

Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Advocacy for an Innovative, Thorough and Sustainable Program to Support Primary Education

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Background:

- Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the lowest primary education enrollment and youth literacy rate of all regions reporting to the United Nations.¹
- Libraries play a major role in fostering literacy skills in pre-k/elementary school children.²
- In 2008, the Millennium Change Corporation (MCC) granted Namibia \$145 million mostly for a massive education project titled the *Namibian Library Development Program* (NLDP) to be guided by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Directorate of National Library and Archive Services (NLAS). The International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) joined in 2009 as consultants.
- NLDP plans to open three community libraries called Regional Study Resource Centers (RSRCs) this year.

Research Questions:

- Question 1:* Does NLDP have the potential to support primary education in Namibia?
Question 2: Are plans for this program innovative, thorough and sustainable?

Methodology:

- An examination of NLDP's plan via exclusive documents provided by IREX
- Qualitative stakeholder feedback surveys
- An analysis of the plan and surveys; as well as Namibia's economy, educational system and library services through the Conceptual Framework for a Study of the Dissemination of Educational Innovations³

Conclusion:

Answer 1: Yes, this program has the potential to support primary education in following ways:

- Lowering educational inequality gap—Bookmobile trucks will service the rural (poorer) areas
- Improving reading literacy—Children's library will provide popular and native youth literature books
- Improving ESL test scores—English as Second Language (ESL) courses will assist with linguistics
- Facilitating independent learning—Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) centers will provide internet access to support homework and studying

Answer 2: NLDP's plans are **innovative** and for the most part, **thorough** due to transparent and purposeful goals (e.g. improving access to information resources and study facilities in underserved areas); a participatory approach to development (e.g. community issued surveys and focus groups); a state-of-the-art building design; and strong partnerships between the MCC, MoE/NLAS, and IREX that encourages future stakeholder investments.

- However, the program will not be **sustainable** until a rational plan is established (soon) to generate revenue from those future stakeholders to keep libraries of this magnitude functioning, and sufficient qualified staff is hired and trained to manage the RSRCs.

References:

- ¹United Nations. (2013). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*. United Nations Pubns.
²Celano, D, & Neuman, SB. (2001). *The Role of Public Libraries In Children's Literacy Development: An Evaluation Report*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Library Association.
³Miles, B. M., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

"These libraries have a space and special resources dedicated to the youth." —Alex Pompe, NLDP Program Manager



Innovative: The use or display of a completely new method, a unique collaboration of methods, or the addition to, or altering of a traditional method in a novel way.
Thorough: The completion of a method with great care and attention to detail by examining all possible outcomes (e.g. failures, obstacles and successes).
Sustainable: The duration of a method without depleting resources over a long period of time—in which decent outcomes outweigh destructive ones.

NAMIBIA



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RSRCs