

Full Length Research Paper

Empowering Children and Teachers through Literacy: The Case of Children’s Book Project (CBP) for Tanzania

***Hellen N. Inyega (PhD) and Justus O. Inyega (PhD)**

Department of Educational Communication and Technology, College of Education and External Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi – Kenya

*Corresponding Author's Email: hinyega@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper discusses how the Children’s Book Project (CBP) for Tanzania empowered children to take control of their lives and future destiny through literacy as a tool for learning across the curriculum. CBP in-serviced teachers on careful choice and/or preparation of high quality and culturally relevant instructional materials capable of equipping pupils to be literate in the true sense of the word and to actively participate in personal and national development. CBP’s unique contribution to Tanzania was, and continues to be, the spear-heading of production of multi-genre Kiswahili texts and the achievement of Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and looking forward to Sustainable Development Goals.

Key Words: Academic Achievement, Reading Achievement, Readership Program, Teacher Education, Professional Development.

Introduction

The Children’s Book Project (CBP) for Tanzania was established in 1991 in response to the acute shortage of children’s literature, especially those in Kiswahili language. The main objective of CBP was, and still is, to contribute to increased literacy skills of primary school children in Tanzania. To achieve this objective, CBP has, over years, undertaken various comprehensive and strategic initiatives aimed at: Enhancing availability and accessibility of high quality, culturally relevant books to school children; Equipping teachers with research-based methodologies of teaching reading skills that lead to improved literacy among children; and supporting the development of key book sectors (in the writing, designing, production and illustration of high quality books).

Since 1998, CBP has been managing a Readership Program, funded by several international and local donors. At the time of the research, the Project was focused on 13 districts close to Dar es Salaam. CBP went ahead to work directly with a total of 99 Project Schools, 4 Teacher Training Colleges and 5 Practice Schools. CBP reached

over 100,000 pupils, hundreds of teachers and education officials, 2,625 authors and 255 illustrators and more than 40 publishers.

We got involved with CBP as external evaluators of the Fourth Phase of the project. The main purpose of the evaluation was to take stock of achievements of CBP during the implementation period prior to the review. Specifically, we evaluated the extent to which the following strategic objectives outlined in the their CBP Strategic Plan had been achieved: Development of a reading culture among school children; Improving the quality of children’s books; Increasing fundraising for sustainability; enhancing lobbying, networking, collaborations and partnerships; strengthening CBP institutional and management capacity; and enhancing promotion and publicity. A secondary objective was to gather information which would form basis for the next five-year strategic plan.

The review looked into the following **SIX** key areas and answered the following questions:

Resources

- ✓ Are the financial, human and material resources at the disposal of CBP adequate to respond to the needs of the beneficiaries?

Design

- ✓ What design and/or methodology does CBP use to meet its objectives?
- ✓ Is the design and/or methodology working well to meet CBP objectives?
- ✓ What are the needs CBP is trying to address?
- ✓ Have the needs CBP is trying to address changed over time? If yes, has the CBP design changed to suit the identified needs?
- ✓ Are the activities/programs carried out by CBP still appropriate to address the identified needs?
- ✓ Does CBP work with appropriate partners to implement its activities/programs?
- ✓ In view of the above, are there suitable technical skills to design, manage and monitor CBP activities/programs?

Results and Impact

- ✓ Do tools and tests used by CBP provide useful information about students learning outcome?
- ✓ Is CBP able to compare with confidence the students' learning outcomes in CBP schools with non- CBP schools?
- ✓ Are there additional approaches to assessing learning outcomes that CBP should consider?
- ✓ Are the data collected by CBP sufficient in detail and coverage to give a picture of library usage by the community?
- ✓ Are the CBP data able to assess the changes in teaching practice that result from its training?
- ✓ Have there been any unexpected outcomes over the last 5 years?
- ✓ What are the longer-term, broader impacts that CBP has had on the problem that it is addressing?
- ✓ In view of the above, has CBP achieved the desired outcomes as set out in their program documents?

Sustainability of Results

- ✓ Can the benefits of CBP activities during the course of the five-year period be sustained without CBP involvement?
- ✓ Can the results in the schools during the course of the five-year period be sustained without CBP involvement?

