

RECYCLED TEXTBOOKS CHANGE LIVES IN UGANDA

'The books are really good. They help us especially in Biology and Mathematics with simple examples. This adds on to the knowledge the teacher gives us in class.'

Abidrabbe Federico, Anyiribu Secondary School

THE ANYIRIBU SCHOOL LIBRARY

In Northern Uganda, the Anyiribu Secondary School Library – with its few dusty shelves, plain concrete walls and sand-laden floor – had once struggled to offer passers-by an insight to its actual function. Indeed, with only a handful of books and materials – a result of decades of civil conflict and prolonged instability – the room's purpose would be hard for any of us to comprehend. Nevertheless, even in this state and under these conditions, the Anyiribu Secondary School Library had continued to serve a vital, if not limited role, providing Anyiribu and its surrounding communities with a point of access to information, knowledge and opportunity.

In November 2009, the Anyiribu Secondary School Library was able to extend its services to the many children in and around the Anyiribu area when **World Vision Australia**, in partnership with Melbourne based company – **Recycled Textbooks**, provided over 600 secondary school books to the community of Anyiribu and the Offaka sub-county. This donation, as well as many others, provide an additional boost to initiatives aimed to alleviate the effects of poverty and improve the livelihoods of individuals and communities.

In Uganda, the consignment of textbooks to Anyiribu and the Offaka sub-county, has been a timely addition to efforts that seek to not only counteract the

pressures placed on communities and schools by decades of violence, but to also overcome the effects of a recent government decision to provide free primary education – a move that will see Uganda achieve Goal Two of the Millennium Development Goals, but that has had a dramatic impact on student to teacher and student to resource ratios nationwide.



EDUCATION IN UGANDA

For a country approximately the size of Victoria, but with a population of over 30 million, Uganda is no stranger to classroom congestion. However, when student to teacher ratios jumped from 47 to 1 in 1996 to 67 to 1 in 2006 – ratios that dwarf Australia's current primary education figure of 17 to 1 – there was a clear indication that unlike student enrolments, both

teacher and resource stocks had not been comparatively increased. For instance, in Northern Uganda alone, the number of textbooks

required to meet the 2 to 1 ratio desired by the Ugandan government, has been forecast at approximately 900,000 units. When one considers that it would cost approximately 6.3 million AUD to meet this need in a country whose GDP per capita is a mere

OFFAKA Area Development Program

LOCATION: Northern Uganda

START DATE: 2004

TOTAL BENEFICIARIES: 16,000

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:

- Lack of Schools and resources
- Lack of Trained Teachers
- High student to teacher ratios

533 AUD – compared with Kenya (922 AUD) and Australia (47,369 AUD) – this is a monumental task.

THE ANYIRIBU SECONDARY SCHOOL

The lack of teachers and other resources, as well as concerns over the quality of education being delivered, has prompted many smaller communities like Anyiribu, to seek alternatives to Uganda's over-

populated public schools. For this reason, as Erina Nalule from World Vision Uganda explains, ‘the community had decided to come together with some teachers to establish the Anyiribu Secondary

***World Bank Development Indicators 2007-2008**

	UGANDA	AUSTRALIA
Population*	31.6 Million	21.4 Million
Land Area (Sq Km)	236,040	7,686,850
GDP (AUD)	\$16.8 Billion	\$1.1 Trillion
GDP per capita (AUD)	\$533	\$47,369
Enrolments, Primary (Net %)	95.5%	97%
Enrolments, Secondary (Net %)	19.2%	87.5%

School in January 2010, beginning with 11 students in senior grade 1’ – the equivalent of Year 7 in Australia.

For students Orodriko Loice and Abidrabe Federico, the opening of the Anyiribu Secondary School has benefitted not only their lives, but the lives of their family and friends as well. Previously, given the widespread destruction of schools and other buildings during periods of conflict, Orodriko

and Abidrabe – along with many other children in Anyiribu – endured a long and often dangerous walk to their school.

