

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: BENEFITS,  
CHALLENGES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

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## ABSTRACT

### INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Shortages of books and libraries exist in many developing countries, making it difficult for people to develop and maintain literacy skills. In response to this need, Westerners have created non-profit international library development (ILD) programs to build libraries, furnish them with books, and train library staff. These ILD programs provide beneficial services but as foreigners developing policies and development priorities, they may also create unforeseen problems. As a reminder to Western influence in developing countries, the negative effects of colonialism are still felt daily in regions such as Africa. Some believe the answer may be in supplying aid in the form of sustainable development, interim aid that helps recipients to eventually manage and finance projects independently.

There is little research on ILD programs. Many descriptive and anecdotal articles have been written describing book aid and ILD programs but only three researchers have collected and analyzed data to explore their effectiveness. To explore the topics of benefits, potential negative impacts, and sustainability in international library development, I incorporated three

traditional ethnographic research methods of interviews, observation, and examination of documents. In order to better understand their lived experience, I interviewed two Western ILD program leaders. I also traveled to two African countries to observe the ILD programs in action.

This research study found that ILD programs are doing more than just supplying books. These leaders and their programs are playing a central role in international education, supporting local schools and educational efforts by providing materials and programs supporting literacy. They supply benefits previously unrecognized in the literature, benefits that meet the needs of the local communities. In many ways these libraries serve more as community centers than as traditional Western libraries. The ILD leaders are also taking measures to avoid some of the biggest mistakes of past book donation and to incorporate local persons into advisory boards and as members of library staff. But regardless, Western influence is evident in the library collections and adherence to policies and procedures created by Western ILD leaders.

The viability of sustainability in international library development is unpredictable. Before ILD libraries can function independent of foreign aid, many serious issues need to be addressed such as the financial stability of partner organizations, a lack of capacity in related managerial skills, and a shortage of materials available to create relevant book collections.

**KEY WORDS:** Educational Leadership; International Library Development; Foreign Aid; Sustainability; Libraries; Africa; International Education.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate everything I accomplish to my family. Thank you to John, Ian, and Emma, plus my parents, siblings, and Mary, for their patience and for their love.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

In 2008 I attended the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) conference in Quebec City, Canada. At one of the programs, I had the good fortune to meet Karen (not her real name), the leader of an international library development (ILD) program referred to in this study by the pseudonym West African Library Program (WALP). As an international library development program, WALP raises funds, builds libraries, and furnishes reading materials to the public. I was immediately intrigued due to my belief that a librarian's primary role is to provide access to books and information. My encounter with Karen was followed in 2009 by reading *The Life You Can Save* by Peter Singer (2009), a noted ethicist. In his book, Singer writes that as financially privileged Westerners, it is our duty to help those in economically challenged countries by offering aid. At the time I was finishing my coursework in my doctoral studies and decided to make international library development programs the focus of my dissertation.

In May of 2010, I traveled to West Africa to visit WALP. This visit was followed by a trip in November to an ILD program in Southern Africa—referred to as the Southern Africa Library Program (SALP). During my trips, I also visited several public and university libraries. It was at these public and university libraries that I witnessed the reality of book shortages in developing countries and the misguided attempts of Westerners to ameliorate the lack of reading materials.

What I observed in the public and university libraries were old, dirty, and worn copies of books filling the bookshelves. The poor condition of the books can be attributed to two

factors: these libraries retain books much longer than Western libraries due to lack of funding for new books, and the majority of their collections are made up of discarded, worn, and out-of-date books donated by individuals and non-profit agencies. Staff members told me stories of donors shipping crates of books with the stipulation that all of the books be added to the collection, regardless of relevancy or quality, and of publishers sending numerous copies of the same publication. When I browsed the shelves, I often saw ten or more copies of the same book. At the three children's public libraries that I visited, I saw multiple copies of textbooks donated by publishers, sometimes 20 copies of the same text. In a country where the supply of textbooks in public classrooms is so insufficient, these donations might appear to be beneficial except that the curriculum had little relevance for the local classroom, and, by appearance, they were seldom (if ever) used.

This shortage of quality and relevant reading materials is paralleled in economically challenged countries throughout the world. The supply of books in these countries is much smaller than in Western countries, due to a variety of reasons discussed later in this paper. Many scholars and researchers believe that this shortage of reading materials undermines the development of a literate environment—an atmosphere conducive to developing reading and writing skills. To alleviate this problem, Westerners have developed international library development programs such as WALP and SALP to provide books, build libraries, and train library staff.

While I am enthusiastic about the idea of international library development, I also recognize the damaging effects of colonialism throughout Africa, still evident and felt on a daily basis. Is it possible that international library development could prove harmful in the future? Is building libraries a vestige of colonialism—the idea that white culture can make

the citizens of African countries into Western-style readers. One could even question if libraries are indeed important, relevant, needed, or desired. With a deep history of colonization throughout Africa that has reaped more terrors than any environmental disaster ever could, American and European efforts to help these communities must be measured with a strong eye of caution. That said, literacy—in and of itself—is a critical stepping stone toward economic stability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no matter where in the world. And as illustrated later in this section, reading materials are mandatory for persons wanting to develop, maintain, and improve their literacy skills. At this time, the majority of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa lack the funds to support an adequate supply of interesting and relevant reading materials (Issak, 2000). Book donation and ILD programs are ready to supply aid in the form of books, libraries, and capacity building for local communities.

In this sense, international library development is a form of foreign aid. Much has been written in the last decade about the failure of foreign aid to improve Africa's economic and social situation. Critics claim that foreign aid leads to dependency, that NGOs are often self-serving and ignore the needs of the intended beneficiaries, instead catering to their own needs and to the interests of the donors (Afwerki, 1997; Hubbard and Duggan, 2009=-). An alternative is sustainable development aid: donors supply starter funds and training to support projects in developing countries with the understanding that aid will eventually be withdrawn, leaving the responsibility of financing and managing the project to the recipient country. Many questions come to mind in relation to ILD and sustainability. Are libraries necessary, or even desired, if people do not have enough to eat or do not have clean water or jobs? Is library development a luxury that simply cannot be afforded in the current economic state? What form of library *would* be most relevant to local communities in these countries?

How do people in Africa perceive libraries and to what extent are libraries supported by residents and politicians? If libraries cannot prove sustainable at this time, what needs to change in Africa before ILD programs can become independent of foreign aid?

Through my visits to WALP and SALP and interviews with the leaders, I developed a better understanding of ILD programs and various tensions that could have negative impacts on sustainability. I learned that some library staff members were not receiving their salaries from the local communities as per prior agreement, due to various financial issues. I also heard stories of corruption such as con artists collecting money in governmental offices posing as employees and administrators mishandling funds. Stories abound of lost paperwork and red tape. On a day-to-day basis, most libraries face electrical outages, limited water supply, and inescapable dirt. Even when construction projects were underway, they underwent delays due to community financial shortages and prolonged negotiations involving choice of building sites. Sustainability—an ideal situation in theory—could prove unattainable at this point in time.

### **Libraries in Africa and Literacy**

This introductory chapter is written to supply background and context for international library development (ILD) programs. I begin by briefly discussing the current state of libraries in Africa. Due to severe economic limitations, African governments consider libraries to be a lower priority than other concerns such as education, health, and securing necessities such as food, water, and electricity. Public libraries are stocked with irrelevant and poor quality books, mostly acquired as donations. Moreover, the majority of the population do not use the library and are unfamiliar with the benefits that come with reading for pleasure and library use.

**Libraries in Africa.** Authors and researchers commonly cite similar reasons for the neglected state of libraries in Africa. Issak (2000) summarizes the current state of public libraries in Africa, “as being very weak, with numerous problems regarding financial constraints, lack of human resources, outdated materials and poor use” (p. 3). In summarizing a literature review on the topic, Issak (2000) states that the condition of public libraries in Africa is deteriorating due to economic crisis and a lack of trained individuals qualified to run libraries. Due to an absence of government support, further library development is difficult, if not impossible. A lack of a defined reading culture in Africa persists due to the high price of materials, a weak local publishing industry, and lack of relevant and interesting materials, acquired mostly as donations from abroad.

Other researchers cite cultural reasons for the low usage of public libraries, reminding us that libraries are a Western concept and, in a strictly Western format, do not fit the needs of local communities. Matare (1998) refers to the cultural history of libraries in Africa, originally created for the colonial powers to entertain the Europeans and acculturate the Africans. Traditionally African culture was rooted in the oral tradition, and the concept of learning by reading was foreign (Etebu, 2009; Banjo, 1998; Nyana, 2009). The majority of people are unfamiliar with the benefits of reading for pleasure and remain unconvinced that using a library can make a difference in their lives (Bukenya, 2009). The mere existence of most public libraries in Africa is due to the high number of school children that use the libraries to study, although few actually use the library materials (Issak, 2000; Mchombu, 1998; Pfoefffer, 2003). As much as ninety-five percent of patrons in African public libraries are students, while adult sections remain almost non-existent (Mchombu, 1998).

Supplying reading materials to support literacy is a primary goal for book aid programs.

As discussed later in this chapter, strong and diverse reading materials need to be available in order to create readers. Not only does the ability to read and write open up numerous opportunities, ideas, and educational outlets for individuals, reading also increases curiosity, knowledge, and improves writing and communication skills. One possible method of increasing access to reading materials is by increasing the number of available books. There are numerous book aid programs that supply money and books to developing countries. A subset of book aid programs, programs referred to herein as international library development (ILD) programs, also build library structures and train staff as well as provide books.

Exactly how literacy benefits a person is a highly debated issue with multiple definitions of what it means to be literate. To help understand the connection between literacy and ILD programs, I discuss societal factors that diminish literacy efforts, suggested steps to increase literacy rates, the importance of reading in developing reading and writing skills, and the concept of book aid: non-profit programs which strive to provide reading materials in support of creating literate environments.

**Definition and benefits of literacy.** The definition of literacy and the benefits of being literate are highly debated. UNESCO defines a literate person as someone “who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his/her everyday life” (Lind, 2008, p. 42). In her book *Literacy for All, Making a Difference*, Agnes Lind (2008) makes the point that there are various levels of literacy in different contexts (a signature, the ability to fill out an application, comprehension of a legal document) and becoming literate is a continuous process. She writes that basic literacy programs recognize two phases of literacy: the first phase is learning to read and write and the second phase is reading to learn. Vincent

Greaney (1996) reinforces the belief that literacy comes in two stages: (1) attaining the skills and (2) practicing and improving the ability to read through daily exposure to various materials. He makes the additional point that access to reading materials is necessary for the second stage of development to occur.

Many claims have been made in the name of literacy: literacy makes us more civilized, it leads to logical, analytical, critical, and rational thinking, it develops skeptical and questioning attitudes, gives us modern and democratic governments including separation of Church and state, and leads to greater social equity, better economic development, wealth, and productivity (Gee, 1996). Scholars disagree about the reality of the above rewards and some refer to the above bounty of benefits as “the literacy myth” (Gee, 1996, p.26). This re-evaluation of the benefits of literacy is referred to as “new literacy studies” (Gee, 1996, p. 39). Proponents of new literacy realize that the ability to read and write is not an adequate definition of literacy but must include the ability to understand and evaluate what is read. Paulo Freire (1987) believes literacy empowers people when it renders them active questioners of society. One must know how to interpret the world around them including their government, society, and their own role in forming their reality. This reciprocity between reality and one’s interpretation of reality is emphasized in Freire’s frequently quoted passage, “Reading the world always precedes reading the word and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (Freire, 1987, p. 35). The ability to read in itself is not enough. One needs to be able to interpret, evaluate, and react to what has been read.

An alternative view of the benefits of literacy comes from the *Monitoring Report: Literacy for Life: Summary* by UNESCO (2006). UNESCO suggests that literacy brings human benefits tied to self-esteem, confidence, and personal empowerment. Literacy may

also bring cultural benefits such as the ability to question cultural norms or to increase the use of indigenous language for communication. The ability to read and write may also bring social benefits for women including better knowledge of health and family planning, increased self-esteem, and increased power in the home (UNESCO, 2006). An undisputed benefit of literacy, according to Lind (2008) and others (Krolak, 2005; IFLA, 2007), is that making a parent literate contributes to his or her own education as well as the education of the child. The most important factor in a child's literacy is the literacy level of the parent.

**Causes of illiteracy.** Why does illiteracy still exist in such high numbers in certain areas of the world? Poverty, inadequate infrastructure, poor quality of education, lack of government support, and lack of reading materials are among the possible causes of illiteracy (Lind, 2008). Governments play a vital role in the success or failure of efforts to increase literacy. A lack of political support results in insufficient financial and ideological support for literacy efforts. As a volunteer, I witnessed municipalities fail to follow through with initial agreements to pay the salaries of library staff, citing lack of funds as the reason. Economic difficulties coupled with corruption, is responsible for poor quality and limited primary education resulting in illiteracy (Lind, 2008).

To acquire and maintain literacy skills, it is necessary to have access to the written word. Countries with low literacy rates have poor literate environments. Many countries lack the infrastructure to print and publish books, magazines, newspapers; to provide buildings and resource centers; or to provide electricity and staffing (UNESCO, 1993; Lind, 2008). UNESCO's publication *Guidelines for Public Libraries Promoting Literacy* (1993) includes several additional barriers to literacy. School-age children often cannot attend school due to limited educational facilities and resources or need to work. There is a high drop-out rate

among students and adult education attendees. The newly literate sometimes relapse into illiteracy due to irrelevant curricula, lack of trainers, or lack of reading materials. As cited before, there is a scarcity of affordable reading materials coupled with lack of adequate service and inadequate funding to train personnel and develop relevant curricula. Lastly, communities often witness an unfortunate duplication of efforts due to lack of coordination between governmental and non-governmental bodies, as well as general lack of management resource skills. With all of these documented issues, the problems of establishing a stable and useful library are notable.

Though this list of roadblocks to literacy may seem insurmountable, many ILD programs recognize the obstacles and continue working towards minimizing these problems. They are creating a service (libraries) which often did not exist in the community previous to their arrival. They are providing training for staff and teachers to work as librarians. For example, one of the library development programs central to this study, WALP, gives secondary school scholarships to children that have visited their libraries on a regular, long-term basis. WALP also provides adult literacy classes at the majority of its libraries, so even if adults failed to acquire reading skills as a child they still have opportunities to become literate.

**Importance of reading in literacy efforts.** Many research articles stress the importance of reading in developing literacy skills (IFLA, 2007; Nhlengetfwa, 2005; Krolak, 2005; Krashen, 2004). One can think of reading as practice for building literacy skills, just as practicing a sport improves game performance. Linguist and literacy researcher Steven Krashen believes that “reading is the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammatical competence and the only way we become good spellers” (2004, p.37). He writes that direct instruction is not effective in

improving reading, writing, and other language skills. We acquire language in only one way, by understanding messages or obtaining comprehensible input in a low-anxiety situation, such as free voluntary reading (FVR). Seeing an unknown word in context in FVR adds to comprehension of the word. These words tend to stay “acquired” as opposed to memorized vocabulary, which is “learned” (and quickly forgotten). Those who read more, tend to read, write, and spell better. FVR consistently ranks as effective or more effective than standard teaching methods (Krashen, 2004). If FVR is the answer, we have to give readers access to reading materials, whether in classrooms, schools, or public libraries.

### **Book Donation and International Library Development (ILD) Programs.**

As described previously, reading materials are necessary for the successful development of literacy skills. Many parts of the world experience book famines—a scarcity of reading materials due to a lack of local publishing, a shortage of government support, and/or other necessities such as food, medical attention, and shelter, receiving higher priority than books (UNESCO, 1993). Book aid and international library development (ILD) programs strive to supply books and other reading materials to developing countries.

A general summary of descriptive articles written about a various book donation and ILD programs, large and small, helps to further illustrate the concept of ILD programs. I believe this material to be very important as it gives the reader some contextual information about the history of book aid, the wide variety of programs, and concerns about the effectiveness and cultural sensitivity of international library development. ILD programs described include CODE, BAI, The Riecken Foundation, Room to Read, and several smaller scale projects.

**CODE and BAI.** Book donation and ILD programs vary in size, purpose, method, and effectiveness. Because small programs begin and end frequently, it is challenging to list

current book donation and ILD programs and keep records up-to-date. Instead, a more detailed description of selected programs can illustrate the wide variety of scope, experience, staffing levels, and success of these efforts. Two of the oldest and best established programs (both began in the 1950s) are the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) and Book Aid International (BAI). Both of these programs can be viewed as pioneers in book donation. Both organizations began by sending large crates of unwanted or non-relevant used books to Sub-Saharan Africa only to later appreciate the importance of sending only good-quality, new or like-new, interesting, and relevant books. In fact many of the best practices and new initiatives for international library development originated from these two programs in response to former, potentially negative, practices (CODE, 2010; Book Aid International, 2009). In chapter two of my dissertation, the literature review, I recount some of the graver errors of book donation.

**Room to Read and Riecken Foundation.** Two other notable programs are Room to Read and The Riecken Foundation, both representative of large ILD programs created by ex-corporate executives and entrepreneurs. Reflecting their professional backgrounds, the leaders of these two programs have a tendency to portray themselves as the Andrew Carnegies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, bringing stable government to economically challenged countries by providing information and increasing literacy. Both programs have a large number of paid staff who work to create a large number of libraries. Room to Read is self-proclaimed as the largest and most successful international library development program in existence. In their 2008 annual report they proclaim to create a new library every four hours and distribute a new book every three minutes (Room to Read, 2009a). Their goal is to develop literacy skills among children with special emphasis on gender equality and

community participation (Room to Read, 2009b).

John Wood, founder of Room to Read, is a former executive for Microsoft. His book, *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World* (2006), describes his transformation from corporate executive to founder of a non-profit international library development organization. On one of his vacations to Nepal, Wood visited a school in the mountains with 450 students enrolled and no children's books. The few books the school did own were cast-offs from the local backpackers and were kept under lock and key in the room labeled "school library." Wood made a promise to the teachers of the school that he would return the following year with 300-400 books for the library. One year later John Wood returned to Nepal with a load of over 2,000 books for the school and a desire to do even more.

Ten years after his first visit to Nepal he had expanded the project into five other countries where he created over 2,300 libraries (housing a million books), built over 200 schools, furnished 50 computer and language labs, and awarded over 1,700 scholarship to girls, enabling them to stay in school. Throughout the book he describes his success in raising money from his many professional connections in the technology industry, his work ethic, and his success as measured in the quantity of libraries and schools created. In a short article Wood (2004) wrote for *American Libraries*, he describes the typical Room to Read library as cheap and cheerful. The libraries can be housed within schools, orphanages, and non-formal learning centers. The typical library consists of 300-500 books. A local employee of Room to Read monitors the library and if they meet standards, they receive more books. Each library has a teacher or other designated individual to serve as librarian. These individuals receive three days of training from a Room to Read trainer.

The Riecken Foundation, another large library development program developed by a

corporate executive, was founded in 2000 by business and social entrepreneur Allen Andersson. Andersson, who was a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras in the 1960s, earned his millions by designing software and investing in various pharmaceutical enterprises. He began to invest 99 percent of his family income into programs in Central America, including the Riecken Foundation (Bolder Giving, 2006). The goal of the Riecken foundation is to offer access to information (print and electronic) to rural communities in Honduras and Guatemala through community lending libraries (Riecken Foundation, 2010a). The communities elect a committee to oversee the establishment and ongoing operation of a library (supplying a parcel of land, obtaining municipal government support to pay salaries for two full-time librarians, and all public utilities). Riecken in turn pays for all construction costs of the library building, supplies an initial collection of 1,000 books, four computers with internet connections, and some audiovisual equipment. In time, the local community takes on the majority of responsibility for operations but remain part of the national Riecken Network, receiving continued support (Riecken Foundation, 2008).

**Medium and small scale book donation and ILD programs.** Not all international library development programs are run on a large, corporate scale. The two ILD programs investigated in this dissertation, WALP and SALP, are mid-sized projects. These programs are run by individuals living in Western countries, leaders who are heavily involved in the majority of new initiatives and solve most of the administrative problems encountered. Salaries are paid to library staff native to the country but the Western staff is composed entirely of volunteers. Both programs operate a small number of libraries, ranging from two to ten. I discuss these programs and my reasons for selecting them as the focus of my research in chapters three, four, and five of this dissertation.

In addition to large and medium size programs, hundreds of small scale programs exist. These programs are run by an individual person or organization, such as a church, school, or civic organization. One example of such a program is the partnership between Janet Lee, U.S. librarian and former Peace Corps volunteer, and Yohannes Gebregeorgis, Ethiopian librarian and founder of Ethiopia Reads, a non-profit organization providing books and libraries to the children of Ethiopia. In an international collaborative project, they raised money to build a library in Mekelle, in the Tigray province. Lee offered training for the local staff, organized local Peace Corps volunteers to help, and raised money in the United States. Gebregeorgis did much of the liaison work with the local community and used his influence from his past work with Ethiopia Reads (Lee, 2009). For his efforts, Lee was then successful in her nomination of Gebregeorgis as a “CNN Hero,” raising awareness of the project among the American public, resulting in additional publicity and financial donations (Ethiopia Reads, 2009).