Challenges

- ✓ What have been CBP's challenges during the course of the five-year period?

- ✓ How has CBP responded to those challenges during the course of the five-year period?

Opportunities Emerging and Lessons Learned

- ✓ What opportunities presented themselves to CBP during the course of the five-year period?
- ✓ How did CBP respond to the opportunities presenting themselves during the course of the five-year period?
- ✓ What lessons did CBP learn during the course of the five-year period?
- ✓ How did CBP respond to lessons learnt during the course of the five-year period in relation to planning and implementing of activities/programs?

N.B. What is discussed in this paper is, however, specific to how the children and their teachers benefitted from CBP.

The Problem and its Relevance to the Knowledge Field

Many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have sprung up in different countries purporting to further the human course when, in reality, they are conduits for conning well-meaning donors of their hard earned dollars. Aware of this loophole, donors now demand periodic monitoring and evaluation reports which document progress, if any, made in line with original strategic plans and goals outlined by a benefiting NGO. The review under discussion was as a result of such a requirement and more so with outsiders with no conflict of interest.

CPB recognizes literacy as an indispensable means for effective social and economic participation and an important contributor to human development and poverty reduction. It understands also that literacy is not only a component of basic quality education and a foundation of lifelong learning, but also a lifelong process. This linkage of literacy to empowerment has focused CBP's efforts over time to address the learning needs of many primary school children in Tanzania. CBP is slowly but surely working towards helping the United Republic of Tanzania achieve Sustainable Development Goals which subsumed Educational for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This paper has important implications for stakeholders in the education enterprise including: Local and international development partners, teacher educators, learners, and NGOs. Documenting and showcasing the achievements of NGOs such as CBP provides a reference resource for other like-minded organizations and any and all interested in starting and/or strengthening similar projects. Monitoring and evaluation consultants can also draw important lessons from this paper on how to evaluate projects.

Methodology

The evaluation under discussion was informed by social constructivist theoretical perspectives. This paper is an outgrowth of ideas co-constructed and shared during the entire data collection period between the researchers and participants. This includes informal talks made in the vehicle to and from research sites and while waiting to see a prospective participant. Each experience was treated as a researchable moment so long as it related to CBP programs and activities.

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants interviewed in the review under discussion and the schools visited. Schools had to represent all the phases of the project as well as be accessible within the fourteen-day time limit set aside for the review. Schools and teacher training colleges in Morogoro region were thus excluded from the review because of their distance from Dar es Salaam. In short, 29 participants were interviewed and 10 out of 99 schools visited. This represented 10 per cent of Project Schools.

The following qualitative research methods of data collection were employed: Participant observation, semi-structured individual and focus-group interviews, thematic analysis of secondary data sources and artifacts/archival documents including: The Strategic Plan and Annual Reports, reports on baseline and follow-up baseline surveys, CBP-sponsored products such as calendars, catalogues and supplementary readers, mass media reports, pictures of past CBP activities and comments based on the draft report of this evaluation. The evaluation was specific to the fourth phase. However, it drew from previous evaluations and reviews, reflections of Board of Directors, Secretariat and CBP implementers and beneficiaries - including teachers and pupils.

Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. This means analysis began immediately upon arrival at CBP offices, and on each day as more data were collected. Key ideas and emerging themes were compared across data sources for triangulation of information. For instance, during each data collection session, the researchers paused at several strategic points to summarize what had been discussed thus far and to clarify any issues arising from previous interviews and secondary documents read during the first three days of the review. Soon after each interview, researchers recapitulated some of the main ideas, concerns and suggestions being raised in the interviews with key informants (such as assistant monitoring coordinators, driver and Executive Secretary) for further clarification and/or (dis)confirmation of information. This process is referred to as member-checking. Triangulation and member-checks were useful for validity and reliability of information provided in this paper. Last but not least, constant reference to the terms of reference was made throughout the review period to ensure data collected were relevant in accomplishing the tasks of the review.

