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Africa unite

By Scott Walter, Executive Director, CODE

The capacity to provide quality and sustainable literacy education continues to be a challenge faced by modern Africa, in part because teachers themselves are often lacking a strong foundation in reading, writing, thinking and problem solving skills. To counter the inevitable sense of dissatisfaction that this leads to for teachers, they need access not just to professional development opportunities, they need to be part of a professional community. They need to feel and act as education professionals.

Literacy educators from across Africa and around the world came together for exactly that purpose this August under the banner of the "Pan-African Reading for All Conference".

A biennial event started in 1999, the 'Pan-African' exists to create professional development opportunities and to solidly establish the professional literacy community across Africa. The 2009 Dar es Salaam event built on the achievements of past 'Pan-Africans' and once again produced an exceptional opportunity

for classroom teachers, teacher educators, researchers, librarians, writers, publishers, book sellers and policy makers to share and learn from a compendium of professional ideas, practices and approaches to developing and promoting literacy in Africa.

In the 10 years since the first Pan-African RFA conference was held in Pretoria, South Africa, the event has continued to register a steady increase in participants from North America, Europe and Australasia, but it is the overwhelming African participation which gives it its most meaningful perspective.

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A Burt in the hand

By Jana McDade, CODE



This summer CODE announced the first recipients of the Burt Award for African Literature, a new initiative designed to ensure publication of and access to quality locally written books for African youth in English. Established first in Tanzania, the award will spread across Africa on a country by country basis.

The Burt Award comes at a time when the influx of students moving from primary to secondary school in many African countries has doubled due to efforts undertaken in the last decade to provide Education for All.

The challenges faced by young secondary students to stay in school are numerous. Beyond school fees and family responsibilities, there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers to instruct the swelling classes. Furthermore, in line with education policies seen across the continent, the language of instruction often changes from mother-tongue or national language to English, French or Portuguese (depending on the country) after primary school. Students are expected to study, read, write and learn in a language they seldom have strong command of and with minimal one-on-one support.

For the student transitioning from primary to secondary school, access to well written engaging stories reflecting the student's own reality can make all the difference. The Burt award has been developed specifically to generate quality engaging books written for youth as they make this critical transition. The books are intended to help students continue to build English language literacy skills and in turn increase their school performance and ultimately lead to higher secondary school completion rates.

The Award's significant prize money (worth a combined \$21,000 CAD annually in each country) gives local writers an incentive to create and submit manuscripts. The initiative also stimulates the growth of the local publishing industry as it guarantees purchases of thousands of copies of the winning books.

Young Adult Literature (YAL) is not a common genre in Africa, so value is added by CODE linking Canadian writers, authors and publishers with their African counterparts through mentorship and workshops. The Canadian publishing sector has developed expertise both in writing YAL and in developing ESL materials. Designed to assist reluctant readers, these types of books are typically short, with illustrations and packaged to look like traditional chapter books.

Canadian children's author Hadley Dyer volunteered her professional time to support the first Tanzanian award. Ms Dyer's ongoing support includes mentorship on the selection committee, facilitating workshops for writers and editors and advising CODE on the award's roll-out. In partnership with the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) Canada, CODE is identifying one Canadian to support the award in each country.

The first Tanzanian winners of the award have been teamed with local editors and publishers and are now in the process of refining their manuscripts and preparing them for publication. Announcements of the 2010 Burt Award for African Literature and calls for manuscripts have already been made in Ghana, with Ethiopia next in line. ▀

Winners: Burt Award for African Literature Tanzania



1st Place, \$12,000 CAD: Mkama Mwijarubi for *Treeland: the Land of Laughter*, a story about the quest for happiness and fulfilling dreams.



2nd Place, \$6,000 CAD: Asungushe B. Kayombo for *The Best is Yet to Come*, a story about not giving up and persevering in the face of difficult times.



3rd Place, \$3,000 CAD: Ambani A. Guyi for *A Hero's Magic*, a story about a group of young strong-willed men out to survive the turbulent waters of Lake Victoria in the midst of a great tempest.