In addition to Allen Andersson (The Riecken Foundation) and Janet Lee (Ethiopia Reads), a seemingly large number of Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs) are responsible for international library development programs. Although many PCVs are not originally assigned the task of creating libraries, they see the need for libraries in their communities and work to collect books, train local staff to serve as librarians after their departure, and cultivate local community support to sustain the continuance of the libraries (Cassell, 1999). In 1985, PCV Holly Gordon set up a library in a secondary school in Swaziland and trained one of the teachers, Joel Masko, to be the ongoing librarian after her departure. The library was still operating with Joel as librarian in 2002 (Hampton, 2002). A former PCV, Laura Wendell, set up the North Carolina based program, World Library Partnership, a non-profit

agency that strove to create libraries in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Honduras. Between 1996 and 2003, WLP furnished 38 rural libraries in Zimbabwe and South Africa books and materials. They also enlisted American librarians to serve as trainers for the libraries (Whelan, 2004).

Westerners are creating book aid and ILD programs, large and small, to provide reading materials to developing countries. Increased literacy is the most commonly stated objective but are there additional unrecognized benefits? Or, does international library development have unintentional negative effects? If yes, how might these negative outcomes be avoided?

### **Problem Statement and Research Questions**

In this interpretive study, I interviewed the leaders of two international library development (ILD) programs in Sub-Saharan Africa (WALP and SALP) to better understand the benefits and consequences of supplying foreign aid in the form of libraries and books, as well as matters relating to sustainability. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have sufficient resources and infrastructure to purchase books or to build libraries in the majority of cities and villages. One measure is for book donation and ILD programs to supply books, build libraries, and train library staff. However, with Western intervention, there is the risk of handicapping the country's ability, willingness, and self-determination in creating and sustaining culturally relevant libraries. Some believe the answer is in sustainable aid, i.e., interim aid that helps recipients to eventually manage and finance projects independently.

Through interviews with the two leaders, site visits, and analysis of documentation, I present both the benefits and potential negative consequences of book aid. I also address issues relating to the viability of creating sustainable international library programs in Africa. Do the leaders of WALP and SALP believe that total sustainability (independence from

foreign aid) is an achievable goal for their ILD programs?

I conducted a qualitative study to address the following two research questions:

1. How do the leaders of international library development programs balance the benefits of ILD programs with the possible negative effects of supplying foreign aid?
2. Is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development?

### **Methodology**

To better understand the phenomenon of international library development, I conducted in-depth phenomenologically-based interviews with the leaders of two ILD programs, WALP and SALP. The leaders I interviewed are both Westerners with programs based in Sub-Saharan Africa. I chose to keep the identity of the leaders, their organizations, and the partner countries anonymous to better ensure openness in leaders' responses and assist my own analysis and interpretation. As a reminder to the reader, I refer to the international library program in West Africa as the West Africa Library Program (WALP) and the program in Southern Africa as the Southern Africa Library Program (SALP).

I chose to interview the leaders of these programs for various reasons. The audience of this research will mainly be other Westerners interested in international library development. By interviewing Westerners, I present issues from a Western perspective, informing the uninitiated to relevant concerns such as African bureaucracy, vastly different infrastructure, and cultural considerations. Specifically I selected these two leaders since they are directly involved with both minor and major decision-making in their operations, they have been successful in establishing mid-size international library development programs, and they both were willing to spend a significant amount of time delving into these issues. I realize that my choice of interviewing Westerners has implications for my research as this decision does not

give voice to the African staff of the libraries, the community members utilizing the libraries, or the African municipalities partnering in the establishment and maintenance of these libraries. These concerns are detailed in the methodology chapter of this dissertation.

In addition to the interviews, I used the two additional ethnographic research methods of observation and analysis of documentation. I visited both of the leaders' programs prior to the interviews. During the month of May, 2010, I worked as a volunteer with WALP and in November, 2010, I traveled to Southern Africa to visit SALP. Visiting the libraries was beneficial for my dissertation research in many aspects. It was important that I experience non-Western culture and libraries in order to engage in a meaningful discussion with the library leaders. I also became aware of situations I had not otherwise considered, such as the interaction between library administration and bureaucratic offices, water and electricity outages, and the interactions between Westerners and Africans. In order to better understand the balance between positive and negative effects of foreign aid, I browsed the library collections for relevancy and cultural sensitivity, observed the use patterns by various demographics, and became aware of innovations begun by resident staff and community members.

I also examined documents gathered from the web sites, program leaders, and the libraries themselves. In the documentation I looked for information to give further insight into the interview data and my observations. Specifically, I looked for descriptions of the programs, stated benefits of literacy, sustainability goals, and innovations in regard to cultural sensitivity, African leadership, and bilateral cooperation. Reading relevant documents also offered opportunities to triangulate my interview data and observations.

### **Significance of Issue**

A primary goal in my research was to better understand the benefits and potential negative outcomes that may result from offering aid and what these leaders are doing to prevent such outcomes. In reading the literature on the evolution of book donation programs, it is clear that one perceived benefit of book aid is the provision of reading materials. This research goes further, looking to recognize additional benefits that result from establishing community libraries in developing countries. In regard to negative effects, when book donation programs were first developed it was common practice to deliver shipping crates full of discarded library books, regardless of language, relevancy, or interest to the reader. These practices may have actually done more harm than good. In addition, book aid and ILD programs may create negative consequences that arise from development aid. No other researcher has examined international library development in the framework of development aid, a form of aid that is criticized by many to be ineffective and at times, damaging to its recipients. I recognize these potential negative effects that may result from supplying foreign development aid and how successfully the leaders minimize negative outcomes.

I also wanted to know the leaders' opinions about sustainability. This is a topic as yet unexplored in the book aid and ILD literature. If the definition of sustainability includes the condition that one day these libraries will operate without international funding/support, do the leaders believe this can or even should happen? Have they considered releasing all responsibility for the libraries to the communities at some point? What do they believe needs to happen in African countries before library programs such as these can become truly independent of foreign aid? Can these libraries exist in Africa today without international support? To what extent is self-reliance their goal for these two international library

programs? These questions informed the primary direction of our interviews.

### **Definition of Terms**

Book donation programs collect and deliver books to economically challenged countries. Some organizations, such as the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) and Room to Read, began as book donation programs but have evolved into institutions with a much broader purpose. Now, in addition to donating books they also build libraries, train teachers and librarians, and work with local publishers and authors to produce books reflective of regional cultures and languages. These programs, along with the two programs investigated in this dissertation, I define as **international library development (ILD)** programs. When I speak of the generalized efforts to supply books to developing countries, combining book donation and ILD programs, I use the term **book aid**.

**Sustainability** is currently a very popular term used in various environmental and economic contexts. Sustainability, as based on the word “sustainable,” is defined as “capable of being maintained at a certain rate or level” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989).

**Environmental sustainability** relates to the impact of human activity on natural resources.

**Economic sustainability** refers to development which can be sustained for the long-term. In the context of offering aid in order to ensure the independence of others, the term sustainability in this paper parallels the usage on the Heifer International web site where sustainability is defined as the goal of the “project partner achieving self-reliance” (2009).

Sustainability is a concept rarely found in conjunction with international library development programs in my literature review but it is a concept that I address with the library development leaders. **Sustainable library development programs** strive to work with communities to jump start the acquisition of books and the creation of libraries with the

ultimate goal of handing over operations to the local community.

**Developing countries** is the term I use to refer to the poorest countries of the world, those countries most needing aid. Alternative terms include economically-challenged countries, third-world countries, and generically the Southern Hemisphere. The term third-world has fallen out of usage since it implies that countries can be ranked. I do recognize that the term “developing” also has a negative connotation, assuming that some countries are yet undeveloped (a concept difficult to comprehend, particularly for those cultures that have existed thousands of years), but it is a term used frequently in the literature.

**Africa** is a term I use when speaking of African countries south of the Sahara. The continent of Africa contains over fifty independent countries, reflecting a wide variety of cultures, governments, and societies. However the generic “Africa” is often used in the literature cited in my dissertation, and I believe is used by most for the sake of brevity and popular usage. Whenever possible, I refrain from using the generic term “African” to refer to individuals, and instead employ terms such as “national,” “resident,” or “community member.” This usage reflects the terms in use by many researchers in the fields of history and education.

The term **Western** refers to countries in North America, Western and Central Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand. These are among some of the wealthiest countries in the world and share religious, historical, and cultural backgrounds. The term “Westerner” refers to a person that self-identifies as being a resident of a Western country.

### **Structure of Dissertation**

The remainder of my dissertation is structured as follows: in Chapter Two, I explore the literature of matters pertaining to my research questions: book donation and international

library development programs, best practices for ILD programs, foreign aid, and sustainability. Chapter Three covers the research methods and procedures used in the study along with my epistemological perspective. Chapters Four and Five present descriptive vignettes of the two leaders and their ILD programs, organized within the themes that arose during my analysis. In Chapter Six, I present an analysis of findings, making linkages back to the literature. Chapter Six also presents the limitations and implications of my study, and suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Examining the current state of libraries in Africa, most residents and visitors find them to be rarely used, of poor quality, and considered culturally irrelevant by the majority of population. However, were they stronger, community libraries could help build literacy, a primary rationale for international library development. Chapter two focuses on literature specific to the research questions: international library development and best practices, foreign aid, and sustainability.

After performing a literature review, I found the research base for book donation, and ILD programs specifically, to be thin. The vast majority of sources are informational pieces about the programs themselves, drawn from newspapers, magazines, professional newsletters, and web sites. Many articles propose best practices for book donation and ILD programs, but are again, mostly anecdotal and opinion pieces. I found only three studies that measure the effectiveness of book donation and ILD programs: one scholarly research paper, one unpublished thesis, and one sponsored study. This research is of poor quality with the exception of the sponsored independent study by the Riecken Foundation. This lack of written investigative or analytical studies reveals an area ripe for further attention. That so many articles have been written to describe existing programs and to suggest best practices makes it clear people are interested in knowing more—yet few have collected and interpreted data in order to deepen current understanding or assess the effectiveness of current efforts.

I also discuss suggested best practices for international library development. Most of these guidelines were developed to counteract potential negative consequences that have occurred in the past when Westerners donated books or created libraries in developing countries. The guidelines work to ensure cultural relativity, bilateral communication, and quality materials

and services.

Despite the dearth of research studies on ILD programs, many noted researchers have written on a related but much broader topic: foreign aid effectiveness. These readings set a historical and sociological context for library development programs, a specific form of foreign aid. Many critics of foreign aid believe that it eventually leads to a recipient country losing ownership and self-determination in respect to development priorities and projects, becoming dependent on donor countries.

An alternative form of aid is sustainable development aid, interim aid that is withdrawn once the recipient country has developed the infrastructure and capacity to manage the development program independently. However many questions remain as to whether Africa is capable to sustain libraries at this time, independent of ILD program support. Does Africa have the infrastructure and tax base sufficient to support libraries? Are libraries culturally significant to the majority of the population and who is to say that Africans want and/or need libraries?

### **Research on Book Donation and ILD Programs**

A literature review for research on the subject of international book aid results in few texts: one unpublished thesis, one peer-reviewed article, and one commissioned independent study. In the literature review of her thesis, Hite (2006) states that she also failed to find any substantial research on the topic, although she did find many opinion pieces, testimonials, and anecdotal examples. In addition to my literature search, I emailed an inquiry to members of the Executive Board of the International Relations Roundtable of the American Library Association asking for leads on research about book donation and ILD programs. The few replies I received were all citations for anecdotal or opinion pieces.

Hite's thesis looks at the realities of book donation programs through the lenses of her own experience as a librarian in Sub-Saharan Africa and the writings of African librarians. Hite concludes that "book donations are not useful and may in fact do damage in libraries and literacy in developing countries" (Hite, 2006, iv). Her view of book donation programs seemed quite out-of-date, as she made no mention of any of the programs discussed in this dissertation. The one exception was a brief mention of BAI as one of the 'alternatives' to traditional book donation programs. This is a very confusing statement as BAI is one of the oldest and most established of all book donation programs. However, since she never identifies any of the "traditional book donation programs" by name, it is impossible to put her argument into context. The literature review of the thesis relies primarily on dated anecdotal writings from the 1980s and early 1990s and neglects to do any investigation into the new breed of book donation and ILD programs developed in the past 10-15 years.

In one of the few papers evaluating book donation services, researcher Mohammad (2008) asks whether Book Aid International (BAI) is effective in improving libraries in the state of Kano (Nigeria). Mohammed questions both the level of satisfaction of the receiving libraries and the number and relevancy of books and other types of material the libraries are receiving. Sixteen libraries in Kano, Nigeria were surveyed. He discovered that the program was viable and libraries wanted to see it continue. The libraries were benefiting.

His results are not surprising. In fact BAI is the only major source of foreign and expensive library resources. Libraries, on average, are receiving 100-300 books from the program per year. The survey results contradict Hite's hypothesis that book donation programs are not effective. His research confirms the fact that without these donations the libraries in Kano would have very little to offer their patrons. Alternatively, the study fails to

address the broader issues. How is local publishing and research affected by the influx of foreign donated published material? Does receipt of donations affect the commitment of administrators to include the purchase of books into their budget allocations? These questions are important to investigate because they ask us to recognize the effect of programs on local communities—a first step in helping Nigeria to become independent of foreign book donation and ILD programs and to create their own sustainable libraries.

In 2008, the Riecken Foundation commissioned a comprehensive independent study about the effectiveness of their program. The report states that 11,000 unique users enter the 61 Riecken libraries every week. Nine out of ten users are students, with the age group of 5-14 years old composing 56 percent of users. Among the students, 38 percent visit the library daily. For most of these children, the library is their only source for internet access (84 percent) and most come from homes with fewer than six books. Seventy-five percent of the students come from households in which neither parent finished sixth grade (Riecken, 2008).

Perhaps the most impressive statistic in this study is that 40 percent of the young people in these rural communities use the library. They use the library to complete schoolwork (90 percent), to read (62 percent), or to use the computers (50 percent). The presence of the library has a strong impact on local education. In interviews with local teachers, they say the libraries have a positive effect on the curriculum, particularly at the secondary level. Perhaps this article is most impressive in driving home the benefits of library development programs. Again, the study does not mention potential negative effects of receiving aid and measures taken to avoid such possibilities. Lastly, it may not be able to extrapolate these findings from Central America to the libraries of rural or urban Africa.

These three research papers make up the total of research found to date on the topic of

international library development programs. In light of this lack of research, any further studies such as this one could make a strong contribution to the understanding of international library development programs, their leaders, library sustainability, and the actions taken to ensure that local culture and autonomy receive the respect they deserve. This research is needed to inform other volunteers interested in pursuing this type of work, to further clarify standard best practices for library development programs, and to give illustrative examples of these best practices in action.

### **Negative Effects of Book Aid and Current Best Practices**

International library development programs have learned from the past misguided efforts in supplying book aid to Africa. These examples proved to be invaluable as learning experiences and resulted in the creation of suggested best practices for book donation and ILD programs. I have collected suggested best practices from a variety of publications written by international agencies, librarians, scholars, and book donation and ILD programs and summarize them later in this chapter. In reviewing these suggested best practices, it is clear that they run parallel to the concerns for the broader topic of foreign aid, where donor countries supply aid in various forms to developing countries.

**Past mistakes.** Many potential negative effects of book aid center around supplying the wrong books. Book donation programs need to avoid “dumping,” the practice of sending inappropriate books to economically challenged countries (Greaney, 1996). One famous example of dumping is a 1960s donation from England of over 7,000 old and discarded books sent to Ibadan University in Nigeria. After the Nigerians examined the materials, it turned out that over ninety percent of the donated books were unusable. Cited examples included 25 copies of a pamphlet entitled, *How to Win the War*, written in Polish to the

Polish people during World War II; two volumes of a five volume set of the topography of Wales; and books about British ecclesiastical issues (Harris, 1965). Other stories include a library having 20 copies of Vanna White's biography and an old set of encyclopedias with every book a copy of volume A (Hite, 2006). In addition to old and irrelevant books, some countries send shipments of propaganda literature. Publishers send large amounts of unsellable books in order to gain publicity, often these books have failed to sell, are irrelevant, and of little interest to the African public (Otikey, 1993). The content of these books are often culturally inappropriate or the books are in English or French but not in local languages (IFLA Reading Section, 2003; Mchombu, 1998).

**Suggested best practices.** Many suggested best practices for book donation and ILD programs center on maximizing the benefits and avoiding negative consequences of book aid. Cultural considerations are of utmost importance. Donors must work with the country to understand the cultural, linguistic, and educational conditions (Greaney, 1996). Purchase of books in native languages and that reflect local cultures and knowledge systems is very important and should be encouraged. Book donation and ILD programs need to link materials to the learners' cultural heritage (attributes of a society as inherited from ancestors, encompassing folklore, language, art, and architecture) in order to strengthen self-confidence and self development (Nhlengetfwa, 2005). African indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and values should be the foundation for the development of African education and library systems. According to Nhlengetfwa (2005), the educator and librarian need to remember that basic literacy skills in a native language may be necessary before literacy skills in a second language may be achieved. Book donation and ILD programs need to provide reading materials in native language so readers can maintain/improve native literacy

skills. Studies show that children benefit from instruction in the mother tongue for the first 3-4 years (Nhlengetfwa, 2005). Beginning a child's education in the mother tongue proves to be an enabling experience.

Establishing selection guidelines prior to delivery of books helps to avoid frustration or misunderstanding. The ideal situation is to allow receiving libraries to pre-select materials (IFLA Reading Section, 2003; Greaney, 1996; Otike, 1993). Prior to their rebirth as Book Aid International, The Ranfurly Library Service was notorious for sending discarded and outdated books to economically challenged countries. Fortunately they realized their disservice to the recipients and changed their procedure for dissemination of materials to allow recipients to pre-select materials from a list of books available (Sturges & Neill, 1997).

Book donation and ILD programs work with the local communities and governments to build a firm foundation for their joint endeavor. Vital to the creation of a new library is that the community requests its construction rather than having it imposed upon them (Alemna, 1995). It is also important that the community contribute to the cost of library, either through designating land, labor, materials, building maintenance, or staff wages (Riecken Foundation, 2010b). This contribution displays the community's desire to acquire a library and their commitment to maintaining its operation. The community decides on the resources included in the library; materials are not imposed upon them, not even by donation (Alemna, 1995).

Book donation and ILD programs do not replace acquisitions but only provide urgent aid until a local book publishing industry develops. Critics believe that supplying foreign books actually hinders local publishing efforts, a negative side effect of book donation and ILD (Matore, 1998; Greaney, 1996). In many countries the book chain (author to publisher to vendor to individual) is weak, resulting in few books reflecting local interests, authors,

illustrators, or culture. In these countries, the majority of books are imported. Africa contains 12 percent of the world's population but produces only 2 percent of its books (Krolak, 2005). Krolak reports that sub-Saharan Africa imports an estimated 70 percent of its books. Mchombu (1998) cites that 97 percent of the materials found in libraries are imported, mostly as donations.

Additional reading outside of the literature on book donation and ILD programs was necessary to gain a better understanding of the realities of local publishing in Africa. Exploration of the literature surrounding the African publication industry unveils the reality of a lack of culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate children's books. In Africa, very few books are published for pleasure reading, in fact ninety-five percent of books published in Africa are education books (Wafawarowa, 2006). African publishing focuses on supplying educational materials to its main client, the government. Almost all of these materials published are textbooks with very few supplementary materials such as readers (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011). Due to lack of disposable income for the majority of people, publishers have found publishing non-education books to produce very low profits (Odaga, 1998; Wafawarowa, 2006). In addition, many African publishers lack the editorial and production skills necessary to produce quality children's literature (Wafawarowa, 2006). Distribution of books is expensive due to difficulties in shipping them across long expanses of undeveloped roadways and across borders (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011; Odaga, 1998; Wafawarowa, 2006).

It is recognized that reading books in her first language increases a child's ability to become literate (Khorana, 2006). First language children's books also display respect for the child's culture and heritage, instilling self-esteem in the children (Khorana, 2006). Books in local languages allow "children to use their knowledge of life and language to make meaning

of, rather than simply decoding, the text” (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011, p. 439). In face of these recognized benefits, why are the large majority of books in Africa still published in English? Reasons for the continuing predominance of English publications in African include: English has become integral in the educational, publishing, and governmental infrastructure; the English language allows the international community and the African nation (with its linguistic diversity) to share ideas; and publishing in English makes it economically viable for the publishers since there is a lack of sufficient readers in any one language (Khorana, 1998). The lack of a unifying language for many African countries is a major obstacle to publishing books in local languages. As an example, there are more than 41 indigenous languages in Kenya but the publishers cannot meet the needs of all these children and expect to see sufficient financial return (Odaga, 1998). After a deeper investigation of the literature, it becomes clear that many of the criticisms of book donation and ILD programs, such as supplying culturally and linguistically inappropriate materials, are complex issues with numerous extenuating considerations.

The vast majority of libraries in Africa are based on a Western model. Matare (1998) reminds us that the cultural role of the library in African society is much different than in the U.S. Historically African libraries were created to fit the needs of the colonialists. Most African countries are committed to economic development and changing the lives of people while at the same time preserving the culture of the people. A balance between the advantages of literacy/reading and the respect for local tradition needs to be realized. According to Matare (1998), the heaviest users of the libraries may be deemed as victims of cultural imperialism.

Traditionally African culture was rooted in the oral tradition, and the concept of learning

by reading was foreign (Etebu, 2009; Banjo, 1998; Nyana, 2009). The mere existence of most public libraries in Africa is due to the high number of school children that use the libraries to finish school work (Mchomba, 1998). Most use the public libraries because of the poor condition (or non-existence) of school libraries (Mchombu, 1998; Pfoeffler, 2003).