Findings

Findings from the evaluation were reported in thematic form using the terms of reference as a guide. This paper focuses on four key themes: How CBP remained successful; How CBP improved students' reading and academic achievement; How CBP improved teachers' pedagogical skills; and How CBP contributed towards achievement of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and looking forward to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

How CBP remained successful over the years

CBP remains a credible success story today since its establishment in 1991. At the time of the review, its credibility and local and international recognition was exemplified in the many prestigious awards it had received including: The 2007 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize, the 2007 CODE Director's Award for Literacy Promotion, The 2006 Zeze Award by the Tanzania Cultural Trust Fund (supported by Tanzanian and Scandinavian governments) for pioneering children's book writing and distribution of books to schools, the 2004 National Writers' Association Award for facilitating establishment of Zonal Writers Associations and for supporting the associations and, last but not least, the 2002 BAKITA award for promoting Kiswahili language through publishing. In addition, CBP had been contracted severally by UNESCO and International Reading Association to conduct literacy-related activities within and outside Tanzania.

CBP's strength at that time lay in its ability to develop structures, systems and partnerships to harness the enthusiasm and support for its programs and activities. Its governance and management structure consisted of personnel committed to collaborating and networking with other like-minded stakeholders. CBP stayed committed to its strategic objectives and goals. It maintained an impeccable track record of shrewd financial management of donor funds. According to the Executive Secretary, at that time CBP employed strict financial control, accountability and transparent practices.

CBP consistently monitored the project and then programmed iteratively. CBP conducted regular monitoring visits to Project Schools to reinforce newly developed skills as well as monitor performance and general implementation of CBP strategic objectives. CBP, together with education officials such as District Education Officers, created a comprehensive baseline for schools upon their induction into the project, which they then monitored throughout the school's participation in the project. All schools had to show initiative by, for instance, setting aside a library room or space in one corner of a room whether or not they had books. The school had also to be ready to buy book shelves. Three CBP staff in charge of monitoring and evaluation at the time were skilled and resourceful in conducting workshops/seminars and providing advisement to beneficiaries of CBP activities.

CBP was, and still remains, innovative and flexible in adapting to changes occurring in this fast-paced and ever-changing world. CBP programs and activities were thus carefully thought out and designed in line with emerging societal, economic and educational needs of primary school children in Tanzania. CBP ensured sustainability of benefits and results by soliciting input from all implementing partners and stakeholders in the strategic planning process. At the same time, CBP engaged in strategic partnerships to provide the necessary components.

How CBP improved primary school children’s reading and academic achievement

All CBP officials and teachers interviewed spoke confidently about students’ learning outcomes in CBP and non- CBP schools. Extraneous variables can sometimes complicate conclusions made on research phenomena such as academic achievement. This review, whilst

recognizing this limitation used interview data and documentary evidence from Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT) provided by teachers and baseline surveys of Project Schools done by CBP to determine whether or not there was improved academic achievement in Project Schools. The assumption was that these data would provide a sufficient indicator of achievement. For instance, before a school got enrolled into the Project, CBP conducted a thorough baseline survey. In our opinion as researchers, that data was a fairly good representation of any non-Project School. CBP conducted other follow-up annual baseline survey of each school. From all surveys over the years before the review, CBP noted improvements in academic as well as reading achievement as illustrated below.

In the Annual Report it was reported that many of the schools had seen the academic achievement of pupils improve consistently, with some schools registering 100 percent passes for Standard VII examinations (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of Schools with 100 Percent Pass in Standard VII

Name of School	District	No of Passes
1. Kizuiani	Bagamoyo	61 out of 61
2. Msufini	Mkuranga	47 out of 47
3. Msimbazi*	Ilala	144 out of 144 (Review Year) 107 out of 107 (Year Before)
4. Buma	Bagamoyo	28 out of 28
5. Nianjema*	Bagamoyo	59 out of 59 (Review Year) 20 out of 20 (Year Before)
6. Msorwa	Mkuranga	19 out of 19
7. Vikindu	Mkuranga	90 out of 90
8. Mkoani	Ilala	82 out of 82
9. Ruvu JKT	Kibaha	95 out of 95
10. Bokomnemela	Kibaha	33 out of 33
11. Magindu	Kibaha	48 out of 48
12. Kigurunyembe	Morogoro	118 out of 118

*Schools reporting 100 percent passes in Standard VII examinations.