The opening of a school close to their homesteads, has meant that they can attend classes, while continue to undertake their domestic duties – including fetching water and cooking for their parents and siblings. In addition to this, the recent injection of textbooks from World Vision Australia and Recycled Textbooks to the Anyiribu Secondary School Library, has meant that the children of Anyiribu, many for the first time, will be able to borrow their own books and follow their teacher’s instructions.

THE BENEFITS OF TEXTBOOKS IN ANYIRIBU

The current state of education in Uganda, and indeed, the need to fill an existing resource gap is keenly illustrated by the positive and widespread impact that the textbooks have had beyond Anyiribu and Anyiribu’s secondary school. As Patrick Obita, Project Coordinator for World Vision Uganda states, ‘there are children in Anyiribu who do not go to school...and there are children who are in other secondary schools in other areas. While both are around the community, they can borrow the books. They see that they are good and useful to their own education’.

Such a significant impact in and around Anyiribu has not occurred by chance, but can instead be attributed to a lengthy collaboration between World Vision Uganda, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and World Vision Australia’s Program Resources Team. Like all consignments of goods that are overseen by World

Vision Australia, the consignment of textbooks to Uganda, had to satisfy strict guidelines to ensure that the items donated were context appropriate, of high quality and were able to add value to existing poverty alleviation initiatives.

SENDING TEXTBOOKS TO NORTHERN UGANDA



A needs assessment conducted by World Vision Uganda and World Vision Australia, first highlighted the need to address the worrisome state of education and the shortage of education-specific resources in the Anyiribu area. From this assessment, the allocation of textbooks to the children and teachers in Anyiribu was identified as an appropriate and highly valuable step towards overcoming these challenges. While, discussions between the Ugandan Ministry of Education and World Vision added further insight to this decision – determining that textbooks ought to correspond to

national curriculum standards, particularly where their use would be within community schools that seek to supplement the existing government-run institutions.

To achieve this compatibility, World Vision Australia and Recycled Textbooks aligned subject-specific material with the advice given from the Ministry of Education and World Vision Uganda, allocating only those books that would suit the needs of students and teachers alike.

Indeed, For World Vision Uganda, providing materials that comply with Uganda's national curriculum standards, is crucial to ensure that the students undergo an appropriate and relative learning experience, while the teachers are also provided with user-friendly and familiar material from which to base their lesson plans. Ensuring that this was the case, the textbooks, as Erina Nalule from World Vision Uganda states, 'was a timely boost to the library which is currently supporting both teachers and students'. More than this though, 'the books are in line with national curriculum, which is directly helping the school'.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR A BETTER LIFE

Sustaining long-term partnerships with donors likes Recycled Textbooks, is an important way that World Vision Australia can offer hope and opportunity to people like those in Anyiribu and the Offaka sub-county. The partnership between World Vision and Recycled Textbooks continues to provide value to communities around the world, giving children like

Orodriko and Abidrabe the chance to achieve their dreams. Ultimately, it is partnerships such as this, that leave passers-by in no doubt to the function of the vibrant and busy library that now operates in Anyiribu.

WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA PROGRAM RESOURCES

World Vision Australia's (WVA) Program Resources team manage donations to countries all around the world, focusing specifically on education, economic development and World Vision's water, sanitation and health initiatives. In 2009, WVA Program Resources partnered with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Vietnamese Ministry of Health to supply much needed de-worming medications to primary school children. Similar consignments have continued in 2010, with de-worming and micronutrients being sent to Lao PDR and Cambodia, while further shipments to Vietnam are planned for later in the year.

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Quote reference: R2794

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If you or your school have spare, good quality textbooks, and you would like to donate to help change lives, please contact:

Recycled Textbooks

13 Arcade Road
Mont Albert North (Mel Ref: 46 K7)

Phone: 9898 1677 or 0421 642 362

www.recycledtextbooks.com.au