An alternative to the traditional library is the rural library/community information center. These facilities would serve as “a multi-purpose, multi-disciplinary centre where information is presented in a variety of media to meet the needs and abilities of users, many of whom are new literates or non-literates. They also attempt to disseminate and document the indigenous knowledge system drawn from the African cultural heritage” (Banjo, 1998, pp. 229). These centers would blend the written tradition of the public library with cultural activities, club and organization meetings, and media (film, music, and other audio-visual materials). Community libraries would have information on topics relevant to rural Africans, such as healthcare, education, agriculture, and domestic life. They would have a social and political purpose and actively pursue involvement with the society. These rural libraries/community information centers would not be housed in expensive and large buildings based on Western architectural models but designed as regionally appropriate, open, simple, and inexpensive buildings (Alemna, 1995). During my interviews with the two leaders I asked for their opinions of information centers, the cultural relevancy of libraries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and the importance of the oral tradition in relation to information needs.

### **Foreign Aid**

Since the era of post-colonial Africa in the 1960s, African countries have received foreign aid. Hubbard and Duggan (2009) divide this aid into two categories: charity aid and development aid. Hubbard and Duggan believe that there will always be a need for charity

aid, donations that keep people alive by supplying food, shelter, and medical supplies.

Development aid, on the other hand, is a very different matter. This type of aid is given in the hopes that the recipient country will build a sustainable infrastructure that allows them to deliver goods and maintain social programs (health and education) on their own.

Unfortunately, this has not been the effect of most development aid during the last forty years. In fact, many experts believe that development aid has actually contributed to the worsening economic and social conditions in Africa (Theroux, 2003; Glennie, 2008; Brautigam & Knack, 2004). International library development is a form of development aid, and therefore, the question of whether international library development is one more misguided attempt by Westerners to diagnose and rectify a primarily African concern is crucial.

**Africa's infrastructure: factors to consider.** Scholars write that the poor economic state of Africa and the need for foreign aid are due to a number of factors: bureaucratic and political corruption, political instability, ethnic conflict, civil wars, economic crisis, unmanageable debt, poor quality institutions, pervasive military intervention in national politics, and excessive population growth (Mbaku, 2004; Brautigam & Knack, 2004). Hubbard & Duggan (2009) link corruption and inefficiency in Africa to the institutionalism of tribalism within government. Tribalism ensures that one favors those most likely to reciprocate favors in the future, those people tied to us by bonds of family, tribe, or geographic proximity. When one combines tribalism with the socialist governments that developed throughout Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s, the outcome is enlarged bureaucracy and corruption. People in authority look after those connected to them by giving them jobs. The more jobs they create, the more jobs they can give to others. These jobs may not pay

much so people in authority turn a blind eye when employees begin to demand 'gifts' from those seeking government clearance. As one writer explains, "In Mozambique, it takes twelve different government offices to fill out a form. That gives a job to twelve Mozambiquans behind the desks. They get their small salary plus the bribe you give them to get their stamp on your document" (Hubbard & Duggan, 2009, p. 74). Mbaku (2004) cites that the policies of post-independence politicians and civil servants were created out of self-interest and resulted in political opportunism. The new rulers received a remarkable level of significant discretion, enabling them to re-distribute power and wealth to the favor of themselves and those closest to them (Mbaku, 2004). Critics of aid believe that only after the above concerns are addressed can aid truly be sustainable.

**Negative effects of foreign aid.** Combining the above factors with the advent of foreign aid in Africa created several problems. Foreign aid most always comes with strings attached, working towards a specific purpose. In this manner, the Western world has played a major role in setting policy agendas for Africa. Basic services such as public health and education have been controlled by Western development agencies (Glennie, 2008). One example is the IMF introducing user fees related to education and health care in the 1980s and 1990s. The end result was that the poorest simply stopped sending their children to school or seeking medical care (Glennie, 2008). Glennie states that "under intense pressure from donors, the entire direction of the continent has changed since the 1980s" (p. 46). One could argue that Westerners creating libraries in Africa is setting policies for a practice outside of the African culture. This issue becomes especially relevant in concerns over the content of library collections and in policies related to the use of the library.

Foreign aid has led to aid dependency: the receipt of large amounts of aid without

evidence of self-sustaining development. In receiving outside funds, recipients become unable to sustain the infrastructure or to deliver services on their own. Glennie describes aid dependency as, “the sense of powerlessness that has been instilled in governments, the civil service, parliaments and civil society in almost all African countries to varying degrees... characterized by a lack of initiative in developing strategies and policies and in general, a reactive rather than proactive form of government” (Glennie, 2008, p. 55). Foreign aid is also associated with relaxed effort to create a tax base, reflecting a tendency of some African governments to rely on outside sources for economic support, abandoning sustainable development (Brautigam & Knack, 2004). Many academic and regional libraries in Africa have tiny or non-existent budgets with which to purchase books. Administrators have cut the funds due to the fact that non-profit agencies have volunteered to supply the books through donations, thus relinquishing all collection management decisions to Westerners.

The reality is that many countries with poor governance records still receive a high percentage of their budgets from foreign aid and that “aid needs to be delivered more selectively and in ways that reinforce a virtuous cycle of development rather than contributing to a vicious cycle of poor governance and economic decline” (Brautigam & Knack, 2004, p. 256). *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* calls for additional reforms to international aid including reforming the way aid is delivered and managed; enhancing mutual accountability for donor and partner country development policies, strategies, and performance; defining measures of standards for partner country accountability in financial and environmental matters; and for improved cost effectiveness by eliminating duplication of donor efforts and rationalization of donor behavior (OECD, 2005).

Some opponents of aid believe that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are self-

servicing and ignore the needs of the intended beneficiaries, instead catering to their own needs and to the interests of the donors (Afwerki, 1997; Hubbard and Duggan, 2008). It follows logic that if NGOs are successful in creating sustainable development projects, allowing communities to finance and administer projects independently, they would soon put themselves out of a job. Critics of NGOs in Africa would say that projects that were initially short-term relief projects have evolved into long-term agencies entrenched in the African social and economic structure (Theroux, 2003; Easterly, 2006). Extracting these critiques to ILD programs, leaders of international library development programs may not be fully prepared to build the libraries, stock them with books, and then cut the ties of management, funding, supply, and upkeep.

Travel author Paul Theroux (2003) believes that aid agencies are not agents of change but help maintain the status quo, squelching the need for innovations and upheaval. Politicians wanting to stay in power welcome foreign aid for these reasons. The consequence of maintaining the status quo is under-development and poverty. Since the leaders need under-development and poverty to obtain foreign aid, the cycle continues.

A story that illustrates the ineffectiveness of development aid is told in Paul Theroux's *Dark Star Safari* (2003). Theroux went to visit the school in which he worked as a Peace Corps volunteer in the 1960s. During his forty-year absence the English couple who created and maintained a thriving school had died. Upon his return and in the absence of the British administrators, he found that the school has fallen into disrepair, is severely understaffed, and the library, previously holding ten thousand books, has lost the majority of books to theft. Upon seeing the library, Theroux' thought was, "I will never send another book to this country. I also thought: If you're an African student and you need money, it made a certain

criminal sense to steal books and sell them. It was a justifiable form of poaching” (p. 319).

The following excerpt, describes his personal frustration with the failings of supposedly sustainable development efforts in Africa. One need not agree with his pessimistic outlook in this particular passage in order to recognize the thoughtfulness of the issues he raises.

*Maybe no answer.* The whites, teachers, diplomats, and agents of virtue I met at dinner parties had pretty much the same things on their minds as their counterparts had in the 1960s. They discussed relief projects and scholarships and agricultural schemes, refugee camps, emergency food programs, technical assistance. They were newcomers. They did not realize that for forty years people had been saying the same things, and the result after four decades was a lower standard of living, a higher rate of illiteracy, overpopulation, and much more disease... Foreigners working for development agencies did not stay long, so they never discovered the full extent of their failure. Africans saw them come and go, which is why Africans were so fatalistic. *Maybe no answer*, as my friend said with a rueful smile... Westerners do not know the answer, they don't even know the questions. Our efforts to improve conditions in Africa are done solely to please ourselves (Theroux, 2003, p. 181).

### **Sustainable Development**

The definition of sustainable development varies depending on context and focus. Currently the most common use of the term applies to environmental sustainability in relation to economic development, as defined in the *Encyclopedia of International Development*, “the achievement of economic development at the same time as protecting environment and natural resources” (Bandyopadhyay & Perveen, 2005, p. 667). The

definition for sustainable development relevant to this research is a broader concept of development that is sustainable, that is, development that enables communities to produce self-beneficial outcomes

In theory, sustainable development leads to self-sufficiency for the partner organization. Yet developing countries often experience economic, social, and political factors that negatively impact their ability to fulfill the perceived needs independently. Some scholars believe that sustainability is in conflict with serving the poor; that the services will falter as donors phase out funding (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007). Others write of public health and agriculture projects that were proven much less effective once NGOs had withdrawn, with the quality of services and availability of supplies showing a sharp decrease without foreign funding and expertise (Kremer & Miguel, 2008).

Will Easterly, a critic of sustainable development, refers to the goal of sustainability as an “elusive goal” (2006, p. 189) with a poor record of success throughout recent decades. He believes it is futile for international non-profits to attempt to change the behavior of governments with demonstrated poor commitment to development. He suggests that donors focus on producing beneficial outcomes rather than enforcing expectations on partner agencies, “aid donors should just bite the bullet and permanently fund road maintenance, textbooks, drugs for clinics, and operating costs of development projects. Politically dysfunctional governments that won’t do maintenance can concentrate on other things” (Easterly, 2006, p. 190).

In monitoring the long term success of a sustainable development project, two factors are considered: (1) the continued success of the partner agency to produce beneficial and valuable outcomes for the community and (2) the partner agency’s ability to rely on local

resources for self-support (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007). To assure these two factors, there are many obstacles to overcome. In a study of twenty-eight community-based micro-lending groups (called federations) organized by the non-governmental organization Concern Bangladesh, only five proved to be sustainable and work independently after more than a decade of capacity building (Datta, 2005). The main causes for failure in attaining sustainability included a lack of capacity building efforts relevant to the partner community, estrangement of the federations from the rest of the community, politicians manipulating the projects and their leaders for their own gain, and poor leadership. Factors that led to achieving sustainability include strong leadership, a long-term and clearly defined organizational direction, a clear vision and mission, and dedicated staff (Datta, 2005).

Looking at the above parameters that lead to self-sufficiency in sustainable development, it is clear that factors encompass the human experience. Relationships at the political, community, and inter-personal levels, as well as the values, beliefs, and talents of community members, need to be examined. The following quote from the World Bank describes four characteristics of sustainable development that need to be examined in order to achieve success:

All economic, political, cultural, and social characteristics—are a necessity. There is no getting away from it. Interventions cannot be based on desperate hope or good intentions. NGOs shy of entering into all the arenas, or encouraging people to do so, may be doing “good work.” But they are not creating sustainable communities. No matter what the entry point of the intervention, the others must be tackled and brought in at the appropriate time, before there can be any claim to the accomplishment of empowerment

or sustainability (*Meeting the challenge*, World Bank, 1992, as cited in Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007, p. 205).

Good intentions alone are insufficient to achieve sustainable development. In order to achieve sustainable benefits, it is necessary for donors to address all relevant factors. The following section discusses additional consideration broken down into four sections: economic, political, cultural, and social.

**Economic considerations.** Some scholars question the possible success of sustainable projects in Africa due to economic realities. If some governments are unable or unwilling to commit domestic resources, programs will suffer without continued foreign funds and expertise (Easterly, 2006). Withdraw of financial aid has been proven to lead to decline of services in health development projects (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007; Kremer & Miguel, 2008). In order to detect and ameliorate such decline in services, Le Loup & Fleury (2010) suggest donors continue to monitor sustainable development projects. If it is determined that the project needs additional help, the donor should be willing to step in as needed.

There is no definitive amount of time donors should remain involved in sustainable aid projects. Some donors are hesitant to commit to long term sustainable donor support because they believe it can lead to reduction of incentives for governments to raise domestic resources (Dodd & Lane, 2010). In referring to the Brundtland definition of sustainable development, with its emphasis on environmental issues and industrialization, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987), the term “future” in this study can be interpreted as months or decades. Some researchers stress the need for prolonged sustainable

aid in order for their partner to reach self-efficiency. Dodd and Lane believe that in order for aid to be effective, it needs to be given on a consistent and predictable schedule and sustained over the long term. They believe that effective aid for health care requires “sustainable donor support until domestic health financing can substitute” (2010, p. 363).

The *Paris Declaration* stresses donor commitment, while at the same time strengthening the partner country’s financial management capacity and intensifying efforts to mobilize domestic resources (OECD, 2005). Mutual accountability is a key component. Donor countries commit to a specific amount of aid disbursed according to a predetermined schedule. In turn, the partner country accounts for the expenditure of such funds in a transparent manner. The *Paris Declaration* also encourages partner countries to evaluate and make use of their own resources for development, planning beyond aid pledged by the donor country (OECD, 2005).

**Political considerations.** Effective aid requires political support from both donor and partner organizations (OECD, 2005). One method for ensuring political support is to align aid with the partner’s development priorities rather than those imposed by donors. All countries are in agreement with the development priorities of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), developed by the United Nations. The MDGs focus on providing universal primary education, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality and improving maternal health, combating disease, providing safe drinking water, employing youth, and improving expertise in technology (United Nations, 2010).

The problem is that support of libraries may not be in the best interest of politicians as it is not directly addressed in the MDGs or the development goals of specific countries.

Politicians view other issues such as improved schools and hospitals as more effective campaign platforms (Bukenya, 2009). Although library development can be promoted as beneficial in helping school children achieve success in their primary education, it does not stand alone as a development priority.

Corruption of government and government officials is another factor to be considered. Many of the Concern Bangladesh's micro-lending federations failed to become sustainable due to the federation leaders allowing themselves to be manipulated by politicians seeking to secure re-election (Datta, 2007). Dibia (2008) surveyed staff of international non-governmental organizations (NGO) in Africa to understand what impediments they have encountered in implementing sustainable development programs. Eighty percent of the respondents complained that whenever government clearance was necessary for a project, the vast majority of officials demanded a gift in return. NGO administrators feel frustration that such happenings are an inherent part of African bureaucracy.

**Cultural considerations.** Rodgers (2005) stresses the importance of cultural considerations in international development projects. Culture is reflected within a community in tangible resources such as architecture, literature, and art and in intangible resources such as ways of thinking, shared values, beliefs, and manners of behavior. Culture is viewed as intrinsically important to development because it mediates human behavior, allowing a better understanding of the people in the community and their actions, beliefs, and needs (Rodgers, 2005).

Relating to the importance of culture in development, begs the question, are libraries culturally relevant for these communities in which they are built? According to Bukenya (2009), a major problem for public libraries in Africa is that people are unconvinced that

using the library can make a difference in their life. In order for international library development to be sustainable, community members need to value libraries and consider them relevant. The concept of libraries reflects Western culture with an emphasis on the written word as opposed to the African oral tradition (Banjo, 1998; Etebu, 2009; Matare, 1998; Nyana, 2009). The challenge for ILD leaders is to create an alternative to the Western library, libraries relevant to the culture, needs and desires of the community (Banjo, 1998; Alemna, 1995).

A recent study by Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL), *Perception of public libraries in Africa* (2011), reveals interview data concerning African libraries, recognition of potential benefits from public libraries, and support for additional allocation of resources to library development. The study covered six African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe and gathered data through interviews with community members, public librarians, and local and national government officials. The majority of those interviewed viewed public libraries as mostly small and underfunded — places that supplied books and a place to study as opposed to supplying digital technologies or community development services. But the majority also recognized that if public libraries received sufficient funding, libraries could help individuals and communities achieve their development goals (EIFL, 2011).

**Social considerations.** For sustainable aid to be successful, it is important that there is strong leadership, a long-term organizational direction, a clear vision and mission, and dedicated staff (Ravichandran and Rajashree, 2007). Developing strong leaders and committed staff is foremost a social issue and is a major concern in the success of sustainable development. In addressing capacity building, the *Paris Declaration* recognizes the

importance of strengthening human resources and stresses that building capacity is primarily the role of the partner country with support from the donor (UNESCO, 2005).

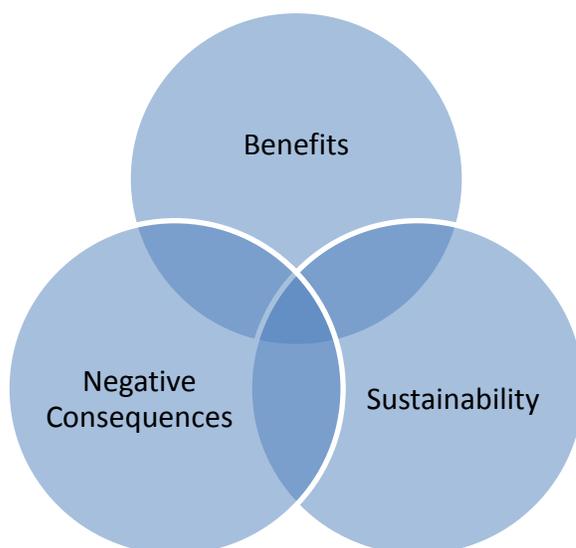
The challenge lies in expecting partner organizations to build leadership capacity when faced with a lack of capacity building resources. In the following quote, Datta describes strong leadership while also acknowledging potential complications, “a committed leader who respects accountability and transparency, ensures participation in all decision-making process, and promotes alternative leadership within the organization can positively contribute to sustainability, even in the adverse sociopolitical context, and with limited capacity-building” (Datta, 2007, p. 61). One key element common in all of the five successful Concern Bangladesh federations was a committed leader that ensured participation of others, proved transparent and accountable, and enlisted strong second-line leadership. In contrast, the federations that failed had weak or corrupt leadership (Datta, 2005).

There are numerous considerations in building a cadre of library leaders in Africa (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007). Due to the fact that few new libraries are being built, it is difficult to find employment as a public librarian. Most library jobs available pay low salaries. Professional training opportunities do exist in most African countries, but the Library Science programs focus on the technical aspects of librarianship, with very little support for children’s librarianship. The number of Library Science programs in Africa remains steady, with most countries having at least one certified program (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007).

### **Conceptual Framework and Expected Contributions**

Previous articles written about international library development fit into two categories: (1) promotional pieces highlighting the successes of various programs, and (2) theoretical

papers written by academics citing the historical failures of book aid and warnings of potential negative effects. The conceptual framework for this research is to investigate both positive and potentially negative effects of book aid and issues of ILD sustainability via challenging questions posed to leaders of ILD programs. Sustainability may be defined in several ways, depending on emphasis applied to various dimensions (environmental, social, economic, and cultural). As applied within this framework, sustainability refers to the effectiveness of development aid in enabling the partner agency to continue providing benefits to the intended community even after outside aid is withdrawn.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework for International Library Development

This research highlights the lived experiences of ILD leaders, previously unrepresented in the literature except in interviews or promotional articles. This research contributes a summary of the important benefits, outside of books, offered by ILD programs. The existing literature focuses on the appropriateness of book selection but fails to address ILD programming, physical space, personal contacts, and other benefits to the community. This

dissertation also addresses the recognized potential negative effects of ILD within the context of foreign aid and asks ILD leaders to explain their efforts to avoid such consequences, taking the discussion from theoretical to experience-based. And lastly, it addresses the matter of sustainability in international library development, a topic not addressed in the literature. This research unveils the realities of local communities unable or unwilling to honor their agreement to pay librarian salaries, the importance of community and government support, and factors vital to the success of sustainable international library development.

### Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

As discussed in earlier sections, experts agree that a supply of reading materials, such as books, is necessary for a newly literate person to maintain or improve his or her level of literacy. In order to fill this need for reading materials in economically challenged countries, Westerners have developed book donation and library development programs. The leaders of such programs devote time and effort to raising funds and public awareness of the shortages of reading material. They travel overseas to coordinate support from local communities and to share their expertise, often working as volunteers, receiving no pay for their work. The leaders of these agencies work towards positive outcomes (i.e. supply books, raise literacy rates, provide culturally relevant programs) while hopefully minimizing potential negative outcomes that may result from acceptance of international relief aid (i.e. creating a dependence on foreign aid, damaging the local publishing industry, supplying the readers with inappropriate reading materials).

In my research I interviewed two leaders of international library development programs. My process included investigation of the benefits of book aid as well as potential negative outcomes. I also inquired as to their attitudes towards sustainability: do they think it will be possible to relinquish responsibility for the libraries to the local communities? Or do they see their programs as ongoing bilateral partnerships? Specifically, I conducted a phenomenological study of two leaders of library development programs using traditional ethnographic research methods (interview, observation, and document analysis). The purpose of this study is to understand:

1. How do the leaders of international library development programs balance the

- benefits of ILD programs with the possible negative effects of supplying foreign aid?
2. Is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development?

### **Research Design**

To better understand the phenomenon of international library development leadership, I have chosen to conduct a qualitative study, a useful and logical choice, with its inductive approach to reasoning, its focus on people or specific situations, and its emphasis on written description rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2005). Qualitative research allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon through listening to the personal narratives of those who have experienced the phenomenon first-hand. Qualitative research also provides insight into context and the personal significance of the phenomenon being studied.

My epistemological perspective is that of constructivism/interpretivism. Within an interpretivist framework, reality does not exist in some tangible form but only in our consciousness (Prasad, 2004; Grbich, 2007). As methodologist Carol Grbich (2007) describes, “Reality is viewed as socially and societally imbedded and existing within the mind” (p. 8). I believe that knowledge is subjective, formed by a combination of our life experiences and cultural norms. What is important to the researcher is how we “order, classify, structure, and interpret our world, and then act upon these interpretations” (Prasad, 2004, p. 13). Reality is ever-changing and knowledge is constructed both through the telling of the story by the research participant and the interpreting of the story through the researcher (Grbich, 2007).