Out of 7,381 pupils who sat for the Standard VII national examinations in Project Schools, 5,674 passed - a 77 percent pass rate. The Executive Secretary stated that the pass rate was 77 percent of Standard VII pupils in Project Schools or eight out of every ten students passing - an outcome that was substantially higher than non-program schools. These conclusions were supported by evidence from official results issued by the MOEVT for each district

in Tanzania. The Executive Secretary stated further that these pass rate had been consistently increasing.

In the Annual Report it was reported that out of 5,544 who sat for their Standard 7 national examinations in Project Schools, 3,901 passed – a 77.36 percent pass rate. Annual Reports summarized results of the past six years (from earliest to most recent as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Year 1	30% (earliest)
Year 2	46%
Year 3	56.5%
Year 4	70.36%
Year 5	77%
Year 6	78% (most recent)

It was reported further that 21 out of 89 Project Schools took positions between one and ten in their respective districts in Standard VI examinations rankings as shown in

Table 2 which shows that 22 out 79 Project Schools took positions between one and ten in their respective districts.

Table 2: District Level Ranking in Standard VII National Examinations

School	District	Phase	Ranking in Year 5 (1 - 10)	Ranking in Year 6 (1 - 10)
Mwanandege	Mkuranga	3	2	8
Vikindu	Mkuranga	5	4	4
Mwanambaya	Mkuranga	3	6	1
Kiparang'anda	Mkuranga	3	3	10
Msorwa	Mkuranga	5	9	9
Kimanzichana	Mkuranga	4	10	10
Nianjema	Bagamoyo	5	3	6
Zinga	Bagamoyo	4	10	10
Mwendapole	Kibaha Town Council	1	2	8
Pangani	Kibaha Town Council	3	4	3
Kongowe	Kibaha Town Council	3	8	6
Ruvu JKT	Kibaha Distr. Council	1	2	3
Mtongani	Kibaha Distr. Council	3	5	5
Jamhuri	Kibaha Distr. Council	5	8	7
Ilonga	Kilosa	5	1	1
Msimbazi	Ilala	1	1	1

From Table 2, schools such as Ilonga and Msimbazi maintained the lead in Standard VII National Examination results in their districts. Mwanambaya recorded the most improvement from position 6 in Year 1 to position 1 in Year 2. Nine out of the 16 schools doing well at district level were those that joined the project between 1997 and 2001. Academic achievements noted above are attributed to the presence and intervention of CBP in those schools. Further research is needed to determine the relationship between length of school in CBP Project and academic achievement.

All teachers interviewed affirmed that their students' academic achievement had improved tremendously since they joined CBP. A head teacher of Mwendapole Primary School said:

Since we became part of the program in 1998, the school has significantly improved. Performance is better and pupils and teachers are more skilled. (*Pointing to a chart on the wall showing improvement over the years*) for the last three years, all our pupils who sat for Standard VII and IV National Examinations passed to the next level compared to about five years ago when only 24 to 25 percent passed. (*Handing me official results from MOEVT showing ranking by school within Kibaha district*) we are also among the top three schools in the district.

Tools and tests used by CBP do provide useful information about students learning outcome. CBP is able to compare with confidence the students' learning outcomes in CBP schools with non- CBP schools based

on national examination results baseline surveys and witness reports from teachers. The consistent improvement in academic achievement over the last five years has been the most impressive outcome.

Libraries and the culture of reading

Many schools in Tanzania have no libraries and few, if any, books. In a typical classroom, one textbook is often shared between five and six children. In such schools, there are no supplementary reading materials. Limitations in the book industry in the areas of local authorship, marketing and bookselling are major contributing factors to this shortage. The shortage of textbooks and relevant supplementary reading materials in Kiswahili, the official language in Tanzania, creates enormous barriers to the learning process. In an interview, The Executive Secretary stated that lack of books "negate the national endeavors to wipe out illiteracy and bring knowledge to the doorstep of each and every household." All teachers interviewed expressed their dissatisfaction with the capititation to schools by stating that it was insufficient to run many of its activities.

