



Big rise in pass rates for school ICT exams revealed in Ghana under mobile library project

Press release

7 July 2020, Vilnius - There has been a dramatic increase in the pass rates of children who took ICT in Ghana's Basic Education Certificate Exam (B.E.C.E.) at 28 schools in four regions in the country, thanks to a mobile library project that used low-powered laptops, solar panels and modem internet in practical ICT classes.

Exam pass rate figures from schools reached by the mobile libraries from 2016 to 2019 show that the project helped over 3,200 students to pass the ICT exam. In 2019, 84% of children who gained practical computer skills passed the exam - an increase from 45% in 2015 before the project started.

In Ghana, many schools in deprived and rural areas do not have access to computers and the internet, resulting in students learning ICT in an abstract sense, sometimes without ever having had practical experience using the technology, a significant obstacle for those children taking the compulsory B.E.C.E. exam in ICT.

The project was a partnership between EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) and the Ghana Library Authority (GhLA). As the positive exam result rates increased, the national government's Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC), came on board, enabling the GhLA to transform the service into a sustainable project across ten regions of Ghana.

"This project has been a great success, we have seen how access to technology and practical classes not only provided students with skills for the future, but has inspired and motivated them to learn further. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated to us the importance of technology for learning and communications. GIFEC looks forward to expanding this project into the future and helping more students achieve better results in their B.E.C.E.," said Hayford Siaw, Executive Director, Ghana Library Authority.

"Currently, Ghana Library Authority has 74 libraries across the 16 regions in Ghana, therefore, we could expand this project by equipping each branch library with the necessary resources to reach surrounding schools. This can increase our impact by over 50%," Mr. Siaw added.

The project was started by Volta Regional Library with a small grant from EIFL. They equipped their mobile library van with five laptops, solar panels, a modem for the internet, and travelled to five junior high schools that did not have computers in and around Ho, the capital city of Volta region. The librarians and teachers together taught children from Grades 1 - 3 how to use the computers and research the internet.

The project was very successful, and in 2015 EIFL and GhLA expanded it to cover four regions, Ashanti, Western, Upper East and Volta. From 2015 - 2019 the Regional Mobile Libraries conducted classes in about 20 schools each year. Their main focus was the B.E.C.E. students, and the annual pass rate in the ICT exam steadily increased.

“I can proudly say that in 2018 ICT was the subject with the highest grades in the B.E.C.E. The project has transformed the children to become computer literate!” said Veronica McCarthy, Head Teacher, Aboadze Catholic Junior High School in Western Region.

The project also helped the children with their other subjects. Each laptop was pre-loaded with content related to other school subjects - geography, maths, science, English and questions from past B.E.C.E. exams so that the children could study and practise. At some schools, the teachers also used the computers to improve children’s reading and English comprehension skills so that they would better understand the B.E.C.E. questions, by including 30-minute sessions in which children read aloud from the laptops.

During the four years of the project, mobile libraries covered thousands of kilometers to deliver practical computer skills. At times travel, terrain and the maintenance of vehicles was difficult. Software had to be downloaded due to poor and irregular internet connections, solar panels helped keep electricity running and librarians, teachers and pupils put in time during weekends to keep from falling behind.

“We have been a partner in the project from the outset, and are proud to have contributed to its long term sustainability and expansion to the national level,” said Rima Kupryte, Director of EIFL. “It is an excellent example how public libraries are contributing to quality education when equipped with ICT and relevant resources.”

The community played a big part in the project. In some places, parents offered to pay for taxis to transport laptops when the library vans were being repaired. Some schools brought children to the library during free periods and over weekends so that they would not miss classes when the library vans were unable to travel.

The sustainable continuation of this project and its impact on quality education in the country has helped to contribute towards Ghana’s progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and the overall attainment of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

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More information: <https://www.eifl.net/annual-report/2019/#spotlight>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E4E-cmxFBA>

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