CODE volunteer Hadley Dyer discusses stories with a Tanzanian librarian and students.

CODE's advisory council grows

Peter Mansbridge of the Canadian Broadcast Corporation, and Anna Porter, founder of Key Porter Books, have added their names to CODE's Advisory Council, joining a group of prominent Canadians who share our vision and help guide our work.

"This is an issue, and CODE is an organization, to stand behind."

- Peter Mansbridge

Peter Mansbridge has been the award-winning Chief Correspondent of CBC News and the anchor of The National since 1988. He has covered the biggest stories of our times, interviewed world leaders and hosted the program across Canada and around the world.



accessing and participating in a world of information and dialogue," says Mansbridge. "I've seen the significance of informed dialogue around the globe, and I believe this is an issue, and CODE is an organization, to stand behind."

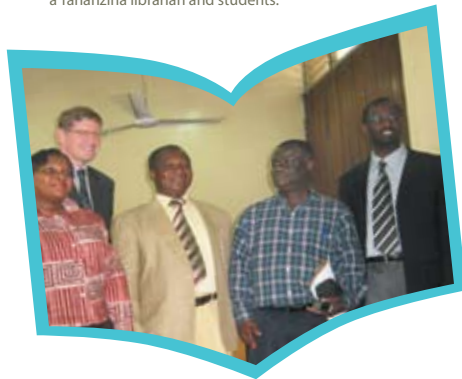


Anna Porter has been one of Canada's most respected book publishers for 30 years. The co-founder of the prominent publishing

house Key Porter Books, Ms. Porter has dedicated her life to publishing, lecturing, speaking and writing on culture, the arts, history, and social issues both at home and abroad.

"I support CODE's aim to teach the young to read and learn," says Porter. "We all know that reading builds bridges of understanding among people, that it encourages imagination and seeing other points of view, these are formidable assets in a divisive world."

Chaired by Knowlton Nash, the Council also includes famed artist Robert Bateman, publishing entrepreneur Avie Bennett, author and activist Mel Hurtig, internationally acclaimed dancer Karen Kain, former foreign minister the Honourable Flora MacDonald, President of the Public Policy Forum Jodi White, and eminent classical pianist Anton Kuerti. ■



Dorothy Onie, Deputy Director, Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs; Darren Schemmer, Canadian High Commissioner to Ghana; Eric Ofei, Chairman, Ghana Book Trust; Robert Amoako, Executive Director, Ghana Book Trust; and Willy Rangira, Program Manager, CODE at the launch of the Burt Award for African Literature, Ghana.

"Literacy is about more than just reading and writing - it's about

latest news

The Burt Award for African Literature: Ghana

This September CODE launched the Burt Award for African Literature Ghana in Accra. In attendance was Darren Schemmer, Canadian High Commissioner to Ghana, who spoke on behalf of the Canadian government; "Canada is happy with the achievements of civil society organizations such as CODE Canadians can be proud of our support to achieve tangible results in advancing literacy as a key to a brighter future in developing countries." The Ghana award is managed by the Ghana Book Trust, a CODE partner of more than two decades. The Ghana award is well underway with a judges panel selected, a deadline of May 31, 2010 for manuscript submissions and plans to announce the award winners at Ghana's International Book Fair in November 2010.

Changing minds, changing lives

By Jana McDade, CODE

“There are two good reasons for this project. First, we can make change in countries where children and students do not have materials for learning - without the materials that we easily get here students in Africa can not learn and change their lives and the society in which they live.

Second, we can change the image of our school. We

can show the city and the country that the Jane and Finch people are united and conscious about the chance they have to live in Canadian society - we are not gangsters despite the relative poverty of our area, but responsible people able to change the world.” (Facebook)



Their mission, as stated on Facebook, was clear. Westview Centennial Secondary School students registered to participate in CODE’s Canadian engagement program Project Love to make change. And change they made.

The project was led by Pierre Yesaya, a grade 12 student who had arrived in Canada from Cameroon just two years ago. Pierre had a firm understanding of the need for learning resources in developing countries. In a Toronto neighbourhood notorious for crime and violence, he saw Project Love as an opportunity to rally his classmates around something positive – together they could, and would, make a real difference.