I believe that knowledge may be constructed through the experience of others. I chose to conduct in-depth phenomenologically based interviews with the leaders of two international library development programs in order to learn more about how they perceived their lived

experiences and to reflect on the meaning of these subjective thoughts and actions. Prasad (2004) states that the theoretical perspective of phenomenology “assumes that the experience of any reality is possible only through interpretation” (p. 13). Grbich (2007) defines phenomenology as “an approach which attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these” (p. 84). She further describes phenomenology as a strategy to allow the researcher to explore, record, and interpret the experience of others, particularly useful in answering such questions as “What has been the experience of [providing foreign aid to economically challenged countries; creating sustainable libraries] for you?” (p. 84). Since I am studying the essence of these leaders’ decisions, they would be the leading experts on the subject (themselves).

Phenomenological interviews allow both researcher and participant to set context for the narration of experience. The participant will set the narrative in context during storytelling, while the researcher may suggest a context for the participant to reflect upon their own experience, such as, in my case, foreign aid and sustainability (deMarrais, 2004).

The challenge of classical phenomenological research is for the researcher to bracket or eliminate any preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied in order to not impose their own beliefs or experiences on the data, a process known as phenomenological reduction (Grbich, 2007). I reject a classical phenomenology approach since I believe it is impossible for a researcher’s reading of literature, life experiences, and previous knowledge not to influence the documentation, presentation, and interpretation of the data. Instead, I chose the hermeneutic form of phenomenology. The hermeneutic tradition has a long tradition of researching text to study the social world (Prasad, 2005). Ezzy (2002) describes hermeneutics as “the art and science of interpretation” (p.24). The researcher attempts to

remain open to the voice of the participant but does not attempt to abandon all prior knowledge of theory or knowledge. “In being open to hear the other person, the researcher aims to listen, to hear some things that might be inconsistent with the researcher’s preexisting theory but nonetheless are understood and reinterpreted within theoretical traditions” (Ezzy, 2002, p. 30). Instead of bracketing, I kept a reflective journal of those very preconceived notions, experiences, and knowledge that classical phenomenology tries to eliminate (Grbich, 2007). I found that due to my passion for libraries, books, and reading, I tend to promote international library development. Reading critical views of book aid and development aid helped me to better understand and appreciate possible negative outcomes of such aid. The hermeneutic approach also fits in with my epistemological view of constructivism/interpretivism, in that “reality is fluid and changing and knowledge is created jointly in interaction by the researcher and the researched through consensus” (Grbich, 2007, p. 8).

## **Methods**

I incorporated three traditionally ethnographic methods into my research. I collected data through a series of interviews with the library leaders and also accumulated general knowledge, life experience, and background information through observation of the libraries and reading of relevant documentation. I visited WALP in May, 2010 for a period of a month and SALP in November, 2010 for a week. I conducted three sets of interviews with each of the two leaders, six interviews in all. The focus of the interviews was their experiences as ILD leaders, their perceptions of ILD benefits and potential negative effects, and the viability of sustainable international library development. “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of

their experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). For each series of interviews, I applied the process of thematic analysis, allowing themes to emerge from the data.

### **Participant Selection**

I chose these two programs leaders through purposive sampling—selecting participants based on shared characteristics. Both programs are located in Sub-Saharan Africa and do more than just donate books; they strive to develop libraries in conjunction with local communities. Each of these programs permits volunteers/observers to visit their libraries (other programs are very restrictive in allowing visits, Room to Read being one example). Specifically, I chose to interview these two leaders because they are actively involved with their programs, making both small scale and program-wide decisions. In the larger programs, such as Room to Read and CODE, there are numerous levels of staffing, making it difficult to speak with one person with overall knowledge of operations. The two leaders selected proved agreeable to being interviewed.

I chose to interview Western leaders of international library development programs since my audience for this research is Westerners interested in supplying book aid to economically-challenged countries. This audience is interested in the realities of running an international library development program and how to maximize benefits to recipients while striving to minimize negative consequences. As Westerners, these leaders are able to present the realities of running an international library development program (including African bureaucracy, infrastructure, and cultural differences) in a manner understandable to other Westerners. As outsiders supplying foreign aid, they are also faced with the question of sustainability: would their programs be able to survive if they withdrew? Tying my participant selection with my decision to conduct phenomenologically-based interviews

allowed me to construct knowledge through the experience of those active in the field.

My choice to interview Westerners working in international development raises many questions. Since their fundraising success is dependent on positive outcomes, the leaders may tend to give overly favorable descriptions of their work. To do otherwise, jeopardizes continued success. Additionally, as Westerners, they may not be entirely representative of Africans' need for libraries, their problems, and possible solutions. Would it not be better to interview African library staff, library patrons of the programs, and African community leaders?

Various factors weighed against interviewing Africans involved with international library development at this point in time. One principal factor is an insufficient amount of time to build trust and rapport with Africans that is necessary to gather open and honest information. Additionally, there are various hazards for African staff in being interviewed. If they are critical of the programs, they could feel or be in danger of losing their positions. These critiques indicate the need to conduct this type of research in the future, ideally with an African librarian or scholar as co-author. For the purpose of this research study, the focus is on the experience and stories of the Western leaders of international library development programs.

### **Data Collection**

As mentioned earlier, data was collected through in-depth phenomenological interviews, site visits, and document review/analysis. Since the goal of the interview is to elicit detail from the participant about a particular experience (in this case, being a leader of a library development program), the questions should be open-ended. After the initial question is asked, the interview takes the form of a conversation with the participant taking the

conversation wherever he/she desires. The researcher assumes the role of learner. Follow-up questions are based on the participants own words, for example, “You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Tell me more about that” (deMarrais, 2004, p. 58).

After receiving approval for human subject research from my university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I commenced with the interview process. I used the three-interview series model of phenomenological interviewing as presented in Irving Seidman’s *Interviewing as Qualitative Research* (2006). This approach allows for the researcher and participant to fully engage in and set the context for the interview. Seidman describes the process, “The first interview establishes the context of the participant’s experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context of which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning the experience has for them” (2006, p. 17). My interview questions were created in reference to my conceptual framework focusing on the benefits, potential negative outcomes, and the viability of sustainability in international library development. I have included a list of interview questions as appendix I.

Each interview was scheduled to last 90 minutes, the length recommended by Seidman (2006). One hour is thought to be too constrictive, two hours seems too long. Ninety minutes was adequate for the interviewee to know she is being taken seriously and she will be able to pace herself in story telling if she knows the set amount of time in advance. The interviews were conducted by phone, and I used a recording device to record interviews, as well as took written notes during the interview. After each interview, I spent two-three days transcribing the interviews. I studied the transcripts between interviews to process the participant’s story and to help form follow-up questions.

I visited both library development programs. At WALP, I visited four libraries and the Community Center (a combination of library and performance art center). At SALP, I visited the one operating library and toured a second library scheduled to open within the month. At both programs I observed the everyday realities, work processes, personal interactions, and culture of the libraries. All of these experiences gave me the opportunity to use my observations as examples in my analysis and helped me create well-informed questions for my interviews with the two leaders.

A third step in data collection involved examining documentation gathered from the library program web sites, program leaders, and the libraries themselves. My main purpose in examining documentation is to look for connections between the interview data, my observations, and the information offered in the documentation. In the documentation, I looked for descriptions of the programs, stated benefits of literacy, and mention of international guidelines. Examining the documents helped as a meaningful step towards triangulation of the data. Due to concerns of anonymity, much of the information from the web sites could not be included in my findings or, if information was mentioned in the discussion, could not be cited.

### **Data Analysis**

The analytic procedure for this research is thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is more inductive than content analysis because the categories for analysis arise from the data as opposed to being predetermined. Ezzy (2002) further explains that the researcher may be aware of the general issues of interest prior to the analysis but the specific nature of the categories and themes remains to be explored. This approach may result in issues and problems the researcher has not anticipated. Glesne (2006) describes thematic analysis as “a

process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (p. 147). According to Glesne, thematic analysis is the most widely used means of data analysis in the social sciences.

In my initial reading of the interview transcripts, I attempted to keep an open mind about my findings. Glesne (2006) stresses the importance of writing down my thoughts as they occur. No matter how trivial the thoughts may seem at the time, writing reflexive memos begins the analytic process. These initial thoughts can be stored in analytic files—broad categories of information such as (in my case) training of librarians, directors’ backgrounds, or number of libraries created. I created analytic files for other areas of my research, such as subjectivity, titles, thoughts for introduction, and quotations from literature. White and Marsh (2006) also advocate writing memos. They see memos falling into two categories, concept memos and theory memos. Concept memos categorize information by topic, helping the researcher to keep track of emerging concepts (categories, codes). Theory memos focus on the relationships between concept memos, helping the researcher to interpret the data and create a workable model.

In my systematic review of transcribed data and through use of reflexive memos, I created a rudimentary coding scheme. Coding is the main method of categorizing data in social science research (Maxwell, 2005). Coding is a progressive process of sorting material and finessing these sorted codes, in a continuing cycle. One begins with basic codes by which to sort the data and eventually these clumps of data are broken down into more specific sub-clumps. According to Glesne (2006), coding will help the researcher to develop a focus and fine tune her research question.

In my case, coding of the interview transcripts resulted in six overarching themes:

description of leader, libraries, the potential negative effects of aid, the role of Africans in library success, partnership, and sustainability. Each of the above included various sub-topics, issues that arose from the transcript. For instance, under the topic of libraries fell the sub-topics of book selection, outreach, libraries as place, programming, and adult programs.

Once I coded the data, I began the process of transforming the emergent themes into a written document. Taking my lead from Wolcott (1994) and Glesne (2006), I approached representation using a 3-tiered model; description rewriting, analytical writing, and interpretive writing. Maxwell (2005) uses different terms (organizational, substantive, and theoretical) but basically has the same analysis and representation categories as Wolcott and Glesne.

The first procedure (description/organizational) was to write a brief narrative description of what I have observed from the coded data. Wolcott writes that “description addresses the question, ‘What is going on here?’ Data consist of observations made by the researcher or reported to the researcher by others” (1994, p. 12). As it was impossible to include all of my data from the six 90 minute interviews, along with background information gathered from observation and documentation, I selected data based on its significance to the topic, consistently asking myself: “Is this relevant to the account?” (Wolcott, 1994). Including too much data would create a dumptruck effect, making it the task of the reader to sort through data to answer the research questions.

I began the findings section of my dissertation (chapters four and five) with an essentially descriptive account or in this case, selected content from the interviews accompanied by summaries of other pertinent information. Following the advice of Wolcott (1994), I included more description than I believed necessary in my first draft, narrowing down the amount in

later revisions. I also asked my advisor and other members of my dissertation committee to read the drafts and voice an opinion about relevant evidence versus excessive, redundant, or unnecessary detail. As for the structure or organization of the descriptive data, I organized and presented the data by following the analytical framework that arose during my thematic analysis of the data.

The second procedure, analysis/substantive, identifies key factors in the data and the interrelationships among them. Wolcott (1994) writes that “analysis addresses the identification of essential features and the systematic description of interrelationships between them—in short, how things work. In terms of stated objectives, analysis also may be employed evaluatively to address questions of why a system is not working or how it might be made to work ‘better’” (p. 12). He goes on to write that “an inherent conservatism and caution is associated with the work of analysis” (p. 23). In this section I analyzed the stories of the two leaders, making generalizations as well as contextualizing the interviews within a broader analytical framework derived from the literature.

The third procedure is interpretation/theoretical. Wolcott writes that “*interpretation* is well suited to mark a threshold in thinking and writing at which the researcher transcends factual data and cautious analyses and begins to probe into what is to be made of them” (1994, p. 36) then answering the question, “What is to be made of it all?” (1994, p.12). He also cautions the beginning researcher to go heavy on description and light on interpretation.

### **Subjectivity and Ethical Considerations**

Particularly in the interview process, it is difficult to keep the perspective of the researcher and the participant completely separate. Even the process of description and thematic analysis can carry bias. My personal perspectives and biases in this particular project were

two-fold and contradictory. As a child, I spent long hours in the library, reading books and taking them home. It is through this love of books that I chose my profession. I am an academic librarian, and I believe that the greatest good that librarians can achieve is the provision of books, information, and libraries. I believe that we, as privileged Westerners, have a moral obligation to help those in economically challenged countries. On the other hand, I am aware of the long history of colonialism that has led to many of the problems of developing countries. I suspect that international foreign aid, regardless of good intentions, may be the newest form of post-colonial control. I came to this conclusion through reading the writings of others and keeping a reflexive journal to keep track of my thought processes, remaining aware of potential bias and imposition of my words/thoughts into those of the participants.

### **Trustworthiness**

The question of trustworthiness is at the core of research. Flick (2006) believes “the problem of how to assess qualitative research has not yet been solved” (p. 367). The concepts of “validity” and “reliability” cannot be applied to qualitative research in the same manner as to quantitative research. Since I believe that knowledge is created by the individual, based on their own life experience and consciousness, no two stories or realities will be the same—nor would we expect them to be. This type of research offers no objective answers, only subjective experience.

Reliability pertains to qualitative research only in terms of procedural reliability. The reliability of collection and data analysis can be increased through a number of methods: the researcher can undergo interview training, check questions through a test interview, write reflexive memos or keep a reflexive journal to note potential researcher bias or interjection of

researcher's beliefs, create a clear set of rules and procedures for transcription of interview data prior to commencement of transcription work, make a clear distinction in the description, analysis, and interpretation between the words and thoughts of the interviewer and the interviewee (Flick, 2006). Flick concludes these recommendations by stating, "Finally, the reliability of the whole process will be better the more detailed the research process is documented as a whole. Thus, the criterion of reliability is reformulated in the direction of checking the dependability of data and procedures, which can be grounded in the specificity of various qualitative procedures" (Flick, 2006, p. 371).

To ensure procedural reliability, I drew on my knowledge gained from a semester-long course on qualitative research, with emphasis on interview techniques. In creating interview questions, I had my dissertation committee review them for relevancy and potential bias. After the interviews had taken place, I wrote a set of guidelines for transcription of data. I wrote down every word as spoken, even phrases of hesitation (hmmm, uh, etc.), although it looked awkward once transcribed

In qualitative research, validity "can be summarized as a question of whether the researchers see what they think they see" (Flick, 2006, p. 371). Validity focuses on the ability of the researcher to interpret and accurately present the participant's story. For interview research, Flick offers several dictates designed to assure validity: (1) safeguard against the interviewee constructing a modified version of his/her story, telling a story they think the interviewer wants to hear; (2) communicate with the participants and share analysis and presentation; (3) verify with the participant(s) that their story is accurately interpreted/presented. One of the most helpful sources on validity in qualitative research is the following paragraph by Wolcott:

(1) The researcher should refrain from talking in the field but rather should listen as much as possible. He or she should (2) produce notes that are as exact as possible, (3) begin to write early, and in a way (4) which allows readers of his or her notes and reports to see for themselves. This means providing enough data for readers to make their own inferences and follow those of the researcher. The report should be as complete (5) and candid (6) as possible. The researcher should seek feedback on his or her findings and presentations in the field of from his or her colleagues (7). Presentations should be characterized by a balance (8) between the various aspects and (9) by accuracy in writing (Wolcott, 1990, p. 127-128).

To further improve the validity of qualitative research, Glesne (2006) suggests that researchers ask themselves what they notice continuously, as well as what they are *not* noticing. By scrutinizing what they do and do not notice, researchers then note what they have omitted. Researchers need to spend time with the data (prolonged engagement) and with an intense focus (persistent observation). Glesne also recommends asking the research participants to read the data analysis, verifying the author's interpretation, helping develop new ideas or focus, and to specify sections which may be problematic for them. Her guidelines are designed for researchers to openly recognize the limitations of their studies. (Glesne, 2006).

To help ensure the validity of the research, I incorporated several of the above suggestions. The interviews were transcribed within a week after they took place. Each of the interviewees received copies of the interview transcripts, the narrative chapters, and the discussion chapter. In turn, they reviewed the material and sent corrections and additional thoughts. I removed areas that may have proven problematic for individuals, such as direct

reference to performance standards of individual library staff. I began the analysis as soon as possible after receiving above feedback. In analyzing the data, I wrote reflexive memos—mostly in the form of handwritten notes—to note researcher biases. The creation of visual aids—illustrating the relationships between themes that arose from the interview transcripts, the literature review, and notes from my observations and document review—proved very helpful in collecting thoughts and connections.

In the following two chapters I present my findings as they relate to WALP and to SALP. The chapters are organized under categories that reflect the topics as they emerged through thematic analysis. These include portraits of the leaders, descriptions of the international library programs, relevancy of libraries, role of Africans in the success of the ILDs, partnerships with local and national governments, and sustainability issues. Chapter Six presents a discussion of findings presented in Chapters Four and Five, making linkages back to the literature. In Chapter Six I also present cautious interpretation of my findings and analysis, limitations and implications of my study, and suggestions for further research.

## **Chapter Four: West African Library Program**

In the following two chapters (Chapters Four and Five) I present my findings for WALP and SALP in a narrative, descriptive style. I dedicate individual chapters to each ILD program in order to present findings in an organized and clear manner. In each chapter I begin with short biographical vignettes for each ILD leader, followed by a description of the ILD program. I have organized my findings within the analytical framework that arose during the thematic analysis of the data. The three major themes include the relevancy of libraries; the role of community members in the success of the libraries; and partnering agreements with local host organizations.

In Chapter Six, I present a discussion of findings, identifying key factors in the data and relationships between the two interviews. I compare the stories of the two leaders, make generalizations, and contextualize the interviews within the broader analytical framework derived from the literature. The discussion of findings is structured in a fashion that specifically addresses the two research questions:

1. How do the leaders of international library development programs balance the benefits of ILD programs with the possible negative effects of supplying foreign aid?
2. Is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development?

This chapter begins with a discussion of seven identified benefits resulting from WALP and SALP programs followed by five potential negative effects of book aid they avoided to a great extent. I draw from the literature as appropriate, especially from the sections on literacy, best practices, and past mistakes of book aid. In addressing my second research

question, I look at four considerations when measuring the potential success of sustainability for an international library development program, all four summarized in the literature review: political, economic, social, and cultural. Throughout this chapter, observations about the regional public libraries, day to day challenges, and interactions between Westerners and Africans are included. These observations add detail and context that illustrate the benefits, potential negative effects, and challenges in creating sustainable ILD programs. I chose to dedicate an entire chapter to each of the ILD programs in order to flesh out each program and to avoid confusion among the two.

### **Portrait of Karen, Leader of West African Library Program (WALP)**

WALP is run by Karen (not her real name), a Canadian citizen who has spent a large part of her life living in Western Africa. Originally Karen came to live in Africa as a spouse, her husband being employed by private industry. Together they raised four children in Africa while Karen pursued her own career as a healthcare worker. WALP began twenty years ago when Karen started inviting neighborhood children to come and listen to the storybooks that she read to her own children. As more children heard about the story time, more children began to attend. Soon Karen started to provide books for the children to read on their own, in addition to the story time. Karen did not create WALP with a long term vision of running an ILD program; she just knew that her children enjoyed storybooks, and she wanted to share that with other children in Western Africa.

I interviewed Karen over the phone and have spoken with many people who have worked with her over the years. In her responses to the interview questions, Karen always replied with simple, straightforward answers that demonstrated humility (particularly in her willingness to recognize her weaknesses and those of the program) and honesty. Throughout

her interview, it became clear that she values following through according to one's word. Karen describes herself as "relatively quiet, hard worker, meticulous, continually swirling ideas, and being able to multi-task." I posit that Karen's program has not succeeded due to her skills in self-promotion but instead due to her willingness to work hard, set forth goals, and partner with others to meet those goals. The West Africans with whom I spoke all regard Karen with respect and a sense of familiarity which conveys their view of her as approachable, responsive, and trust-worthy.

During an average work day at home in Canada, Karen manages building contracts for new library facilities, publishes books, and handles financial matters related to WALP matters. She has frequent contact with the WALP librarians discussing distribution of payments, day-to-day questions about library management, and other matters as they arise. Twice a year, Karen travels to West Africa from her home in Canada, visiting the WALP libraries and meeting with contractors, government officials, and other individuals and agencies as necessary.

When I asked Karen if being a Westerner working in West Africa helps or hinders her efforts, she replied that she doesn't really see herself as being from outside the country. She lived in the country between 1989 and 1993 and returns twice a year to visit. Karen has worked with many people from various levels of government (the Ministry of Education, the Education Service, and the National Library Board). She feels that her experiences in this West African country in part define her personality, as she explains, it "is very much a part of who I am." Karen believes that West Africans sometimes have a sense that Westerners will honor their word, and Karen has proven herself highly reliable throughout the years. Yet she still, from time to time, has Africans ask why a local person is not coming forward to do this

work or suggest she is overstepping her boundaries.

Karen realizes that, as a Westerner, she has advantages that come with living in the West. She has the basics covered: a roof, lights, and running water, as opposed to West Africa where the lack of such necessities can beat down a person. For many, it is a daily struggle to find enough money to buy food, to fetch water, and to cope with an irregular power supply. Karen is familiar with the difference between life in North America and life in Western African because she spends her semiannual month-long stays in West Africa living at the WALP guest house, an establishment run by one of her librarians. The guest house is in the center of a community described to me, by residents, as a slum.