At the time of the review, CBP had succeeded in disseminating books to over 4,000 primary schools and 99 Project Schools over the last five years prior. Teachers in all schools visited stated that the books donated by CBP were quality and culturally relevant. They lauded CBP's efforts to provide many titles although they expressed concern about inadequacy of books under each title. They praised the fact that the books were leveled - something that made it easy for them to match texts to readers.

CBP continues to play a unique, exemplary and unparalleled, yet very challenging role in attempting to place a book in every Tanzanian child's hands through libraries. Its reach is limited only by insufficient resources. In an interview The Executive Secretary said, "Our challenge was to raise the reading habits among children and the public in general. So far, we are on the right track...." Archival documents indicated that, indeed, reading skills among children in Project Schools had dramatically increased over the years prior to the review. In the Annual Report preceding the review it was reported that the number of children who did not know how to read in Project Schools had decreased from 1,145 to 543. The 543 students were in remedial programs.

Each year CBP, in collaboration with Book Development Council of Tanzania (BAMVITA) organizes approximately eight (8) reading tents a year around the country to promote reading, showcase some of the locally produced reading materials and educate the wider community on the benefits of literacy.

All teachers interviewed cited many benefits resulting from the Readership Program. Many teachers stated that children in Program Schools are motivated to read and take the initiative to read even in the absence of a teacher in a classroom. During recess or lunch breaks, students prefer to stay in class or go to the school library to read.

When the researchers visited Kongowe Primary School in Kibaha, they saw a Standard 2 girl come twice to request the head teacher for books to read from the pile that had been delivered earlier that day. Of interest to the researchers was the way she attracted the head teacher's attention by bringing her a gift - mangoes which had dropped from trees on the school compound. It would have been impossible for the head teacher to turn her down. The researchers include this little anecdote to demonstrate students' love of reading - where they can do literally anything to lay their hands on a good book.

At the time of the review, attendance levels had gone up in all Project Schools. All teachers interviewed stated that truancy and indiscipline in Project Schools had gone down. They backed their claims with records indicating growth in enrolment since involvement with CBP. CBP states:

Libraries have become learner-friendly and have attracted pupils to stay in school, thus reducing absenteeism in schools. A good example is Mwanzega where before the programme the attendance was 10% out of 450 pupils. But after the introduction of the programme and establishment of school library, attendance has increased to 85% (p.7).

At the time of the review, CBP had put in place a very meticulous record-keeping procedure in all Project Schools to document book procurement and borrowing by teachers, pupils and community members. The

researchers had unlimited access to these documents and could tell, for instance, which titles had been supplied to the school, which titles were popular among children and how many children were borrowing books from the library on each school day. Archival records showed also that teachers were slowly but surely integrating library into the teaching and learning process. In other words, the data collected by library teachers and CBP was sufficient in detail and coverage to give a picture of library usage by students, teachers and the greater community.

It was interesting to find out that community members were benefiting from these libraries as well. As a matter of fact, one adult who had read over 100 books had been identified and rewarded by CBP. During the review the researchers found out that more than 10 adults (from different districts) had read over 100 books and more than 9,000 adults had borrowed books from libraries in Project Schools. CBP was responding to this adult literacy quest by seeking collaborations with the National Library to establish two community libraries in areas where adults had shown the greatest interest and motivation to read. Reports availed to the researchers corroborated the finding that reading and academic achievement had improved steadily in Project Schools over the five years prior to the review. The benefits appeared to be having spill-over effects to communities near project schools.

How CBP improved teachers' pedagogical skills

According to CBP archival documents and at the review time, there were inadequate resources for training and employing qualified teachers in Tanzanian public schools. Teachers within the Tanzanian education system typically have little training for teaching; many are unqualified and have little education themselves. CBP filled this skills-gap by becoming a key partner in fostering innovation in teacher education. Specifically, CBP provided in-service training in library management, best practices and methodologies to teach and promote reading and writing and the selection and/or preparation of reading materials for classroom and school libraries.