Pierre and about 20 other students wanted to send school supplies to 500 children in Tanzania. They developed a plan and took action. They started collecting toonies from fellow students, developed a media strategy, started a Facebook group, wrote letters and distributed flyers.

“When we started Project Love we had a dream to make education a human right and to build a connection with other students around the world,” says Pierre. “Everyone was excited to be involved.”

Most of the 1,300 students at Westview Centennial arrived in Canada recently from a developing country. They and their parents know the importance of education and how it relates to employment opportunities and healthy lifestyles. Westview, in what the media might portray as the unlikeliest of places, is a school filled with global citizens – young people interested in the world around them, determined and dedicated to taking action.

“I’m privileged to have been part of the project; we achieved something greater than what others thought we were capable of,” says Claudia, a grade 12 participant. “We were left with the feeling of gratitude in our hearts and the vision of over 500 children in Tanzania with a smile on their face. There is nothing that can feel better than that.”

Pierre and his classmates exceeded their goal and raised enough money to purchase school supplies for 560 Tanzanian children. They joined more than 40,000 students across Canada in making kits of school supplies for about 50,000 African youth this year.

Pierre has left Westview and is now studying at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, but his hard work has not

been lost. A new group of enthusiastic Westview students have taken the Project Love reins, determined to beat last year’s record and to continue showing that they and their school can be agents of positive change. ■

latest news

We’re climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro again - and you can join our team! A group of climbers will be scaling Africa’s tallest peak, Mt. Kilimanjaro, in July 2010 for CODE.



To register or learn more about the 2010 Climb for CODE, please contact Tony Giampietro, Director, Fund Development, at 800 661 2633 ext 232.

A recipe for success

In March 2009, a symposium entitled *Beyond Access: Effective Reading for All*, brought researchers, program developers and members of many international organizations together to share best practices in early grades literacy programs implemented in developing countries.

The following is an abbreviated version of the presentation by Dr. James Hoffman, a professor at the University of Texas who has been assisting CODE and CODE's partners in a volunteer capacity. Along with a fellow researcher Dr. Misty Sailors, Dr. Hoffman is providing on-going technical support to CODE's partner in Tanzania, the Children's Book Project (CBP) in developing and implementing assessment tools to inform program direction and evaluate the program's impact on teachers, students and schools. With their support, CBP staff have gained valuable professional skills in the design, implementation and analysis of program assessments which will be further transferred to other CODE partners.

Recommendations for excellence in early grades reading programs

By Dr. James Hoffman, Professor, University of Texas at Austin

We all know the reality of education in developing countries - 100 children in a classroom, schools that exclude the poor through exorbitant fee structures, children coming to school undernourished, children who come to school and can't find the language they speak. These are challenging areas that we must work to change, but in the meantime we must also plan our aid in ways that are considerate of these challenges and limitations.

There are four particular areas where I believe we can make an impact now if we set priorities, focus our energies, and invest in smart ways.

1. We must ensure classrooms are resourced with a variety of high-quality reading materials, (including a greater use of electronic text) - in languages that are appropriate and in the quantities that are needed.

2. We must prepare teachers in the effective use of these materials to teach basic reading skills and to teach content. A book flood is not enough.

Teachers must be supported in the use of materials. In the Learning for Living Project in South Africa we worked in 1,000 schools with 10,000 teachers for five years. We provided quality reading materials, training, and support for implementation. Data from both our internal evaluation and the independent, external evaluation showed statistically significant impact on the reading skills of participating children in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension.

3. We must teach writing along with reading. Reading instruction without writing instruction is inherently oppressive in its message to learners. Our observational studies in South Africa document that lack of writing instruction beyond copy work and spelling in schools. We must prepare teachers to reform their approach to writing.

4. We must work to instill a spirit of evaluation and research in the context of schooling. Teachers must learn to gather, interpret, and use data to



Dr. Hoffman examines a "big book" designed to read with large classes.

inform practice. Assessment as a tool to learn and improve is essential to becoming independent as a teacher/learner.