During my stay, I had the opportunity to wander the inner streets of this neighborhood accompanied by a library staff member. It was a loud, crowded, and lively area with open sewers, livestock on the street, and many homes without running water or electricity. A couple of nights a week the neighborhood experienced pre-determined black-outs, evenings when electricity would not be available. These were accompanied by other instances where the black-outs were not planned but occurred anyway. The country simply does not have the infrastructure to cope with energy demands. Periodically, there would be no electricity during the day at the libraries, limiting access to computer labs. The libraries themselves were designed to be open and airy thus being able to continue to function without electricity. Because the guest house had running water, I was puzzled by large containers filled with water which took up quite a bit of space within the building. Because the neighborhood can be without running water for days at a time, my hostess was storing water. During my stay, the water was off for three days in a row, and we ran low. One more day and someone would have had to walk to a neighborhood spigot to fetch water for the house.

The fact that Karen decides to live in this neighborhood during her stay says a lot about commitment and connection to the community. Not all Westerners living and working in this country are willing to become integrated with the local communities. During my stay in this country, I had the opportunity to attend a “Friend’s Tea” at the home of the United States Ambassador, hosted by the North American Women’s Association. The purpose of the tea was for members to bring an African friend. I attended the gathering with one of the WALP librarians. Upon arrival I was surprised by the lack of African faces. While at the tea, one Western woman told me that she would have brought an African friend but she lives in a “diplomatic bubble” and has met few locals. I think that the other North American women at the social shared her situation. This is certainly not the case with Karen. During my stay, I met many Africans that know and admire Karen, particularly the children at the libraries, the WALP staff and volunteers, and community members living in the guest house neighborhood. This mutual respect and approachability, along with her willingness to work long hours and her value of keeping one’s word are all factors that speak to the success of the WALP libraries.

Karen recognizes the needs of the WALP library staff and provides benefits in addition to the salaries provided by the local government. Through the sales of books (described in more detail in the following section), WALP provides health insurance, staff bonuses, Christmas parcels, and a revolving staff loan program. When asked why she provides these extra benefits, Kathy responds that she wants to supplement the very low salaries the staff members receive from the local municipal government. She also feels that it is important that they have health coverage and that many of them would be unable to afford insurance without WALP’s support. From a practical view, if WALP staff members are not covered by

health insurance, WALP is expected to give aid to staff in times of medical need and that can be quite expensive. Staff bonuses are offered at the year-end as a way of rewarding good performance.

### **A Description of WALP**

The WALP libraries are library collections with various educational, art, and recreational programs. All but one of the WALP libraries are non-lending, meaning that the books need to be used in the buildings. The selection process for the books collections focuses on certain key factors relating to relevancy, quality, local language, and cultural sensitivity.

According to their web site, WALP runs with an amazingly low administrative cost of 1% due to the fact that all workers from Canada, including Karen herself, work as volunteers. Ninety percent of funds come from general donations, mostly from individuals. A large chunk of her funds comes from one donor, a woman who donates \$125,000 annually. Canadian volunteers help with correspondence related to fundraising, sending out appeals for contributions once a year.

The earlier chapters of this dissertation mention the importance of international library development in attempts to raise literacy rates. Without access to quality, interesting, and relevant reading materials, readers cannot progress in their reading skills. Karen states that literacy is a primary function of libraries, “a library has as its cornerstone reading and literacy.” In this country, most children do not receive exposure to the English language or story books until well into public school. By introducing children to the concept of reading for pleasure, it helps them to increase their reading skills. In turn, good reading skills lead to better performance in their studies, enriched vocabulary, and better writing skills. Karen also believes that reading for pleasure gives you life experience, allowing you to see how

characters in the books have adventures and solve problems. In addition to supplying books to further advance literacy skills, WALP libraries also provide story time and literacy classes.

In the past, the majority of books provided by WALP came from donations. In selecting the books for WALP libraries, Karen has high standards for quality and relevancy. She does not include items in her libraries that she thinks kids would not want to read. The books have to be simple for the majority of children because the literacy level is quite low. Karen currently has a large stockpile of donated books in storage in West Africa and she supplements these donations by spending thousands of dollars every year to purchase books in Africa. For example, all of the textbooks in the libraries are purchased locally. She also gives funds to the WALP librarians for them to spend at the National Book Fair in order to replace worn/lost items and to complement the existing collection. This allows each of the librarians to create collections specifically for their user community as well as supporting the local book trade and publishing industries.

Through her years of experience reading to children, Karen recognized the lack of books that contained faces and stories similar to those of the children that visit her libraries. To address this need, Karen has published a series of colorful books illustrated with her photography of local children. These are simple books featuring the faces the children recognize as their own, their games, foods, and stories. In my experience, these books proved to be the most popular at the WALP libraries. Even the children who could not read, enjoyed “reading” these books to me, reciting the simple story lines from memory. An extra bonus, the profits from Karen’s books sold in West Africa go into the account that pays for health insurance, staff bonuses, Christmas parcels, and the revolving staff loan program.

Recognizing the importance of teaching young children to read in their first language,

Karen also had a number of her books translated into six local languages. This translation project was made possible with support from the government as they were soliciting books for tender in local languages. Otherwise, according to Karen, publishing books in local languages is not financially viable because the demand is for books in English, “you can publish books [in local languages], but they won’t be bought.” Karen feels that the majority of people in this country cannot afford purchasing books and do not perceive books in local languages to have significant value. In addition to publishing books in local languages, WALP librarians visit the National Bureau of Languages every year to buy publications in local languages in quantities, but there just is not much available. One successful strategy to compensate for the lack of publications in local languages is for a talented librarian to make picture books come alive for pre-school age children by describing the story in the first language.

In addition to the book collections, WALP has a number of programs that attract children, youth, and adults. Most of the libraries offer free literacy courses to adults. The classes are taught by library staff using a primer. Karen feels that the level of instruction may not be a high level but is adequate to fit the need. In the libraries I visited, these classes were well attended and some students had been attending for years. Other programs include a football (soccer) club, a dance ensemble, drumming groups, feeding programs, and a theater group. These programs have often been initiated by community members.

The WALP book collections may seem modest compared to some Western libraries with the average collection containing 4,000-6,000 titles, but Karen believes that the success of a library cannot be judged by the books alone. There are many components in creating a successful library, and many of these components are specific to local needs. Karen states

that Westerners need to recognize differences between Western and African libraries, “so what we would expect here in Canada to be a successful library wouldn’t have the same parameters in Africa.” In order to create the best library for the community, it is important first to understand the community’s perception of and relation to books and libraries.

### **Relevancy of Libraries in West Africa**

How are books and libraries perceived in West Africa? From her experience, Karen believes that parents are not so aware of the benefits of bringing young children to the library. Most of the young children, if they come at all, come with older siblings. Staff see few parents at the WALP libraries. The majority of children associate books solely with academics, studying. Most Africans did not grow up with storybooks and have not developed the ability to identify with characters. Those residents that have experienced libraries, however, will endorse them. “They think they are fantastic places for communities, to upgrade the community, a resource for the community. If they’ve never experienced the library, they wouldn’t know what significance a library would have in the community,” Karen states.

I did visit two public libraries in this West African city. One was the largest library in the country and housed the National Library Board. The other was a small community children’s library that has been active for over thirty years. In this West African country with a population of 24 million, there is one library for each of the 170 districts plus an additional 53 branch libraries. At the large public library, I saw the phenomenon of multiple copies, a situation where publishers send up to twenty copies of remainders of the same book off to developing areas. Libraries often put all copies of the book on the shelves, regardless of circulation. Speaking with a librarian, I found out that the majority of books are donated from

Book Aid International, a book donation program in England, and that the vast majority of people that use the library never check out materials. During my visit I saw many students using the library as study space, using their own textbooks and library reference materials. This was a sight that I would see time and time again at public and academic libraries in Africa.

The exception to students using their own materials was the children's library housed in the same building as the National Library Board. Nowhere else in Africa did I see a children's library like this. It was housed in a large open space filled with books, tables, and displays. The librarian was engaged and informed. She told me that during school breaks, as many as ninety children could come each day. She also organizes activities for the children including quizzes, games, story hour, and reading lessons. The most wonderful thing was that the government supplied money for the purchase of children's books, selected by a book selection committee. This children's library serves as a model for the country and reflects the fact that the government recognizes a need, has the capacity for training librarians to work with children, and has devoted resources to creating at least one outstanding children's library. This model library stands in sharp contrast to the other small community children's library I visited later in the same day.

In the second library, in the same city, half of the books on the shelves were multiple copies (as many as 25 duplicate copies) of school textbooks, remainders shipped as donations from publishers in Western countries. These textbooks seemed to have never been used. I was puzzled why these school textbooks would be in a public library but Karen explained to me that since they had been sent to the Library Board and not to the schools, they ended up on the shelves. The community was proud to have them on the shelves despite the fact that

they were never used. And even if the textbooks had been sent to the schools (where children have to share textbooks as there are never enough), teachers would have a difficult time making a Western curriculum work in their classrooms. In conversation with the two young women working at the library, I learned that there is no programming offered at this library (no story time, activities, or clubs), and none of the staff are trained as librarians. During my brief visit, there was a group of secondary students studying and talking at one table, but no young children were present.

In many ways, the WALP libraries take on the role of community center. The children know they are welcome, and the libraries take on, in Karen's words, "a quasi-mothering role." It is a safe place and a place for children to be creative. Karen's ideal for the WALP libraries is to be a place "where reading is promoted, the children can gain in literacy skills, they are able to fulfill their own growth through painting or sewing projects or plays or singing." The biggest draw at the library is the librarians and that the kids know they are welcome. Karen states, "A library has as its cornerstone reading and literacy but really it's a place where children know they are welcome. It's safe, it's colorful, the librarians are here. They're there to listen to the children. So it takes a much bigger role than what you find in America."

In order to further the creative side of WALP libraries, the organization constructed a building to promote the arts. Many groups had formed already from the smaller libraries in the area, and, in order to support their interests, Karen requested and received land from the community where she could build a center to promote the arts, one of the few such centers in the country. This performing arts center turned out to be an important aspect in many local children's lives. Karen describes the positive effect of performance arts as "a pivotal

experience for a lot of the young people where they come from homes without running water and very minimal financial resources but they get on stage and they are on top of the world, they're meeting their dreams."

Much of the credit for the above mentioned WALP successes are due to community members themselves: local volunteers, government officials, and certainly the librarians. Local people play a vital role ensuring that WALP libraries are beneficial, relevant, and culturally sensitive to the local community.

### **Role of Community**

Help from community volunteers sometimes comes from unexpected sources. Karen recalls an instance at one of the WALP libraries where two men came to the librarian offering assistance. The men were rather loud and flashy, wearing gold chains and with their shirts open at the chest. The two men already had certain projects in mind but instead the librarian wrote them a list of things she felt needed to be done. One of those of those items was to fix the plumbing at the library as the library had been without water for four years. To the librarian's surprise, the men fixed the water, "which is amazing."

At the art center established by WALP, the community has proven invaluable as a partner. Community-based programs such as prenatal classes, HIV/AIDS awareness programs, and nutrition classes were all initiated by local groups. The dance troupe, gospel chorus, and theater group all function in partnership with local teachers and performers. At one library, the local public school works in conjunction with the library, sending students to the library on a scheduled basis throughout the week.

Working in partnership with local officials and politicians has proven to be a bit more complicated. One case in point, the librarians at a WALP library decided they wanted

computer access and Karen agreed to build a computer lab in a separate building. Karen went through the appropriate channels to request permission for building the structure and was informed that the regional Member of Parliament (MP) wanted to assume responsibility for building the structure. A generous offer but the building has been stalled, and it has taken much longer to complete than if WALP built it. The MP's explanation was that funds for the building had been re-routed to more pressing needs. At the same time when the MP offered to build the computer lab, the librarian's salary was not being paid by the community, per a prior agreement with WALP. Karen admits that it can be frustrating in dealing with politicians working to meet their own political needs. It may be in their political interest to follow through with the protocol but not put the necessary effort or funds into the project. MPs may also give gifts to the WALP Libraries without checking first to ask what the library needs.

Karen feels as if lack of support from local politicians is the norm and recognizes they are busy people with their own agendas. She also realizes that knowing the appropriate people in government and working successfully with them is a key to success. She states, "You need to know people in the right areas to go high up. And I do; I know a lot of people in senior positions, that's what I do and when I'm stuck, I try to work at the local level and if that doesn't work out, you just continue to climb those stairs until you reach someone you think is going to make a difference."

According to Karen, the individual librarians that run the libraries are of utmost importance to the success of a library. "Having a good librarian to make them (books) come alive makes a huge difference." A good librarian is the biggest success element for a library, more important than a good collection of books. A welcoming and attentive attitude towards

the children and willingness to put in the extra effort to support activities and programs is the recipe for relevant and thriving libraries. "If you don't have good people there, then it's unlikely that the children will want to go back. The books are a drawing card but it's just one of them. It has to be a full experience of going to a place and feeling good about themselves and knowing that there are people that will listen to them and respect them and so on." Karen emphasizes that the success of the activities, programs, and literacy classes really depends on the librarians:

And so you're really quite dependent on who's in charge because if you've got someone in charge that does a really good job, the library is more likely to do better. So that's the key. It's the people that make the difference. If you've got really good people in charge you're more likely to have really good programs.

These programs meet the needs of the community but if a librarian is not being paid because of government financial problems, it can be disheartening for them to put forth the extra effort to make the library and its programs successful. Karen believes that in these cases, what the librarians do really is above and beyond expectations.

The WALP librarians were selected through various processes and possess different levels of abilities and engagement. It should be mentioned here that librarians are hired and paid by metropolitan assemblies or the National Education Service. In some cases librarians were hired based on Karen's recommendations, and, in other cases, she had no input. Karen realizes that different librarians have differing abilities and their personalities define the personality of the libraries. One library may be particularly nurturing towards the children while another library is mainly used as a place to read books, with less of a "fuzzy feeling." During my month-long visit to WALP, I met five different librarians, and each librarian

proved to have differing levels of energy, interests, and ability to connect with the children at the libraries.

During my month-long stay at WALP as a volunteer, I spent ten days at the original WALP library. In many ways, this library set the standard for quality service and librarian engagement. A typical day at this library begins with morning activities: performing chores (cleaning the library, replacing plastic covers on the books, etc.); running errands on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and teaching adult literacy classes on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. In the afternoon, the children arrive. They spend the first hour reading books, the second hour they play games (matching game, snakes-n-ladders, pick-up sticks) and the last hour and a half is spent with story time. At some point in the afternoon a snack is distributed to the children, either farina or bread with margarine or peanut butter or cereal. Under the head librarian's leadership, the staff members are reading books out loud, teaching lessons, or playing games with the children. The library is full of children, many of them coming on a daily basis.

Another library worthy of mention is the WALP library set in a rural fishing village. This community approached WALP, requesting that Karen build a library in their village. Karen did so, and it has turned out to be a marvelous success. During my six-day stay at this library, I admired the fabulous book collection full of comic books, interesting young adult literature, African literature, current reference sources, and picture books. The collection of books is reflective of the head librarian who loves reading and is in touch with the interests of young readers. This library also has an excellent partnership with the local school, with classes visiting the library on a weekly basis. In addition they sponsor Game Day, one afternoon a week when all ages of children fill the library to play games and socialize.

In comparison, a third WALP library I visited had a much lower level of engagement with the children. At this library the librarian was present to greet me, speak with me briefly, and then left four hours early in order to run errands. The rest of my visit coincided with her two days off that week, so I spent little time with her. In her absence she left the library in charge of staff members and national service personnel, young people who have finished university and are obliged to perform service work for the government. National service personnel are one way the government strives to compensate for the shortages in library personnel, but they prove to be insufficient substitutes for engaged librarians. The national service personnel I observed during these three days spent their time reclined on couches, giving their attention to conversations on their cell phones and flirting with other young people who dropped by, for the most part ignoring the young children in the library.

During my visits to those five libraries, I did perceive differing levels of abilities among the librarians. While some libraries had success developing a relationship with local schools, other libraries had problems with the circuit supervisor and little success in promoting school/library cooperation. Some libraries had a steady cohort of regular library attendees who engaged in activities and were eager to listen to stories while other libraries had far fewer children attending, and these children took naps on benches or put puzzles together. Once story time began, they had trouble engaging with the story, and many left before the story was finished.

One effort on Karen's part to improve the overall training and day to day operations of the libraries is to hire a qualified West African as Country Manager. Karen is adamant that the person needs to be a national as opposed to a Westerner. This person could serve in an advisory capacity to the librarians, work to promote the libraries, and would report directly to

Karen. The person would have to possess strong computer skills, communication skills, and confidence to work with people at senior levels. One problem is that the librarians are not paid well, and Karen does not believe the government would come forward with the required funding to pay this qualified person the higher salary for their higher level of skills. This agreement with local government to pay the salaries of the librarians is one of Karen's biggest challenges in running an ILD program.

### **Partnering Agreements**

WALP has established agreements with local communities to maintain the ongoing cost of staffing the libraries, providing utilities, and maintaining the library buildings. Karen realizes that creating a dependency on foreign aid is problematic, so she works with grassroots agencies and within an infrastructure that can support the aid she provides. Otherwise, the project falls apart when the international aid agency leaves the country. To create a balance, WALP pays for the building construction, provides books, and ongoing maintenance of buildings. The government pays for salaries and utilities. The agreement is recorded in a "Memorandum of Understanding," a non-binding written agreement between the two parties specifying the division of expenses in creating and maintaining the libraries.

The salaries for library staff come from government sources, either local villages, metropolitan assemblies, or the National Education Service. Working with local communities and hiring staff from local sources has advantages for the West Africans employees. Having their salaries paid from local sources gives them social service benefits, something lacking when an NGO pays their salaries. When library staff are paid from local sources, they also are on the government pension plan.

Unfortunately, the municipalities have not been paying the staff salaries in many

situations. In one case, due to government restructuring, one library was transferred from the district which signed the agreement to a different district. During the interview, Karen said the librarian was not getting paid by the new district, so Karen was working to ensure payment. Karen stated, "I've been in the system long enough to know if you keep persevering that eventually you'll be able to get them to pay." In the meantime, Karen was supplying the librarian with a small amount, funds directly supplied by WALP.

Additionally, the Metropolitan Assembly is currently not filling vacancies that resulted from retirement, illness, or school leave. Essentially the Metropolitan Assembly is bankrupt, behind on all its other payments. The library cannot function without these frozen positions, so WALP steps in and pays a small allowance to replacement staff with hopes that the Metropolitan Assembly will eventually pay. In the past, the Metropolitan Assembly offered national service personnel to ease the employee shortage, a short-term engagement proven ineffective. Karen believes things are slowly improving, citing the fact that two people from the Youth Employment program were recently assigned to work at one of the libraries. Two individuals working for two-year terms as opposed to nine months for the national service personnel, and as paid workers rather than volunteers.

The procurement of salaries from the municipality can be frustrating for Karen. One of the lead WALP librarians spoke with her recently, saying he felt that WALP should be doing more for the librarians. Karen realizes that staff members are not paid well but recognizes the benefits of them being paid locally. For her part, Karen tries to represent the librarians to the local sources and to advocate for the librarians among government officials. She knows that both the mayor and the coordinating director are both aware of WALP's concerns.

With her most recent library construction project, Karen has switched from working with

the Metropolitan Assembly to working with the National Education Service, hoping they are better able to pay salaries, electricity, and water. But even this has unforeseen “hiccups.” To find land for this library took two years and became a difficult process. Three prior suggested locations fell through before the present location was confirmed. Certainly some of the problems could not be foreseen, such as Karen’s following example:

In one place the library was going to be built in conjunction with a school, but then the footballers in that area didn’t want the school being built, and they beat up the contractor. And so after the contractor was beaten up, the Head of the National Education System just closed down the whole school until that was resolved, and there was an issue with the MP of the area, oh, and it just goes on and on. You just have to be patient, or otherwise you just give up.

Even after interviewing Karen, I am still unclear about the ownership of the libraries themselves. According to the Memorandum of Understanding for a library built in 2001, it is understood that the community allows WALP to build a library on a determined section of land but does not specifically mention ownership. Karen emphasizes the fact that the libraries are for the community, but when I asked Karen who actually owns the titles to the WALP libraries, she responded, “Well, that’s a tricky thing. Libraries are for their communities. We don’t own them but we manage them... we don’t really have it as titles because we are not transferring any titles.” I can only interpret this as the fact that the MOU is basically a loose contract based on inter-dependence. Karen has constructed a building on land owned by the government, but she retains the title. The government has donated land to a cause that works in their favor. Karen realizes it would be foolish to hand over titles to a government that is basically bankrupt, and the government realizes they could not maintain the libraries without

the help of WALP.

Sometimes it's a headache to get bills paid. Karen goes to one office, and they don't have the money, so she has to go to the head office, and they ask for more paperwork. According to Karen, "It's just kind of the bureaucracy of how it is." With all projects, it can be necessary to keep pushing, always having things in writing, documented, so the organization has something to fall back on. As she states, "make sure you have it in writing before you go ahead."