CBP laid particular emphasis on using literacy as a tool for learning across the curriculum as well as equip teachers with skills to support reading in the formal education system. To further increase the availability of reading materials in schools, CBP emphasized production and use of locally developed teaching and learning aids. The teachers trained by CBP gain skills to develop *Big Books*, for use by teachers to teach reading and to build school libraries. Archival documents stated that teachers had improved their creativity in making their own instructional materials.

At the time of the review, for instance, production of reading and instructional materials was as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Books Produced by Project Schools

Phase	No. of Schools	Big Books	Small Books	Pocket Books
I & II	12	420	510	3143
III	18	235	311	2318
IV	23	302	543	4710
V	21	265	131	346
VI	10	32	0	0
Practice Schools	5	65	70	120
TOTAL	89	1319	1565	10637

At the time of the review CBP conducted three different types of workshops for teachers from Project Schools to strengthen the quality of teaching and improve the use of textbooks and supplementary readers in the teaching/learning process.

For teachers new to the project, workshops covered the following topics: Diagnostic teaching and interactive teaching methods, shared reading and shared writing, preparation of teaching materials and library establishment and management. Sessions were set aside for de-briefing each topic covered.

Another workshop or refresher course, targeted what were referred to as veteran teachers. Topics covered in such workshops included: sharing experiences on implementation of program activities and revision on interactive and diagnostic teaching approaches. The aim was usually to reinforce skills learned, ascertain whether or not teachers are comfortable in applying the techniques learned and sharing new ideas and innovations in the teaching of reading and writing.

The third type of workshop focused on Lead Teachers. Topics covered included: Reporting on activities carried out in schools, workshop planning, preparation of teaching and learning materials and interactive methodologies and diagnostic teaching techniques.

Archival documents and all CBP officials and teachers interviewed stated that teachers had improved their teaching following in-service training. The teachers appreciated the work CBP was doing in the in-service workshops and suggested that these courses be maintained and conducted at least twice a year. CBP's approach to professional development and teacher capacity-building did, undoubtedly, ensure teachers' capacities were built. Teachers interviewed for this review stated that in the event that CBP withdrew its support in future, they would most likely continue the good work. They cited many reasons why this would be. For instance, they said they were taking initiatives to visit each others' schools to learn from each other as well as conducting their own in-house professional development workshops. They claimed also that because they were now teaching using interactive methods and diagnostic teaching techniques as part and parcel of their daily routines, they would continue using them.

Archival data indicated also that school-to-school collaborations were becoming popular. For instance four

primary schools - Kichangani, Kwelikwiji, Kilimanjaro and Kwawamanga - shared books with Mhonda schools. In Mwendapole Primary school, an eleven-year-old student, Sofia Beda had this to say about inter-school book borrowing,

Pupils from neighbouring schools come here [to borrow books] and that is a good sign. It means we are better [equipped with books]. I have read most of the books in the school library which have helped me learn about different topics through interesting stories told in our national language, Kiswahili, which is easier to understand than English.

Noteworthy, CBP included, in its project schools, pre-service teachers from four teacher training colleges (TTCs). Including TTCs was an added advantage for CBP in terms of sustainability because new teachers graduating from these colleges would have a head-start on methods and techniques likely to make their teaching experiences more enjoyable and beneficial to all involved. Exchange of information, knowledge and experiences among Project Schools was a good strategy to ensure sustainability of project benefits and results in schools.

At the time of the review, CBP had added new topics, such as diagnostic teaching, on its training package for teachers. Of interest was CBP's emphasis on reading and writing fluency, an area neglected in many well meaning reading education programs. CBP also incorporated discussions on many pertinent and contemporary issues such as life skills, with teachers to ensure they are confident in addressing the issues in the classroom and in the wider community.

At the time of the review under discussion, CBP was planning to introduce a writing project for teachers to enable them produce content area texts for use in classrooms across Tanzania. Researchers were, however, unable to observe teachers in action in their classrooms because my school visits coincided with end of term examinations. In spite of this shortfall, the quality of instructional materials prepared by teachers in all schools visited was testimony of the seriousness with which these teachers did their work. The researchers hypothesized that such seriousness would most likely be reflected in the way they taught their students.