Finally, here are two things we do not need that we are doing and must stop.

1. False promises. We cannot make claims for the impact of programs and approaches that are not supported in research or data. If we have learned anything from reading research it is that there is no easy way and no certain way. It is the knowing, flexible, adaptive teacher that makes an approach successful. We must not promise what we cannot deliver.

2. False premises. What do we do if there are no materials? If there are no materials, then we must start with materials development. Good relevant books are currently costing around 25 cents each to print. For \$6 million we could fully resource all of 5,000 primary schools in Malawi with 5,000 books per school. That's 2.8 million children with at least 6 books per child. We have the means to provide, or better still support, the development of books for developing countries with a reasonable allocation of federal aid budgets.

We must, once we do this resourcing, look at teacher preparation to use these materials effectively. We can work with governments and publishers to resource. We can train teachers in how to use these books to support literacy learning, writing, and content learning. Staff development can be done at reasonable expense. 🍷

*Excerpts from *Beyond Access: Effective Reading for All*, a Report from the Sixth Global Perspectives on Literacy Conference, March 2009.

Africa unite, continued from page 1

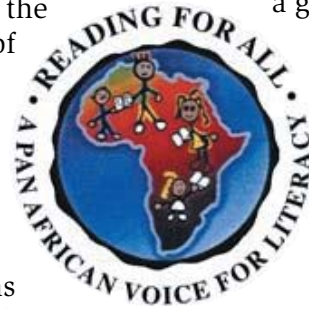
In Pretoria there were some 260 participants from 14 African countries, while the 2009 conference attracted more than 500 educators from over 20 African countries. Such an increase represents a great deal of hard work by committed individuals, but as well, an escalating desire in Africa to be part of a professional dialogue around literacy.

In recognition of the former and in service to the latter, our utmost gratitude goes out to the Conference planners from the African Development

Committee of the International Reading Association, the Reading Association of Tanzania (CCHAUTA.) and our partner the Children's Book Project of Tanzania (CBP) which hosted the 2009 event.

The conference presentations were rich and diverse and they in turn sparked thought provoking discussions throughout the week. The evening galas were great fun, the ceremonies well orchestrated, the keynotes stimulating, the venues well-

equipped and the publishers' exhibits a great and critical addition.



CODE has been participant, facilitator and/or sponsor of the Pan-African since the beginning. The event has been a valuable resource for our network and CODE partners have worked closely with Conference planners.

This year's host, the Children's Book Project of Tanzania is an excellent example of the long term benefits, and repercussions, of bringing

Establishing the professional literacy community across Africa

So what is the Pan-African's place on the development landscape after its first 10 years?

"First, the conference brings together people of rich and diverse schools of thought, rich and diverse cultural experiences, rich and diverse world outlooks. In that vein, the conference becomes a greatly enriching forum. Secondly, the conference is a place for networking. It makes it possible for one to meet great minds face to face".

Prof. Joshua Madumulla, University of Dodoma, Tanzania

"What I really appreciate about the Pan African Rfa Conferences is that those of us that live in Africa get to meet once every two years and we hear what other research is being done in the field of literacy. It is so empowering to hear what excellent work is being done in Africa - this really feeds my soul. Over the years we have developed a sense of belonging to this organisation and to each other and look forward to meeting up at each conference."

Janet Condy, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

"... all I can say is that I find the Pan African conferences personally humbling. I learn so much and I meet countless people who are so professional and doing such important work under difficult conditions. In the back of my mind I keep saying to myself that literacy professionals in the USA, Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere could learn so much here."

Prof. James Hoffman, University of Texas; Past President of National Reading Conference.

"The Pan African Conference has been one of the greatest and most easily accessible fora for members of different literacy orchestras to network, share experience and rub minds on various aspects of reading and literacy. This network has exposed literacy practitioners in Africa to current and proven trends in literacy learning and teaching and it has led to a wonderful cross fertilization of ideas which has shaped literacy development in Africa."