In my literature review on international aid in Africa, much research claims that corruption is a large stumbling block to creating sustainable development programs. I asked Karen whether she had experienced any corruption in her dealings with West African officials. She said that she has experienced virtually no requests for bribes or purposeful deception in her twenty years of working as an ILD leader with only two exceptions. One of Karen's Western colleagues visited the National Births and Deaths Department to obtain a birth certificate for one of the librarians so she could travel out of the country to provide training in a neighboring country. The colleague gave the fee to a person in the office supposedly acting as an official. After an extended period with no response, they inquired as to the whereabouts of the birth certificate, and when they showed the receipt, they were informed no such person worked in the office and they had been swindled. She explained, "You have to be very careful when you are dealing with money because it is easy for money to go the wrong way, especially in a place like [here]." In another instance, a school levied the students to support the library with a fee but the money was never given to WALP. Karen did not have the energy to follow up and she simply let it go.

In summary, one needs to consider many factors when evaluating the benefits and

sustainability of WALP. Karen's dedication as an unpaid volunteer, combined with low administrative costs, creates maximum benefit with donated funds. As Westerners, we need to reevaluate our criteria for a successful library. What may be considered benchmarks for a flourishing library in the United States or Canada may be very different from what is needed by an African community library. The WALP libraries are much more than collections of books, they are places where children go and engage with adults and participate in creative and educational activities that help them grow up with increased self-esteem, creativity, and literacy skills.

In addition to Karen, many people contribute to WALP's successes. Librarians are a key component in creating a welcoming environment for the children and taking the lead role in the creation and direction of library programs. Community members serve as volunteers, helping with library programs and working on facilities. The local government and politicians play a central role in the negotiation for and support of the libraries but with mixed results. At times government representatives voice support, provide unsolicited gifts, or sign agreements but they also fail to meet prior agreements, as in the case with library salaries or utility bills not being paid.

## **Chapter Five: Southern Africa Library Program (SALP)**

### **Portrait of Mary, Leader of SALP**

Mary (not her real name), the leader of SALP, is a trained librarian with a Master's in Library Science and a career background in international development. Early in her career, Mary worked for a consultant firm which performed contract work with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and later on she worked with the World Bank in their Agricultural and Rural Development Department, developing library services for staff working in the agriculture and rural development sector. In addition, she worked as an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture in a Central African country, reporting to national administrators.

In her role as the leader of an international library development program in a Southern African country, Mary spends much of her time networking with other librarians, corporations, government officials, and non-profit agencies. She calls Southern Africa almost every day, to discuss matters of concern with her Regional Program Director, members of her Advisory Board, or government officials. In matters of fundraising, she has been successful in obtaining a generous corporate donation, funds sufficient to finance the construction of a second library. Mary's goal is to make SALP a publically funded development agency as opposed to donation-funded.

Mary feels that the fact she is a Westerner both helps and hinders her success as a leader of an international library development program. On the negative side, she believes her U.S. citizenship hinders her ability to obtain development funding from non-U.S. donors who are

interested in supporting SALP's program. On the positive side, being an American gave her access to quality professional librarian training, as she stated, "I would say as a librarian, being an American trained and experienced librarian is an advantage to me." She also recognizes that living in the United States gives her access to an attractive pool of potential donors. Mary believes that she has a better understanding of African government and protocol than most Westerners and that she has successfully bridged between the two cultures.

In addition to Mary's personal awareness of cultural protocol, she includes a number of nationals within the SALP structure. The founding member of the SALP Advisory Board is a leading representative of the country's culture, currently serving as Chairman of the National Arts Board. Another Board member is one of the country's business leaders and previously served on the National Anti-Corruption Board. Mary never goes to a significant meeting with government officials without SALP also being represented by a country representative, explaining, "These are people on whom I rely to know exactly how to deal with the government on particular issues that I'm not familiar with or that simply, their communications between each other is more direct and more accurate in representing each side's views better." Mary realizes that in some meetings and with some individuals, the influential country members who accompany her carry more weight than she does.

I have been fortunate to meet Mary on a couple of occasions due to the fact that we are active in the same professional association. At one conference that I attended, Mary was everywhere: presenting at a pre-conference, presenting in two different programs, creating and presenting a poster session, and organizing a gallery exhibit of paintings by SALP visual art program participants. Mary works long days as a volunteer but foresees a time when she

will be paid for her role. Mary states that since SALP is a relatively new NGO, just as with any start-up enterprise, it requires a major investment at the beginning. Mary never ceases to take the opportunity to network with others. She is an experienced communicator and understands the importance of convincing others that her program is worthy, needed, and deserves external support.

### **A Description of SALP**

SALP targets youth and children made vulnerable by circumstances, children who are excluded from many other social services including out-of-school children, street children, and orphans. At the time of my visit to SALP, they had one library functioning and a second library that was scheduled to open within the month. Each of the two libraries is built on the premises of their host agencies. The first library resides within a center for homeless children (called Children's Shelter in this dissertation) while the second library was built within a school compound. This second library had held its opening celebration two weeks before my visit but had not yet opened to the public due to construction delays. Both libraries are non-lending libraries meaning the books cannot be checked out but must be used within the building.

The books for the SALP library collections are acquired mainly from donations but by no means are all books that are donated included in SALP libraries. Mary estimates that between one-in-five to one-in-ten books donated were selected for inclusion in the first collection, but as donation guidelines were refined, a much bigger percentage of donated books fit the collections. Decisions on what to include are based on the SALP collection development policy, a policy informed by Mary's years of experience in Africa. Mary has been reading to groups of children for decades, ever since her own children were small. She also conducted a

pilot project of sorts prior to the establishment of SALP in which Mary and others converted a shipping container into a reading area for children at the Children's Shelter and observed what the children read. In addition to book donations from the general public and publishers, SALP receives the top titles in children's literature through U.S. colleagues who serve on book award selection committees.

To supplement the core collection of 4,000 donated books, SALP spends approximately six hundred dollars a year corporate donations to purchase books in Africa. As previously mentioned in the description of WALP, this domestic purchase of titles helps the library collect titles relevant to African readers as well as providing support for African authors, illustrators, and the publishing industry. Mary plans that in the future, the books should be purchased rather than come from donations. She believes that in the world of international development, books are an under-valued resource.

The majority of books in the SALP libraries are in English, but, as with WALP, this is due to the fact that few books are available in local languages. Mary firmly confirms as fact that it is best for children to learn to read in their first language, but it is difficult in this country due to the shortage of reading materials. The few local language books available in SALP were published by Insaka Press in partnership with Cambridge Press (with financial help from UNICEF) back in 1997. They published a set of ten simple picture books set in Africa, translated into seven major local languages plus English. The books were sold for about \$4.50 apiece. At that price, there were not many people who could or would buy them for their children since many are struggling to purchase the necessities of life. Mary summarized that that this equaled a total of ten books for a child to read in their first language. Wordless books are also a wonderful addition to the library, especially if a grown-up can make the

story come alive for the young children. In order to succeed financially in this country, one must be literate in the English language, not just local language. Mary believes that, in this country, people “absolutely have to learn English to get by. I mean, that is the language of commerce and that is the language they will need to have mastered in order to further their education or have jobs that involve communication.”

The fact that SALP libraries target services to disenfranchised youth gives special importance to effective programming, books, reading, literacy, and outreach. According to Mary, literacy rates in this Southern African country are negatively affected due to truancy resulting from lack of school fees, psychological trauma, drugs, responsibility for younger siblings, and the death of parents. If the children are living in the streets, it’s a struggle to just survive. Mary believes that reading “changes your entire world view because you are able to broaden your perspective and understand things more, in more depth. You can’t go anywhere without being able to read. That’s true in Africa as well as anyplace else.” In this country, not being able to read limits your employment prospects notably. And for Mary, it is to a certain extent a question of humanism: “it is everybody’s right to learn to read.”

Mary makes it clear that she does not consider SALP to be a literacy program. She believes that other ILD programs claiming to be literacy programs, such as Room to Read, are actually only playing the traditional library role of putting quantities of books in proximity to children. Mary recognized that SALP needed to go much further in helping children to read so SALP has recruited local teachers and youth who learned to use the SALP libraries’ computers to create computer-based literacy programs in seven national languages, all programs created in conjunction with the government educational curriculum. The project was made possible through a grant from EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries), a

European non-profit organization which works to enable access to digital information to developing countries.

In addition to its book collection, SALP offers a variety of activities and programs, including a motivational mentoring program, an arts program, a performing arts program, and activities on laptops supplied through the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) program. Mary recognizes that participation in the performing arts program helps to give kids a voice and an opportunity to grow and be better communicators. As a result of the motivational mentoring program, “a lot of children who were out of school went back to school.” The mentoring program is taught in the vernacular and based on indigenous stories and traditional ways and values that have been taught throughout the generations.

SALP strives to create culturally relevant libraries by selecting quality donated books, purchasing additional items published within Africa and in local languages, and creating targeted, culturally aware programming in conjunction with local partners and informed by identified needs. Many of the above decisions were made in accordance with Mary’s perception of how people in this country perceive books, reading, and libraries. SALP seems to be creating libraries that take the African library vision in a whole different direction. Just as in the prior discussion of WALP, SALP libraries are creating much more than just storage centers for books.

### **Relevancy of Libraries in Southern Africa**

According to Mary, Africans value books and libraries just as much as their Western counterparts. In her experience, older and more experienced Africans have a tremendous and traditional respect for books and learning. If she gives someone in this country a book that interests them, they are just as motivated to read as any Westerner. The reason Africans tend

not read for pleasure is the lack of access to quality and relevant reading materials. This lack of reading materials is reflected by the fact that many people Mary speaks with do not know how to characterize trade books for children, referring to them as “textbooks,” a problem she feels is exacerbated by book donation programs that, themselves, do not make this distinction because that is what they are in a position to supply.

Mary believes that people in this country have been disappointed in what libraries have been able to give them. Public libraries do not draw children because they don't have anything to offer them, nor do they specifically target children and youth with programming and outreach. During my stay, I had the opportunity to visit the main public library and saw this to be true. The children's library consisted of a medium sized room which housed two work areas for library staff, a few child-sized chairs, and three book carts pushed in to the corner stacked with old and worn children's books. Seated in the child-sized chairs were two grown men waiting for something (although for what was not obvious). I would have never recognized the space as a children's library; I originally thought it was a work space for staff with surprisingly inadequate seating. In speaking with the librarian I learned that during school breaks children are dropped off by their parents and do spend time reading the books in the room.

In the rest of the library, the books are mostly old, worn, and the content outdated. The phenomenon of multiple donated copies is once again evident on the library shelves. The librarian explained that the majority of books came as donations from the British Council Library and Book Aid International (BAI). She also told me that people in this country do not check out books to read for pleasure, and of those books that are checked out, many are never returned. During my visit I saw around fifty university students sitting at the desks studying

for exams but no one examining the book stacks. The librarian explained that libraries receive very little funding from the government as they are not a priority. When I asked her what she thought were the government's priorities, she only smiled but did not answer. The good news was that a representative from BAI recently visited the library and had the staff fill out a form requesting certain types of materials. More than 2,000 new materials have now arrived and are waiting to be cataloged.

Mary has witnessed negative aspects of international library development in other ILD programs. These negative aspects create libraries that are full of uninteresting and irrelevant materials. She stated that a lot of the book donation programs ship textbooks extras or other curriculum-based materials from U.S. publishers. Mary made the point that African countries' curriculum is not congruent with educational curriculum in the United States, making the textbooks irrelevant. She also believes these textbooks are particularly misplaced in public libraries. She recounted an episode from one web site of an international book donation program, Books for Africa. This ILD program sent a shipment of books to Tanzania and a large percentage of them were in Spanish. Tanzanian libraries did not want these Spanish books but were ethically opposed to simply throwing them away. Finally Tanzania found a school in Texas that said they could use them and Tanzania shipped them off to the United States at their own expense. Mary believes that "the big problem is people feel very uncomfortable saying no, and extremely uncomfortable throwing things away." Publishers tend to send twenty copies of the same book and leave the burden of multiple copies to the recipient. In speaking of Western donors and developing countries, Mary states, "We're kind of using them as the garbage can of last resort and that, that is very disturbing."

In addition to creating a high quality book collection and relevant programming, Mary

recognized the importance of creating a library that is welcoming to children. Just like Karen from WALP, Mary believes that the number one factor leading to a library's success is providing a safe and welcoming atmosphere to children. In support of this important element, Mary quoted from Denise Agosto's (2007) work studying why young people in the United States use libraries, that "books and information are only a tiny aspect of, a small amount and not even the major reason why young people in the United States use public libraries." Agosto believes that a library offering children a beneficial space is a crucial element in creating a successful library. Mary believes that libraries can best serve youth by creating a safe and welcoming space:

We feel that the best way to serve children, especially children who are dispersed, who don't have a strong center in their life or in their community, is by having a place just for them, that is especially for them—a place that they can come and connect with other people, where it actually brings people together.

SALP is dedicated to serving homeless children, a mission that dates back to the first reading program Mary coordinated at the Children's Shelter in the 1990s. Recognizing the needs of street kids, Mary has taken the idea of providing a welcoming environment one step further: "We especially want to be, quote, unquote, home for children who are homeless."

The library buildings are designed by SALP's Regional Program Director, who is also an architect by profession with a scholarly knowledge of indigenous building designs. The design of the buildings is based on this knowledge and strives to connect people with their culture. Mary has been approached by some potential partners who want to support the establishment of additional SALP libraries but without the buildings, saying it is problematic

to construct buildings. Mary turns down such offers, stressing the importance of the buildings and how they serve to connect people with their culture.

Some colleagues have also questioned Mary's dedication to indigenous design as opposed to the familiar Western library construction. When Mary opened her first library, a librarian colleague working in the American Library commented that they needed desks to bring people into the library. This is true: many Africans use libraries as study rooms, studying for exams and using the computers for free but not using the library's book resources. Mary emphasized that the SALP libraries serve a different purpose, and, due to the high quality of their book collections, the children are using them in a different manner than the other public libraries. According to Mary, her program's second library (which opened after my departure), demonstrated the success of SALP libraries by the tremendous number of children (over 7,000) who visited within the first month. She explained, "And so we've never, ever, had to really do any dramatic thing to go off and make sure that children will want to use our libraries." Much of this success is also determined by the people working with SALP either as volunteers or as paid staff members.

### **Role of Community**

The role of nationals on the SALP Advisory Board, participation of community members, and the librarians all help to create an engaging and welcoming environment. As mentioned earlier, Mary relies heavily on the African members of her Advisory Board. These nationals are active in mobilizing local funds by approaching organizations for donations and serve as advisors in cultural matters. The members of the Advisory Board include scholars, national leaders in the arts, and leaders in the business community. Mary emphasizes that these nationals serve on the Advisory Board because they believe in the value of the libraries; she

has been informed by the Advisory Board members numerous times that this is something they really want for their country. In addition to the Advisory Board, the instructors for the arts program, the drama program, and the mentoring program are all community members. She foresees future libraries established in rural communities will be run by communities to an even greater extent. In preliminary conversations with community members about SALP's next library (planned for a rural setting), the community wants to be involved in making the blocks to build the walls and have renamed their library in the local language.

Echoing the sentiments of Karen in the previous chapter, Mary stresses that the success of the library is indeed contingent on the quality of the librarians and staff that work at the library:

So, the books, kids love, there's no question about that, but some of them, many of them, especially younger children, want and need to be read to. And I don't know whether it's so much the book or adult paying attention to them that is the thing there. I think you can't separate the materials from the human resources and the human caring and the human interaction that I think is even more important for particularly the younger children we serve.

The staff at the libraries collect assessment data—the type that is vital in knowing if the libraries are meeting their objectives and in obtaining grants and other funds—such as how many children visited the library broken down by gender. They also need to be skilled storytellers and engage in outreach activities to attract children. SALP management expects them to supply feedback on library matters such as how well the collection and the locally-created classification system accommodate patrons' needs. They must be service-oriented,

“making the library a lively place, tolerating noise, and making sure people are—children are not being left out.” Mary realizes that not everyone is able to fulfill the above duties and an individual’s success as a librarian has a lot to do with their individual talents.

In speaking with Mary, it becomes clear that initial librarians at SALP have had varying degrees of talent in interacting with the children that visited the library. She mentioned a past librarian who was very talented in storytelling and very engaged with the children. Other librarians who have worked at SALP have required additional training to improve their ability to interact with the children, keep statistics, and maintain daily operations. Mary informed me that she has had to let librarians go in the past due to their lack of outreach to children, when a situation resulted in lowered numbers of children visiting the library.

### **Partnering Agreements**

SALP libraries are built, maintained, and operated in conjunction with hosting organizations. As in the case of the WALP program, SALP builds the libraries, supplies books, and performs substantial maintenance on the buildings. The host organization in turn pays the staff members’ salaries, utilities, and day-to-day maintenance. Complete ownership of the libraries is transferred to the community. The SALP partnerships are formalized in a non-legally binding “Memorandum of Understanding.” Again, as with WALP, problems have occurred when the host organization is unable to fulfill the financial aspects of the agreement.

In the case of SALP, the Children’s Shelter has run into financial difficulty due to poor management and faulty accounting practices. The Children’s Shelter has changed management since the agreement was originally signed, and Mary believes that the previous management made more of an effort to pay salaries. In fact, the Children’s Shelter

management failed to bring up the fact that they could not pay the librarian; Mary had to broach the topic when the librarian stopped receiving their pay. Mary realizes that the librarian needs to be paid, so SALP found a patron willing to donate money to the Children's Shelter exclusively for the librarian's salary for the coming year.

According to Mary, at the time of my visit the Children's Shelter was at its lowest point ever. They had little money. In an attempt to get back on their feet and to create more transparent financial practices, Children's Shelter has created a new Board, with a SALP representative as one of its members. In the past, SALP has suffered as a result of the accounting practices of the Children's Shelter. In one instance, Children's Shelter was holding the salary of one of SALP's employees but they were unable to come up with the funds when it was time to transfer the funds to the librarian. A few days after SALP informed Children's Shelter that they were considering legal action, they did produce the money, but it was clear to Mary that accounting practices required additional transparency.

Working with the Children's Shelter has proven to be difficult in other aspects as well. Mary admitted that "it is probably the least sustainable organization you can find." Mary has a long-term association with the Children's Shelter and has seen it go from a flourishing volunteer agency to a much less efficient organization with paid salary positions. Her philosophy is that if her first library can flourish here, SALP libraries can flourish anywhere. Additional roadblocks include a robbery of One Laptop per Child (OLPC) laptops and a set of encyclopedias as well as a theft of funds from a scholarship fund. SALP and Children's Shelter were able to track down the scholarship funds and have since received a promise that they will be repaid by the individual.

For SALP's second library, SALP is collaborating with a different type of partner, the

national Ministry of Education. Together they built and opened a library incorporated within a school compound but, as is fundamental to SALP's model, open to the public. This project also presented some challenges. At the beginning of the partnership, the local government and teachers balked at the idea of allowing street kids in the library. Mary recalls that in preliminary discussions with the school there was a teacher "who was just a real pill. She kept saying 'you people, you people [meaning SALP] coming in here with this.'" Mary started having second thoughts about this school as a location and went to talk to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education. Mary told the Permanent Secretary of the teacher's reaction and the Ministry asserted that the government was the main stakeholder in these libraries, not just "you people." The Permanent Secretary voiced her commitment to serving this population of children, recognizing that this aspect of the partnership with SALP meets the Millennium Development Goals for education. The Ministry used the situation to readjust the mindsets of the teachers and local administrators. "They basically used [SALP] as a battering ram to say the teachers have to change their attitudes." When Mary returned, there was a huge change in attitude at the school, all brought about by the Ministry of Education. SALP spent a couple of years working closely with the Ministry of Education on the local and national level and the changes occurred.

When asked about her experience with corruption in this country and whether there had been any resulting negative consequences for SALP, Mary stated that she had experienced only minor incidents where she thought someone might be asking for a bribe. Those incidents at the Children's Shelter involving scholarship funds and librarian's salaries she viewed as outright criminal activity as opposed to corruption. What she does view as a problem in some African countries is the political practice of placing people in key positions

due to their ethnic backgrounds. She recounts her personal experience in a Central African country where she was working as an employee of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry realized the need for additional library training and offered to send two individuals to the United States to receive their MLS degrees. It was understood that after finishing their degrees, they would return home and work as librarians for a pre-determined amount of time. Mary was allowed to participate in the interview process as an advisor and observer. Four people were interviewed, and two rose above the others as enthusiastic and professionally inclined toward the field of librarianship. Mary felt certain that these were the two candidates that would be selected by the committee, but, when the decision was released, these two candidates were overlooked in favor of two candidates who belonged to the prominent ethnic group of the time. No one challenged the decision: "That is something that is Africa, and there was nothing that could be done about it." The result was that one of the scholarship recipients left the Library Science program soon after arriving in the United States to marry an American and the second recipient, who actually did finish his MLS degree and returned home, honored only six months of his agreement to work within the national libraries before he quit. Mary realizes that she is not alone in her frustration with the situation; Africans are working towards changing the system in their own well-timed and thoughtful manner. She explained her thoughts:

Africa sometimes has a way of just making you take two steps back with each step forward, no matter what. So, I guess I tend to be really philosophical about those, those things. I don't think, I don't feel cynical about it; I just feel like these are the odds against which I've seen very courageous Africans battle for and keep going and keep fighting for

things to happen right for a long time, and I just try to learn from them how to take it and just realize, okay, that's what happened there—let's try something else.

In summary, Mary has created an ILD program based on years of experience working in libraries and international development. As President of SALP, she is tireless in networking with colleagues and promoting SALP on an international scale. Like WALP, SALP is more than a collection of books, providing a welcoming and safe environment for children, numerous programs, and creating partnerships with local education agencies.