From CBP data, the researchers were able to assess the changes in teaching practice that resulted from CBP's training. For instance, monitoring and evaluation guidelines used for assessing the changes in teaching practice that result from CBP training were very comprehensive in nature and provided a good indicator of changes in teaching practice among teachers in Project Schools. Perhaps future evaluations could gather more detailed, qualitative data from classroom observation to bolster these findings.

In view of the above, the researchers think that CBP achieved, to a great extent, the desired outcomes as set out in their program documents.

How CBP contributed to achievement of Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In 1994, the government abolished school fees in primary schools in Tanzania. Unfortunately, major obstacles in the provision of high quality education still remain. Funding for construction and for acquiring basic teaching and learning materials, especially books, is limited. CBP contributed in unique ways to ensure that *"by 2015 all children have access to a complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality."* CBP recognized that libraries were an important component to ensure *quality* in education and promptly responded by not only setting up class and school libraries, but by also stocking them with quality, culturally relevant, multi-genre Kiswahili texts.

CBP promoted gender equality through its selection and publication of books that incorporated a balanced, positive portrayal of girls and women as well as sensitizing readers on cultural practices that have deleterious effects on individuals and societies. CBP engaged the services of a local gender specialist to ensure all programs and activities improve gender equality in schools and in the wider community.

CBP emphasized the training of female writers to give them voice and confidence to pursue writing and to allow for their perspectives and stories to be widely read. CBP firmly believed that working with women was important for understanding and mitigating societal barriers that women face in pursuing writing as a profession. Special effort was made to have women role models within CBP programs.

CBP's programs, with their emphasis on developing relevant reading materials for children, youth and adults, supported the Tanzania National Strategy for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction (MKUKUTA) by providing a source of livelihood to many stakeholders in the book sector.

Noteworthy CBP began a program, with the support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), called 'Adventure Book Writing Competition.' The program included the organization of a national writing competition to select and support three authors to create novels based on cultural, social and historical aspects of Tanzanian society and weave together fact and fiction into novels that would stimulate interest in reading and writing throughout the country and enhance learning through educational and entertaining

information. Winning publications were widely disseminated to schools in Tanzania. CBP developed and coordinated essay contests and reading clubs related to the books. At the time of the review under discussion, CBP was planning to conduct annual writing competitions (in the English language) where the winner would be presented a Literacy Award for Tanzania. The ultimate goal would be to have this competition expand to include submissions from all over Africa to compete for a Literacy Award for Africa. CBP's activities of training of authors and illustrators, with an emphasis on female authors, and developing the capacity of publishers and printers also supported MKUKUTA through empowerment and provision of skills.

Through nurturing agents in the publishing industry to produce only excellent quality reading materials, CBP also helped to create a market for locally produced books in Tanzania and in other countries in the region where Kiswahili is a national or commonly spoken language.

CBP firmly believed that formal education is a great entry point for discussions on pertinent and contemporary issues and was addressing them head-on. For instance, CBP published a series of books on HIV/AIDS. It partnered with local organizations such as Life Skills Association to develop stories revolving around personal testimonies of people affected and/or infected with HIV. CBP helped produce books that address negative practices that make girls, in particular, vulnerable to contracting the virus. CBP fostered discussions in schools that helped challenge and change behaviour that endanger health. Other titles focused on human rights and the promotion of peace, nutrition, hazards from wood smoke and other environmental issues.

Politically speaking, readership as part of quality Education for All (EFA) is not yet a priority area in the political agenda in Tanzania. CBP is using a multi-modal approach to create awareness on the importance of literacy across the curriculum among its stakeholders.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper is part of a broader review of CBP's activities in which lessons learnt and challenges, if any, faced during the five years were identified. The purpose of this paper was to showcase how the Children's Book Project for Tanzania empowered children to improve their reading and academic achievement and future outcomes. Findings showed that children's reading and academic achievements had steadily improved in project schools. In addition, teachers in project schools had improved their pedagogical skills as well as enhanced their knowledge of choice and/or creation of instructional materials and resources.