C.E. Onukaogu, Past-President of the Reading Association of Nigeria, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Nigeria.

"The Pan-African Reading for All Conference makes it possible for practitioners in African learning environments to build capacity for Afro-centric scholarship, breaking away the barriers that otherwise inhibit expression of self by many who have associated scholarship as a preserve of a select few."

Penny Moanakwa, Chair of the Planning Committee, 7th Pan-African RFA Conference, to be held in Gaborone, Botswana in 2011

Stay tuned for news about the 7th Pan African Reading for All Conference in Gaborone, Botswana in 2011!

professionals together. Leading up to the first Pan-African, CBP, CODE and the International Reading Association came together in the *Language to Literacy* (LtoL) Project, which was based on combining the provision of appropriate high-interest books with teacher training on effective methodologies in using books to teach literacy.

The approach used was based on best practice from around the world including the extensive experience of South Africa's READ Educational Trust, the hosts of the first Pan-African in 1999. CBP's resulting readership program was itself presented at the 5th Pan-African in Accra, drawing the attention of Liberian educators and leading to the development, with CODE, of the comprehensive readership initiative, *Reading Liberia*. A similar discussion took place this year in Dar contributing to an agreement between CODE and Kenya's National Book Development Council to implement, *Reading Kenya*.

Such examples can be cited, yet professional associations for teachers are rare in Africa. Indeed, many African teachers would be unfamiliar with the concept of improving their teaching by participating in the exchanges of a like-minded group of professional educators. The absence of such contributes to a familiar yet vicious circle -- poor teaching leads to low status for teaching, which means the profession does not attract resources nor the best new candidates, which in turn leads to the continuation of poor teaching. Poor teaching means that communities lose faith in the value of education.

Without a supportive community, of and for educators, problems such as poor classroom pedagogy, school/life disconnect, and lack of effective teacher training go largely unaddressed.*

*For an in-depth discussion on this, see Richard Maclure, *Overlooked and Undervalued: A synthesis of ERNWACA Reviews on the State of Education in West and Central Africa*. 14 October 1999

Lopez the reader

By Catherine Macnab

At 15 years, Lopez is bigger than most other students in his grade five class. But something else makes him stand out. When he finishes his work and other students stir restlessly, Lopez reads his book, moving his lips slightly as his eyes follow the text.

Lopez attends school in the village of Chiuanjoto in Niassa province, Mozambique. The teacher reads out 21 names when taking attendance, but today only notes the presence of eight. Most students attend sporadically, often busy tending crops in the machamba or doing other duties that are considered more important than school attendance for many families that rely on subsistence agriculture.

Rural school enrollment in the province is erratic because many family clans are semi-nomadic. Local schools may expand to accommodate newly settled families, who work the land for several years. When the soil is depleted, they move away from school to settle on more fertile land. It is not uncommon in some villages for half a school population to disappear from one year to the next as family clans move to new land.



Lopez and his classmates in school

Lopez is lucky because both his mother and father were schooled in Lichinga,

the provincial capital, and learned how to read and write. Although Lopez is older than his classmates, he has support to continue his schooling, and motivation to use some of his free time to read. Lopez hopes to become a teacher or a nurse when he finishes school.



Lopez's library

Lopez borrows books from the school library collection. The collection is stored in three wooden crates kept outside the director's office. The Head Teacher keeps the key. When asked in Portuguese to describe his favorite story, Lopez hesitates. When invited to answer in Yao, his mother tongue, he enthusiastically describes *Sorte Namalima* (The Hungry Hyena), a book written by a local Mozambican author.

Lopez can borrow books from the library for five days at a time. He takes them home where he shares them with his family, but not with his friends because they do not take good care of books. They lost their library privileges after pages from books were used to wrap fish.

Sometimes, when Lopez finishes his work at home, he takes a book to sit in the shade of a tree and read quietly. Often his friends will join him and ask him to read aloud because although they may not respect a book, they do enjoy a good story.



if you can learn to read
and write, you can
learn to do, and be,
anything.

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