And again like WALP, SALP involves members of the community to help them achieve their goals. Community leaders serve as Advisory Board members and attend important meetings alongside Mary. The importance of librarians emerges in the findings, as well as the significance of library as a gathering place for children, particularly for homeless children. Partnerships with host organizations are challenging at times, as is the case with Children's Shelter, but Mary is optimistic about her new relationship with the Ministry of Education.

In my next chapter, I discuss the findings described in these last two chapters. In the discussion I draw from the literature, make generalizations and comparisons. The discussion of findings is structured in a fashion that specifically addresses my two research questions.

## Chapter Six: Discussion of Findings

In this chapter I discuss the findings about international library development (ILD), organized into three sections. One section addresses each of the research questions:

1. How do the leaders of international library development programs balance the benefits of ILD programs with the possible negative effects of supplying foreign aid?
2. Is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development?

In these two sections, linkages are made to the literature and incorporate three traditional ethnographic methods—observations of WALP and SALP, the lived experiences of the two library leaders as conveyed through interviews, and documents such as the Memorandums of Understanding and ILD web sites. This study reinforces information gathered in the literature review and also presents new insight into the benefits and possible negative effects of international library development, especially as viewed through the lens of foreign aid. The discussion of sustainability in international library development, a topic previously underdeveloped in the literature, examines various factors that are integral to the success (or failure) of sustainable international library development. From the findings, it is clear that SALP and WALP libraries have not yet attained economic or managerial independence that would qualify as sustainable but they are working towards sustainability as a goal.

The more I wrote about the three topics addressed in the research questions—benefits, potential negative effects, and sustainability—the more I realized the extent that they are intertwined, making organization of my discussion a challenge. Findings related to benefits or potential negative effects are vital to the discussion of sustainability as well. As a result, I

created a third section that serves as a summary, a section that centers on some of the overall issues and unresolved tensions that I perceive in sustainable international library development.

### **Benefits of International Library Development**

For the first research question, “How do the leaders of international library development programs balance the benefits of ILD programs with the possible negative effects of supplying foreign aid?” I discuss findings that pertain to the seven identified benefits provided by these two ILD programs and how the leaders were mostly successful in avoiding five potential negative consequences of international library development and foreign aid. All of these benefits and possible negative effects are directly related to the sustainability of international library development, as they reflect relevancy for the communities, the amount of local support gained for libraries, and efforts to enable the partnering agency to assume direction and management of the libraries.

**Providing materials to support literacy.** It has been established through the literature review that access to reading materials is necessary for readers to acquire literacy skills and to advance their skills to the next level (IFLA, 2003; Krashen, 2004; 2007; Krolak, 2005; Nhlengetfwa, 2005). Both ILD leaders realize the importance of supporting literacy. In her interview, Karen stated that literacy really is the cornerstone of the WALP program. The WALP web site states that introducing children to books leads to a better future and that teaching adults to read improves self-esteem and may lead to better employment. Mary related that through her interactions with people over the years, they all recognize that the ability to read improves the quality of life. They certainly equate the ability to read with improved economic opportunity. For Mary, it is also a matter of humanism. She views it as

everyone's right to learn how to read.

WALP and SALP promote books, reading, and writing in many ways. During my observations of the two ILD programs, I saw librarians, staff, and volunteers engaging children in activities that increase literacy skills. These activities included reading to children, helping children to create their own small books, and writing stories as a group. I also observed WALP and SALP libraries serving as depositories of reading materials for local schools, assuring access to reading materials for developing readers. The level of participation in such activities varied among the libraries, depending on the initiative of the librarians, a topic further explored in the sustainability section of this chapter, under the discussion of social considerations.

Both WALP and SALP are active in endeavors specifically aimed to teach literacy skills. WALP teaches literacy classes for adults who have never been to formal school. I observed four different literacy classes during my visit. The class instruction is basic but effective. The entry-level adult learners work from primers, learning the alphabet and phonics. More advanced readers read simple stories, often the books published by WALP. In this instance the literacy classes strive to meet the literacy goal defined by UNESCO, someone "who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement on his/her everyday life" (Lind, 2008, p. 42). From what I observed, these classes provided students with benefits tied to issues of self-esteem, confidence, and personal empowerment (UNESCO, 2006). The question remains whether these adult learners will continue their literacy education to the second level, practicing and improving the ability to learn through daily exposure to written materials (Greaney, 1996; Lind, 2008).

Some of the WALP literacy classes went beyond simple instruction and discussed various

historical and social topics such as West Africa's history of slave trade and prevention of domestic abuse. In these classes the students were asked to think beyond the primer and to discuss issues with one another. This type of instruction prepares them to interpret, evaluate, and react to what they may read in the future—literacy as defined by Freire (1987).

Mary specifically states that SALP is not a literacy program and she believes that other ILD programs, such as Room to Read, claim to be literacy programs but are actually only filling a traditional library role of supplying books. Not to say that she is underplaying the role of supplying books to support readers, only to clarify that there is a difference between supplying books and actively teaching people how to read. And although SALP is not actively teaching literacy skills, they have recently created computer programs using One Laptop per Child (OLPC) laptops with a grant from Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the project is in conjunction with local teachers and has created 100 reading lessons in each of the seven national languages (700 lessons in total), following the governmental reading curriculum and recognizing the importance of children learning to read in their first language. In this way, the program recognizes the importance of a child reading in their first language (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011, Khorana, 1998) while addressing the recognized shortage of materials (Khorana, 1998; Odaga, 1998).

**Increasing reading for pleasure.** These two ILD programs introduce children to reading for pleasure, a concept they are not likely to discover through their parents or schools. Reading for pleasure enables them to excel in their academic work throughout their school careers and to develop alternative ways of discovery. According to Krashen (2004), the most effective way to improve one's reading, writing, and other language skills is through free

voluntary reading (FVR), or simply stated—reading for pleasure. Those who read more tend to be better readers, writers, and spellers. One retains vocabulary better through FVR than by direct instruction or studying vocabulary lists. And obviously, in order to pursue FVR, it is necessary to have access to interesting reading materials.

Karen concurs with Krashen when she states her belief that introducing children to reading for pleasure helps them increase their reading skills and in turn, that allows them to perform better in their studies, enrich their vocabulary, and improve writing skills. Karen also adds that reading for pleasure gives children additional life experiences through characters having adventures and solving problems.

Karen and Mary realize that the majority of people in these two countries do not do much reading for pleasure. Mary believes that if Africans are not reading for pleasure it is due to a lack of access to quality and relevant materials. She cites that many people use the term “textbook” when talking about story books, not knowing how to characterize books for children. In my observations at public libraries in these two countries, the vast majority of patrons were studying their own class materials. In discussion with one librarian at a public library, she told me that very few of her patrons check out material to take home and very few of them read books for pleasure.

For Karen, it is vital to introduce children to reading for pleasure as early as possible. She has observed that many children are not exposed to story books or the English language until well into public school. Karen finds that the majority of parents are not aware of the benefits of coming to the library. Perhaps they did not grow up with storybooks themselves. Those young children that do come to the WALP libraries most often come with older siblings. One successful strategy is for talented librarians to describe story books to children in their first

language, allowing them to fall in love with books and stories.

**Providing social and cultural programs.** The majority of literature pertaining to book donation and ILD programs discusses the quality of the book collections. An equal or stronger benefit of WALP and SALP that emerged during this study is the vast array of programs, clubs, and activities they offer to community members. WALP and SALP have created outreach services that meet the cultural, social, and educational needs of the community including soccer clubs, feeding programs, health education, performing arts programming, mentoring and counseling, and art programs. In interviewing Karen and Mary, the programs evolved as a response to community interests and needs.

This wide variety of local interests represented at the libraries is very much in line with the literature that discusses cultural relevancy for African libraries. Various scholars, predominantly African, recognize the need for alternatives to the print-based, Western-style library. Alemna (1995) suggests blending the written tradition of the public library with cultural activities, club, and organization meetings, giving the libraries a social and political purpose and actively pursue involvement with the society. Nhlengetfwa (2005) suggests that library programs and clubs link to the community's cultural heritage in order to strengthen self-confidence and self-development and that the programs incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and values.

SALP and WALP have several strong examples of successfully blending culture and libraries. SALP's motivational mentoring program was designed by a local sociologist, is taught in the vernacular, and is based on indigenous stories and traditional ways of transmitting values from one generation to the next. Both WALP and SALP have arts programs that give kids a voice, an opportunity to grow, and build self-esteem. In the last two

years, WALP's Theatre Company performed two plays written by a WALP staff member, based on African folklore and relevant cultural issues. Guided by local artists, SALP's arts program enables young painters to create art that reflects life as they experience it.

A very important aspect of the programs, clubs, and activities is they bring children and adults into the libraries. As has been stated, the majority of people are not familiar with the benefits of using a library but they are interested in programs such as soccer club, arts programs, feeding programs, and health education. Karen tells me one of the WALP staff members first came to the library because he was hungry. He came for the food but stayed for the performing arts, an interest he is passing on to neighborhood children.

**Developing libraries as beneficial environments.** In her survey of American youth that frequent public libraries, Denise Agosto (2007) found that one in ten visited libraries seeking a positive atmosphere as opposed to seeking information. Agosto describes this as "the library as beneficial physical environment" (p. 60). Although Agosto's findings reflect the attitudes of youth from the United States, through my observations and interviews, I would surmise that this certainly pertains to youth in WALP and SALP communities. From my experience with seeing the public "children's" libraries and their low attendance, it is not the presence of books that brings the children into the WALP and SALP libraries but instead a combination of quality books, engaging programming, and a welcoming environment.

Karen recognizes that the WALP libraries take on the role of community center and that some of the libraries have a "fuzzy" feeling, meaning they appeal to the child's need for comfort. In a very telling statement, Karen told me that the cornerstone for the libraries is literacy but they fill a much greater role, they are a place in which children know they are welcome. Libraries fill a surrogate parent role, a safe place where children can be active.

Karen believes that this benefit of the WALP libraries, providing a welcoming and nurturing environment, is of much more importance for WALP libraries than for American libraries.

Libraries as beneficial physical environments are a particularly important consideration for SALP, considering that they target youth and children made vulnerable by circumstances, including out-of-school children, street children, and orphans. The libraries are built to serve as a safe place for those children who have no other place to go. SALP's primary goal is to provide buildings that serve as a place to bring people together, giving homeless children a place to connect with others. The SALP library buildings are based on indigenous design, connecting people with their culture and avoiding the large, expensive Western design of the majority of public libraries in African cities, as suggested by Alemna (1995). Each of the SALP libraries is comprised of three circular structures. The entrance building is modeled after an insaka, the traditional central gathering building in villages in this part of Africa. It has great importance in the ordering of people's lives in the village, a place where elders gather to discuss issues. The library building is a cool, inviting place with bookshelves along the walls and a talking circle (step seating) at its center. A third building, similar in structure to the library building, is used for the art program. The SALP library design is discussed in further detail in the sustainability section under cultural considerations.

**Offering personal connections.** Denise Agosto (2007) writes that interactions with librarians are the reason many young patrons visit libraries in the United States. According to the results of Agosto's survey, many of the young library users mentioned the librarians by name, one giving the nickname Mommy #2 to the Young Adult librarian. The role of the librarian is crucial for introducing small children to the pleasures of reading. Carole Bloch, Director of the Early Literacy Unit at the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in

South Africa, is quoted by Edwards & Ngwaru (2011) emphasizing the importance of a child's contact with an adult to create an interest for books and reading, "It's not the books initially, it's the contact with the significant adult who pulls them in. They could be singing or doing rhymes – anything – but it happens to be from books. And then the books take over later" (p. 442). As mentioned in the previous section, Karen echoes Agosto's findings and believes this factor takes on even more significance within WALP libraries than it does in American libraries. According to Karen, the main role of the librarians is to be present to listen to the children, to let them know that they are welcome.

During my visits to the ILD libraries I witnessed this interaction among the children and librarians, library staff, and volunteers. As a visitor, I was happy to find the children receptive and eager when I offered to read to them. If I was reading to one child, soon others came to listen to the story or I would have them take turns reading to me. I do believe the draw was their interest in the stories but also they were eager for the company and interaction with adults. To repeat a quote from Mary presented earlier in the findings:

So, the books, kids love, there's no question about that but some of them, many of them, especially younger children, want and need to be read to. And I don't know whether it's so much the book or an adult paying attention to them that is the thing there. I think you can't separate the materials from the human resources and the human caring and the human interaction that I think is even more important for particularly the younger children we serve.

I also noticed that the energy and engagement level of the librarian was often reflected in the children's attendance. If the librarian was engaged with the children, the children

regularly attended the library. If the librarian and other staff had less contact with the children, the less likely I was to see the same children returning to the library. My observations support Karen's statement, "If you don't have good people there, then it's unlikely the children will go back." This ability to interact with children is vital to the success of the library and it varies among librarians.

**Providing employment.** WALP and SALP benefit the local communities by creating employment opportunities in conjunction with partner organizations. Hiring locally benefits the ILD programs in that it brings local knowledge and creates a path for community members to fill future management roles (Aall, Miltenberger, & Weiss, 2000). It benefits the community in that it creates employment and helps build capacity in human resources. It is important that the community pay the librarians and staff salaries for two reasons: it demonstrates a sustainable commitment on the part of the community (Riecken Foundation, 2010b) and it ensures ongoing eligibility for social service benefits including pensions. Currently more than sixty people are employed through WALP libraries and ten people are employed through SALP libraries. WALP also provides benefits made possible through the sales of their publications: Christmas parcels, health insurance, a rotating staff loan, and staff bonuses (Interview with Karen, 2011).

**Human resources capacity building.** In these two countries, few training opportunities exist for children's librarianship (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007). Mary has coordinated the creation of a Fulbright position at the national university for a visiting professor to teach children's librarianship, a field of librarianship previously omitted from the Department of Library Studies curriculum. SALP is in the process of recruiting VSO volunteers to work as trainers for six years, hoping to recruit library professionals with children's library training

and experience. As Mary states, “our training plan really calls for long-term in-service and training, we’re talking like six years, at least three VSO’s.” This is much more of a commitment than Room to Read, an ILD program that offers only three days of training for individuals serving as librarians (Wood, 2004). In addition to training WALP librarians, Karen and her staff have created online training publications and travelled throughout the region and to other countries to provide training for librarians serving youth.

### **Avoiding Negative Effects of Book Aid**

In developing these collections, the library leaders set up policies and practices that follow established best practices to avoid some of the worst mistakes of book aid in the past, and in a larger context, of foreign aid. In this section I discuss five potential negative effects of book aid that were in the literature: book dumping; negative effect on local publishing; dependency on aid; Westerners setting policies and priorities; and NGOs self-serving to themselves and donors.

**Book dumping.** As described in the literature review under the section of past mistakes, book dumping is the practice of book donation programs sending inappropriate books to developing countries (Greaney, 1996). For both WALP and SALP libraries, the majority of books in the collections have been acquired as donations from the United States and Canada. Both ILD programs have a selection policy, allowing only high-quality and relevant books to be included in the collections. They definitely avoid some of the worst previous offences of book aid: no multiple copies of irrelevant books, books are in good condition, colorful, and represent various levels of literacy. Yet both leaders recognize the need for active selection in order to supplement the donations. In this section I discuss the various ways the leaders are acquiring additional materials to supplement the donated collections, materials that help

create a better balanced collection, culturally and linguistically.

In addition to selection policies that create core collections from donations, WALP and SALP take further measures to develop interesting and relevant library collections. Nhlengetfwa (2005) writes that ILD programs should link materials to the learner's cultural heritage in order to strengthen self-confidence and self-development. Karen allows her librarians to spend funds on selecting titles for their libraries, further personalizing libraries to the needs of the community. During my visit to WALP libraries, I observed one outstanding example of a library collection developed by the librarian. Its core was donated books but the collection was supplemented with comic books (very popular), selections from the Heinemann African authors' series, and various books about Africa. Additionally, WALP spends thousands of dollars annually buying African textbooks, ensuring they provide texts relevant to the local curriculum.

Each year, WALP spends approximately \$10,000 buying books to supplement new library collections and to add materials to the existing libraries, currently numbered at seven libraries. SALP spends approximately \$600 of corporate donations a year to purchase books in Africa to supplement the two existing collections. Allowing local purchase of materials ensures the availability of interesting and relevant books as well as supporting African authors, illustrators, and publishing industry. As mentioned earlier in the findings section, Mary believes that books should be purchased rather than come from donations. She believes that in the world of international development, books are an undervalued resource and in order for books to be seen as valuable, you have to put a value on them. According to Mary, it is important to be transparent about the real value and cost of building balanced and comprehensive collections.

In my examination of the books at the WALP and SALP libraries, I found that the overall book collections reflected the fact that the majority of books were donated by Westerners. Providing culturally relevant materials for the libraries is a challenge due to various factors: the majority of books come from donation and the shortage of culturally relevant materials due to the state of local publishing. In one SALP library, books about the United States outnumbered books about Africa by four to one. At both WALP and SALP libraries, I saw various young adult series such as Nancy Drew or The Babysitter Club. In the case of SALP, the Nancy Drew books were included at the request of a resident advisor assisting with building the book collection. This person said they enjoyed the Nancy Drew books as a child and felt they broadened the world in a way that was culturally accessible, much more than most chapter books for children today.

It would be interesting to know how often these young adult series were read by the children, especially given the fact that SALP and WALP libraries are non-lending libraries. The fact that books cannot be checked out means a person would have to spend a substantial amount of time within the building to read a young adult novel. I also wonder of the effect of Nancy Drew on a young African girl. Will she be strengthened by the stories of an adventuresome, wealthy, and well-educated American girl? Will she be able to universally identify with the character, building her own self-esteem or will the stories have the opposite effect, making her disillusioned with her own life in comparison?

As mentioned in the findings, Karen recognized the lack of books that were culturally relevant for local children and created a series of books for children featuring their neighborhoods, games, toys, and foods. Even the values reflected in the books are distinctly African as opposed to Western. In one of WALP's books, an old man tells a young girl's

mother that the daughter is lying when she reveals that he is stealing food. Typically, in a Western story, the old man would be recognized as a liar and learned a moral lesson when the truth is revealed. But instead, both the young girl and the old man simply smile at one another at the end of the story, as if forgiveness is understood.

SALP has recruited volunteers to identify and digitize out-of-print traditional stories, creating a repository of materials that are of cultural and linguist importance (many of the books are written in a local language). The digital books are available through an open-access web site. The repository was created to preserve the country's culture, to inspire young readers, and to serve as a resource for future authors and illustrators of children's books. Currently there are thirty books in the depository with plans to add more.

In addition to the challenge of supplying culturally relevant books, there is the challenge of supplying books in local languages. Both WALP and SALP purchase all the local language books they can locate. WALP visited the Bureau of Languages a year ago and bought local language books in quantity but there were few titles available.

As Karen states in her interview, it is not financially viable to print books in local languages because the demand is for books in English. The only way to meet costs for publishing local language books is to ensure that another NGO or the government will buy the books or to enlist their financial support in sharing the publishing costs. WALP published six books in local languages in conjunction with a local publisher and financial support from the government.

Mary supplied additional anecdotes that verify the rarity of local language books due to economic factors. The local language books at SALP, limited in number, were funded with financial support from UNICEF and published by a local publisher in partnership with

Cambridge Press. Mary states that the cost of \$4.50 a piece makes them too expensive for people to purchase when they are struggling to purchase the necessities of life. Not enough people purchase books in local languages to make it financially viable.

**Negative effect on local publishing.** How does international library development affect local publishing efforts? As stated in the literature section, the fact that book donation programs supply desperately needed books to developing countries actually hinders local publishing efforts (Greaney, 1996; Matare, 1998). Mchombu (1998) states that 97 percent of the books found in African libraries are imported, mostly as donations. Book donation and ILD programs should be an option only until a local book publishing industry develops (Greaney, 1996; Matare, 1998). But as one can see, the cycle continues. Books are not published locally so book donation programs bring them in from other countries. This results in less need for locally published books.

The ILD programs realize the need for increased publishing in these countries and for this cycle to be broken. WALP and SALP have sponsored workshops for authors, illustrators, and/or publishers. These workshops were presented in conjunction with the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), a non-profit organization devoted to providing access to books to children around the world. IBBY workshops are held throughout the world and focus on promoting and preserving access to local languages and cultures (IBBY, 2011). In speaking of the WALP workshops Karen shares that she does not think the workshops resulted in more publications but instead the success was at a personal and inspirational level for the individuals involved.

In the past, someone bought the rights to publish the WALP books and hired a local printer, providing additional capacity building opportunities. Karen felt that the quality of the

books was not at the same level as those printed in Canada but she may consider printing books locally in the future. Karen would need to choose between maintaining quality and helping the local printing industry. I understand her hesitation, quality is important because for every book sold outside of Africa, the same book is donated to an African library; in addition, the profit from these books goes to supplement library staff benefits.

**Dependency on aid.** Many critics believe aid has actually worsened economic and social conditions in Africa (Glennie, 2008; Knack, 2004; Theroux, 2003). In my visits to public and university libraries in these two countries, librarians told me that almost all of their books come from book donation programs. There just is no money in the local budget to be spent on books. That makes one wonder, if book donation programs did not provide books, would administrators provide funds or would the libraries go without new acquisitions?

I do believe that book donation and ILD programs create a dependency in the short term. In many countries there is an insufficient tax base or development funds to support building libraries, acquiring books, and providing maintenance. This issue of dependency on aid is addressed in detail in answering the second research question: is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development? The question remains, can WALP and SALP break this dependency in the long term by creating sustainable libraries, libraries that can be managed and maintained by the partner organizations?