Recommendations on the way forward made in the evaluation focused on both realistically achievable short-term goals and gradually achievable on-going- and longer-term objectives - after carefully considering CBP's internal and external factors such as their strengths and opportunities, their keenness to remain a key player in the

education enterprise in the foreseeable future, their willingness to seek more funding to further their vision and mission, government policy on literacy, donor thinking and the anticipated and continued support of local and international donors. Below are some of the recommendations made regarding reading and academic achievement and professional development:

- Adopting innovative monitoring and evaluation strategies and outcome/performance indicators and aspiring towards internationally accepted/recognized literacy norms and standards.
- Commissioning research to examine the link between length in CBP Project and academic achievement among Project Schools.
- Adopting multi-media, multi-genre, multi-lingual and culturally- and gender-sensitive approach to book production e.g., increasing production of plays and poetry publications, venturing into comics and informational texts publications, translating a select number of high quality informational texts and classics, continuing production of books in Braille, digitizing books onto tapes, videos and CDs, and continuing advocacy for equal representation - in documents, programs and activities – along gender lines; Publishing a bilingual catalogue
- Continuing advocacy for the establishment, stocking and effective use of class and school libraries for teaching, learning and research.
- Replicating CBP activities countrywide and elsewhere in Africa.
- Becoming a literacy hub to develop a comprehensive literacy data base for use in the region and CBP being charged with the responsibility of coordinating and overseeing literacy activities among member countries.
- Continuing the cascade approach in professional development workshops and seminars because of its spill-over effects to intended and unintended beneficiaries.
- Guiding teachers on how to develop researchable topics/activities/questions which demand students to use the library to find information to complete assignments.
- Organizing annual literacy conferences locally for teachers in project schools to share experiences and exchange ideas. Participation in the conferences to include the international community.
- Developing and publishing a literacy journal for sharing information on best practices and research-based approaches to teaching and learning using literacy in African contexts. Articles to be sourced from educators' conference proceedings. Journal to be made available locally and internationally (both print and electronic versions).

- Including, in professional development seminars and workshops, topics on basics of classroom research where teachers are encouraged to be researchers within their own classrooms to document any emerging issues, trends and changes during the teaching-learning process. **Teachers as Researchers** to utilize qualitative research methodologies to document student achievement in reading and other subjects. The approaches not to be as complex as those explored in institutions of higher learning. However, needed to be sufficient enough in detail to help teachers make sense (from a researcher's perspective) of all that is happening in their classrooms during the teaching-learning process.
- Local and international development partners to identify and support NGOs such as CBP to forge ahead in their work as well as break new ground.

References

- CBP (March, 1997). Final Report for CBP Phase One (1991 – 1996). Dar es Salaam: CBP.
- CBP (March, 2001). Final Report for Phase Two (1997 – 2000). Dar es Salaam: CBP.
- CBP (August, 2002). Strategic Plan for 2003 – 2007. Dar es Salaam: CBP.
- CBP (February, 2006). Annual Report (January – December 2005). Dar es Salaam: CBP.
- CBP (February, 2007). Annual Report (January – December 2006). Dar es Salaam: CBP.
- Charles, B. (Tuesday October 30, 2007). Mzazi anavyoweza kuchangia staid za usomaji vitabu kwa motto wake. Mwananchi.
- Elly, W. B., Sichizya, F. D., & Mbilinyi, D. A. S. (March, 2001). Report on the Evaluation of the Language to Literacy Programme.
- Fahar, G. (July 29, 2007). *Leisure Magazine*, p. 8.
- Kabendera, E. (Tuesday September 4, 2007). *The Citizen*.
- Kalindimya, J. (Thursday October 4, 2007). CBP Yakabidhiwa Tuzo na UNESCO. *Nipashe*.
- Kitunga, D. (September- November, 2003). Review of Third Phase (2001 -2003) of the Children's Book Project activities: Final Report. Dar es Salaam: E&D Ltd.
- Lusekelo, P. (Friday October 5 & 20, 2007). Children's Book Project Scoops UNESCO Prize. *The Guardian*.