



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Library training helps vulnerable youth find jobs Masiphumelele Community Library, South Africa

IMPACT CASE STUDY

The library's programme provides information and communication technology (ICT) and job-seeking skills training for vulnerable youth living in an impoverished settlement near Cape Town. The programme –

- Helped over 20 vulnerable young people find jobs.
- Encouraged 31 vulnerable young people to enter further education.
- Improved access to computer training in the community.
- Increased library user numbers by over 20%.

Masiphumelele is an informal settlement just outside Cape Town, where 38,000 people live in crowded conditions in shacks made of corrugated iron and wood. Youth unemployment in Masiphumelele is estimated to be as high as 50%, and young people are especially vulnerable to gangs, drug abuse and alcoholism.

Today, most employers expect job-seekers to have ICT skills, but computer and internet training were almost non-existent in Masiphumelele. The local high school had only a few computers for over 1,000 students, and so young people flocked to Masiphumelele Community Library, which had 11 computers but no internet connection. Desperate to learn, they would sit three-deep to a computer.

The library's ICT programme dramatically improves this situation. With a US\$15,000 grant from EIFL-PLIP to cover equipment and some operational costs for a year, the library bought six new computers and a printer. They also installed high-speed wi-fi internet, with a signal strong enough to benefit other organizations located in the library building.

The library's computer centre, now equipped with 17 computers, offers the only free and open access to high quality ICT training in Masiphumelele – in walking distance from where young people live. During training, learners each have access to a computer and individual support from skilled library assistants.



Masiphumelele library's computer training centre.

"I improved my computer knowledge and I managed to find a job through the internet!" – Farai Malon, ICT trainee.



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“The library has changed my life because I am learning and I will get a certificate instead of just sitting at home doing nothing.” – Sikhumbuzo Tsobo, ICT trainee

In less than a year the programme –

- Built ICT skills and training capacity of 8 library volunteers and 7 assistants who provide one-to-one support for young trainees in the library.
- Trained 1,540 beginners and 48 intermediate ICT students.
- Provided job-seeking and career-focused training for 35 unemployed youth.

The future

With support from the Cape Town City Council and the library’s partners, the programme will continue. The non-governmental organization (NGO), MasiCorp, will fund maintenance of the computer room and stipends for volunteer trainers. The NGO Ikamva Youth will continue to provide job-seeking training and career guidance for the library’s young trainees, and the library staff are also being trained to run job-readiness workshops.

Public libraries - partners in development

Youth unemployment in South Africa is high – 9 million people, according to government statistics (2012). Life for young people living in peri-urban areas – the shack settlements like Masiphumelele that surround most South African cities – is especially bleak. In addition to poverty and inequality resulting from the country’s history of apartheid, young people struggle to find work because they lack access to information and ICT skills.

Public libraries equipped with ICT can make a difference. In November 2012 Masiphumelele Community Library conducted a survey of their young computer centre users. Out of 53 respondents 83% used the library computers to look for jobs and 38% succeeded in finding employment. Over 70% looked for information about further education, and 58% enrolled at further education institutions.

“I love computers – that is one of the reasons I go to the library every day. My second reason is that I want people of my community to improve their computer skills – and that is why I am assisting in the computer classes.” - Kululwa Msweli, library assistant ICT trainer.

EIFL-PLIP supported the Internet Access and Youth-centred ICT training programme in November 2011. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the programme. Information presented here is based on the library’s impact assessment. For further information, contact senior librarian, Ms Susan Alexander at susan.alexander@capetown.gov.za.

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. Learn more at www.eifl.net/plip. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