**Westerners setting policies and priorities.** Western development agencies have played a major role in setting the development agenda in Africa (Glennie, 2008). As Westerners building libraries in Africa, one could ask if WALP and SALP are denying local leaders and communities the opportunity of deciding the personality and functions of libraries. Few would object to leaders writing policies and procedures for their organizations. Often these

leaders are the most qualified and have the majority of responsibility for the organization's success. Yet national origin can become an issue when the leader is perceived as an outsider to the targeted community they serves. I believe WALP and SALP strive to reach middle ground in this issue. Mary and Karen fill the role of strong, committed leaders while remaining open to input from regional advisors, officials, and staff.

Upon entering the partnership, each of the partner organizations agreed to adhere to certain policies and procedures created by WALP and SALP. In SALP's MOU with the Ministry of Education, it is stated that the library staff "will follow [SALP's] guidelines and develop all programs with [SALP] officer(s)." The partner organizations are following the lead of the ILD programs in exchange for the benefits associated with international library development.

But the partner organizations are not without a voice. In order to receive suggestions and guidance, SALP and WALP invite local leaders, staff, politicians, and community members to participate in the formation and management of the libraries and their programs. Both ILD programs have nationals serving on their advisory boards or in leadership positions in regional affiliated organizations. Programs and activities are directed by library staff and community members. Mary notes that she always goes to significant meetings with government officials accompanied by prominent nationals serving on her Advisory Board that play key leadership roles within SALP.

Additional evidence that SALP and WALP are requesting local input are the Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) that state that libraries are not run solely by the Western leaders but are managed in partnership with the community and library staff. In WALP's MOU with the Metropolitan Assembly, it is stated that the library will be managed

jointly by WALP, a community committee, and library staff members. The SALP MOU with the Children's Shelter states that library staff is responsible for running the library with help and guidance from SALP.

The *Paris Declaration* (OECD, 2005) states that for aid to be effective, the donor country should align aid with the partner country's development priorities. Both ILD program leaders believe they are working to fill the stated needs of the countries by building libraries and training staff. This topic is discussed in more detail in the section on sustainability, under political considerations.

**NGOs self-serving to themselves and donors.** Many scholars question if NGOs are actually serving the needs of the partner countries or have fallen into a trap of serving their own needs and the desires of the donors (Afwerki, 1997; Hubbard & Duggan, 2008). Logically, if NGOs are successful in sustainable development they would eventually put themselves out of a job.

In reply to the above concern, both of these ILD programs are run largely by Western volunteers that currently receive no compensation for their work. WALP is transparent in reporting their operating costs, with administrative costs an amazingly low 1%. In 2009, Mary reported to the United States government, via tax form 990, that she worked an average of sixty hours a week for SALP, while not paying any current officer, director, or trustee involved in the organization (this includes herself). Both Karen and Mary work as volunteers, as do all of their staff members in Canada and the United States. Obviously financial gain is not considered as a motive to maintain the ILD programs.

When asked how she perceives her future role in the ongoing management and operations of the SALP libraries, Mary responded, "my objective is actually to create a sustainable

organization, [SALP], from which I can retire.” She would like to see SALP continue to function as an umbrella agency for the individual libraries, to provide long-term training and a central office for acquisition and processing. Karen states that she would like to continue her role and strengthen the local chapters to make more of their own decisions and to trouble shoot more of their own problems. She wants the libraries to eventually be self-sufficient financially yet believes it will be quite some time before that happens. In speaking with Karen, it is clear that she wants to remain actively involved with WALP long-term and continue to create partnerships with grass-roots agencies to create self-sufficiency.

Are the ILDs meeting national development goals and meeting local needs as opposed to meeting the needs as perceived by the leaders or by the donors? This question is discussed in much more detail in the section on sustainability, under the topics of political and cultural considerations.

### **International Library Development Sustainability**

In this second section I address the research question, “Is sustainability an achievable goal in international library development?” As stated in the literature review, the relevant definition of sustainable development for this study is, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). Sustainable development leads to the self-sufficiency for the partner organization and can be measured by two factors: (1) the ability of the partner agency to continue producing beneficial outcomes for the intended community, and (2) the ability of the partner agency to rely on local resources to produce these benefits (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007). In order to accomplish these two goals, a wide array of factors needs to be considered. For organizational purposes, these considerations are broken down into four

divisions that encompass the subject of sustainability: economic, political, social, and cultural.

**Economic considerations.** Perhaps the biggest stumbling block to creating sustainable libraries in these two countries is the fact that the host organizations, ranging from local grass-roots organizations to various levels of government, are struggling financially. Scholars question the viability of sustainable development in such situations, citing situations in which services suffered or ceased after withdraw of continued aid (Easterly, 2006; Kremer & Miguel, 2008; Ravichandram & Rajashree, 2007). Both WALP and SALP experienced host organizations' inability to honor the agreement to pay salaries for the librarians and library staff. In the case of WALP it was due to the practice of freezing positions when an employee leaves, not re-filling the position. At SALP, it was due to the host organization simply not having the money to pay the salary. In recent years, SALP and WALP have formed new relationships with bigger and hopefully more stable organizations to host their recent libraries. WALP is going from working with a municipal assembly to working with the National Education Service. SALP has gone from working with a small non-profit organization to working with the National Ministry of Education. The fact that they are now working with national agencies may make a big difference in domestic financial support.

According to the *Paris Declaration* (OECD, 2005), to improve the effectiveness of current aid, it is vital that both the ILD programs and the partner organizations share mutual accountability. Donors need to provide aid according to a predictable schedule and must continue until the partner is capable of providing benefits independently (Dodd & Lane, 2010). WALP and SALP have both proven committed to their partners, providing or securing additional funds in order to provide salary to unpaid librarians and staff. Neither ILD has set

deadlines for withdrawal of aid nor do they foresee supplying aid indefinitely. In turn, the *Paris Declaration* (OECD, 2005) suggests the partner organization works towards strengthening their financial management and build capacity to provide domestic resources, planning for a self-sufficient future. This may prove the biggest obstacle to sustainability in international library development and is ultimately the responsibility of the partner organization. The donor cannot control the situation nor can they predict future actions/outcomes.

Perhaps the biggest question pertaining to sustainable ILD is whether the governments will be able to supply funds in the future to support libraries. Since the end of the colonial era fifty years ago, these two countries have experienced financial challenges. The question remains, will the government have a sufficient tax base or adequate development aid to support libraries? According to Karen, since libraries are not receiving targeted funding, they are currently not a priority. When asked about WALP's sustainability twenty years into the future, Karen replies, "You might have another government that comes in that gives credibility to what libraries can do." Instead the government is targeting basic needs like food and water. During my visits to regional libraries, a public librarian confided in me that libraries are not a funding priority for the government. According to Karen, for libraries to be a priority, those in power would need to realize the value of libraries. Only people that have grown up with libraries or been abroad and experienced their value elsewhere are going to put money into them. The paradoxical conclusion to this statement is that without quality libraries being available, many people in power will remain unaware of their benefits.

When projecting into the future, it is impossible to say whether or not the partnering

organizations will provide the needed financial support necessary to operate the SALP libraries but regardless, Mary is determined to hand over the libraries:

It's [the country's] right to sort of autonomy, to have those [libraries] and make them what they need to be. And of course there is a government and it could use more money, and it will continue to operate, you know perhaps for a long time with external funding. I don't know, I mean it's been that way since it existed.

Mary echoes Karen's belief that it is impossible to predict the future since she cannot predict how the government or the libraries will develop, "I think things will probably evolve in ways that we can't even begin to foresee." Regardless of the uncertainty, Mary maintains an optimistic, realistic, and flexible attitude about the future.

**Political considerations.** Political support is vital in order for aid to prove effective (OECD, 2005). One good reason for non-profit agencies to partner with local governments or host agencies is financial. Studies show the greater the level of partnership between an NGO and partner organization, the more donations a NGO will receive from benefactors (Dibie, 2008). In order for ILD programs to develop partnerships with national government, municipalities, or with grass-roots organizations, it is important to maintain effective relationships with government officials, politicians, local leaders, and administrators.

In order for partnerships to be mutually beneficial, the *Paris Declaration* (OECD, 2005) suggests holding both donor and partner countries accountable for development policies, strategies, performance, and financial matters. To clarify the responsibilities of both donor and partner organization, WALP and SALP created Memorandums of Understanding (MOU): non-legally binding documents that detail the responsibilities of each partner in

creating and maintaining libraries. By signing the MOU, the partnering officials are documenting their commitment to providing ongoing local resources to support the libraries. However, in the previous section on economic considerations, it is evident that the governments and host agencies are not always able to meet these responsibilities documented in the MOU.

For a partnership between donor and partner to be effective, the provided benefits must be valued by the community to the point that they are willing to commit local resources (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007). To ensure that the community values the benefits of the project, it is advised for donors to align aid specifically with the development strategy and priorities of the partner country (OECD, 2005). Both SALP and the Ministry of Education recognize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formed by the United Nations, as primary goals of the partnership. This agreement is written into their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), stating that SALP and the Ministry will work together to attain the objectives of the MDGs by building libraries that target homeless children, promoting libraries in conjunction with the National Library Service, and collaborating to promote literacy and library services. The Permanent Secretary of Education also voiced her support for SALP when she convinced hesitant school teachers that creating a SALP library in the school compound will help the country achieve the MDGs.

When Karen is asked about her level of awareness of WALP's partner country's development goals and how WALP meets these priorities, she responds that free basic education for all children until grade nine is a national goal, with reading recognized as vital to academic development. Classrooms are very crowded and with inadequate numbers of teachers. WALP libraries introduce children to reading for pleasure, making them more

inquisitive, better readers, and better students.

What happens when libraries are not a development priority? I can answer this question from what I have seen during my visits to regional public and university libraries. There is almost no budget to purchase new materials. Books are acquired almost exclusively through Western donations. The buildings are old and in disrepair. The libraries are used almost exclusively for study areas due to lack of interesting materials or engaging programs. But the poor state of domestic libraries and partner organizations failure to pay salaries should not necessarily be interpreted that the governments do not value libraries. These countries are struggling to supply the basics of food, water, and education, making financial budgeting decisions a difficult task.

These two leaders do know how to maneuver the government offices. Karen states that it is important to know the right people and to contact them in the correct sequence. Karen is skilled at working within the government structure to follow through with paperwork and secure payment of salaries and utilities. If she meets a roadblock, she starts with people at the local level and works her way up the ladder as necessary. Another successful strategy: Mary never goes to a significant meeting with government officials without being accompanied with a SALP national representative, perhaps a member of her Advisory Board. As she stated in her interview:

These are people on whom I rely to know exactly how to deal with the government on particular issues that I'm not familiar with or that simply, their communications between each other is more direct and more accurate in representing each side's views better.

Commitment of political and community leaders is so very important in the success of these partnerships. *Global Monitoring Report: Literacy for Life: Summary* (UNESCO, 2006) states that the literacy challenge can be met only if political leaders at the highest level commit themselves to action. Sadly, politicians do not see libraries as an issue that will help in re-election, particularly in comparison to such issues as health, education, and employment (Bukonya, 2009). Both Karen and Mary have worked with politicians who show various levels of support, support that varies based on the individual. Both ILD leaders believe that this depends solely on the individual official. They have both worked with extremely helpful and receptive individuals who have furthered the establishment of libraries. They have also worked with less supportive politicians.

At times, politicians may find it useful to display support for the ILD programs. Karen's experience of trying to build a computer lab at one of her libraries illustrates this situation. When Karen applied for the building permit, the regional Member of Parliament decided that he would build the lab, a good situation. But in reality, the money for completion of the project was routed to meet more pressing needs, delaying the project's completion.

**Social considerations.** In order for these ILD programs to prove sustainable they would need to create a cadre of trained personnel to take over much of the work still performed by Karen, Mary, and their Western staff. Both leaders still call Africa several times a week, dealing with matters of finances and day-to-day questions about library operations. While Mary's organization does have a trained architect/builder who designs and carries out construction projects, Karen does most of that work herself. In her interview, Mary reveals she is still involved in the day-to-day operations of SALP libraries to a greater extent than she was hoping she would be at this point. She would prefer to be working on management,

technical, and procedural issues that guide SALP instead of solving daily concerns. Mary states, “Ideally I probably wouldn’t be directly involved with any necessarily library-level decision making, I’m approaching it as system-wide.”

For the libraries to prove sustainable in the future, they need to rely on local resources for self-support (including management) while continuing to provide beneficial outcomes for the community (Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007). Based on my observations, for the most part, the individual libraries run autonomously. At the WALP libraries, the librarians restock the library collections, organize activities and programs with partnering agencies, and train new staff and volunteers. At both the WALP and SALP libraries, the librarians send progress reports to Mary and Karen and ask questions as needed. The real need is for individuals that serve as library trainers and mid-level managers, a need recognized by both ILD leaders. These individuals could take over the responsibilities of managing local funds, training librarians, juggling miscellaneous tasks, and communicating with local partners. Each of the two leaders has recognized the need for additional help in-country and is going about the task in different ways.

For Karen, a first step in making this happen is creating a position of Country Manager, described in the findings section. This person would serve in an advisory capacity to the librarians, work to promote the libraries, and report directly to Karen. They would possess strong communication and computer skills. I believe that Karen hopes to hand over the majority of her day-to-day responsibilities to a national and train this individual to serve as a future WALP leader. The question is, will the government be willing to pay an adequate salary required for such a skilled individual?

SALP’s immediate solution to the shortage of librarians trained specifically in youth

services is to bring in Western volunteers to provide long-term in-service training to library staff. These Western volunteers would help to build capacity within library staff to successfully run the SALP libraries. Specifically, Mary hopes to recruit volunteers from the Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), an international NGO that works with local partners in developing countries to end poverty. Mary is hoping to obtain three VSO volunteers to work one after another, for a total of six years of training. She is also open to the idea of qualified Peace Corps and U.N. Volunteers working with the SALP libraries.

This issue of capacity building is an important social consideration in relation to creating sustainable libraries. On the issue of training librarians, Karen and Mary have approached this issue of training librarians from different angles. Karen does the majority of training of WALP librarians in-house. Being self-trained herself, she has successfully trained others to work in libraries, travelling to other countries to hold workshops, and writing training manuals she shares on the WALP web site. She also relies on experienced WALP librarians to train new WALP staff and to help with external training sessions for non-WALP libraries.

SALP has also successfully trained librarians in-house but Mary feels that prolonged training will prove helpful to teachers serving as librarians in SALP's newly opened second library. This library is run by a staff of teachers, each teachers receiving salary compensation for their time. Since they are new to working in libraries it cannot be expected that they would run the libraries autonomously without additional training. In addition to the VSO volunteers, Mary worked to create a Fulbright position at the national university to teach children's librarianship in the Library Science program. The successful candidate taught at the university, provided additional training for teachers working as librarians, and provided SALP with some advice in creating new policies and procedures for the SALP libraries.

There is very little professional training for children's librarians in Africa (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007). Library Science curriculum tends to focus on technology and other academic specializations. Most African countries have one professional Library Science program although Mozambique, Lesotho, and Swaziland have no Library Science programs at all (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007). The draw to the profession is limited as salaries are low and almost no new libraries are being built (Ochalla & Bothma, 2007). In addition, there is currently no cadre of SALP librarians in the Civil Service of SALP's partner country although their Ministry of Education has proposed creating such positions. Recognizing the time required for such a change in any civil service entity, Mary feels it may be some time before it could be established.

Another important social consideration in creating sustainable libraries is the ability of the librarians to provide quality service to the public. As mentioned several times in this dissertation, primarily in the findings and in the section on benefits of international library development, Mary and Karen emphasize that the success of the libraries is dependent on the ability of individual librarians to engage the children, to organize successful programs and clubs, and to set a welcoming tone.

**Cultural considerations.** The degree that libraries are needed and wanted in Africa and their cultural relevancy are two primary questions in addressing cultural considerations. As mentioned previously, African libraries were originally created by the colonial powers to entertain the Europeans and acculturate the Africans (Matore, 1998). The whole notion of learning by reading was foreign since African learning is based on the oral tradition (Etebu, 2009; Banjo, 1998; Nyana, 2009). According to Bukenya (2009), the majority of people in Africa are unconvinced that using a library can make a difference in their lives. Much of the

literature about cultural relevancy of libraries in Africa is written by African scholars and reinforces the idea of libraries evolving to meet community needs and desires (Banjo, 1998; Alemna, 1995). Yet a recent study on the perception of public libraries in six African countries reflected the belief of community members, librarians, and government officials, that if libraries were properly funded, they could make a difference in people's lives (EIFL, 2011).

As Mary and Karen discussed in their interviews, this could be related to a number of factors, particularly previous exposure to poor quality libraries and library materials, the lack of outreach to parents and their young children, and the low percent of population that read for pleasure. In this section I discuss findings that suggest that libraries have not been treated as a high priority in Africa. They are underfunded, not well attended, and the majority are based on Western models. I will also present findings that suggest libraries are very much needed and wanted by those that are familiar with their benefits. I also ask a second question that discusses cultural relevancy. Are the WALP and SALP libraries Western libraries or are they African libraries?

According to scholars, the mere existence of most public libraries in Africa is due to the high number of school children that use the library to finish school work. And they use the public library because of the poor condition (or non-existence) of school libraries (Mchombu, 1998; Pfoeffler, 2003). In her interview, Karen told me that parents are unaware of the benefits of bringing children to the library. Most Africans did not grow up with storybooks and associate books only with academics and studying.

The majority of public libraries I visited in these two countries were being used by students studying for exams. The three children's libraries I visited varied widely in quality

of collections, programs, and personnel. The bleakest was in the same town as the SALP libraries. As mentioned earlier, I did not even recognize it as a children's library until enlightened by the librarian. Basically it was a large, open room, used as a work area with book carts stuck in a corner filled with deteriorating children's books. A second children's library, in the same town as the WALP libraries, was better but still had shelves filled with multiple copies of textbooks, unengaged staff, and no programs, story time, or organized activities. The fact that the community included as many as fifteen copies of the same unused textbook displayed pride in ownership but a lack of a relevant materials. But the third children's library I visited, this library spoke volumes about government support for the future of children's libraries in WALP's partner country.

This large children's library reflected the fact that the government and the National Library Board obviously recognized the value of libraries for children. I saw staff interacting with children, providing activities and story time. The library receives government funding to purchase new children's materials, guided in their purchases by a selection committee. But from what the librarian told me, this could very well be the only such library in that country, much more the exception than the rule. This large library serves as a model and in reality, it may be one of a kind, but its presence acknowledges an understanding of good children's librarianship. I interpret this as a commitment to the future of libraries in a country that has little funds and more pressing priorities.

The fact that each of the ILD programs was created in partnership with the government or a host agency, speaks to the fact that they are wanted by the partner organizations. In fact, for the large majority of libraries built, the local host agencies contacted WALP and SALP to request a library for its organization or community. Both ILD programs have community

leaders on their advisory boards, community spokespeople that are very vocal about their support for the libraries and their desire to have them for their country.

Other community members show their support of libraries by volunteering their services. Volunteers from the community come in many different forms. Sometimes they come unexpectedly, such as the example of the loud men fixing the plumbing in the WALP library. Other times they are young scholarship recipients who agreed to donate their time to WALP in exchange for tuition money. At many of the WALP libraries, young people are the ones that clean the library every evening. Some of these young volunteers go on to join the library staff.

Addressing the question of whether SALP and WALP libraries are Western or African, I believe they possess qualities of both. Both WALP and SALP provide services similar to those described by Banjo (1998) in his depiction of an alternative to the Western library, the rural library/community information centre, a place where written tradition is blended with cultural activities, club and organization meetings, and media. WALP and SALP provide various programs and activities that engage the communities. Such centres would be designed based on local architecture, regionally appropriate, open, simple, and inexpensive (Alemna, 1995). The WALP and SALP buildings themselves are low-cost, regionally appropriate, and simple. The architecture of the SALP libraries in particular is very much in line with Alemna's suggestions. Mary makes the additional point that the buildings themselves are very sustainable, "useful and useable." Mary specifically stated that if the communities decided they would prefer the libraries to become story-telling centers after SALP withdraws, that would be fine with her. It is important that the building, which is in itself sustainable, fit the needs of the community.

Mary has no expectations that the libraries need to continue in perpetuity exactly as in the first few years. The partnering institution and community are empowered to maintain and run the libraries, assuming responsibility for ownership. When asked about the sustainability of SALP libraries, Mary responds:

The whole idea is that they do take ownership. And help make it something that works with their institution, and we, why shouldn't we withdraw from that? ... It will be sustained as the owners want to sustain it and that's the only thing that's really genuinely sustainable. To continue, we don't have a model that calls for continuous external inputs at all.

This shows Mary's commitment to allow the local community to decide the future evolution of the libraries. The implications being that in the future the libraries could be totally unrecognizable from what Westerners envision as libraries and be re-created as true African libraries, whatever form that may take. This quote could also be interpreted to mean that Mary realizes the possibility of the failure of the library, if indeed the institution chooses to sustain it at a very low level.

The question, is sustainability an achievable goal for international library development, cannot be answered by a yes or no response. At this time, conditions are not ready for the WALP or SALP libraries to run independently of financial assistance or Western management. In the future, circumstances would have to change before libraries such as WALP and SALP could function independent of foreign aid and the majority of these issues are controlled by the partnering organization. In the next section, I elaborate on some of the complicating factors inherent in international library development and thoughts on ILD

leadership.

### **Tensions in Leadership and International Library Development**

After interviews, site visits, and informal discussions with additional ILD leaders, I find that international library development has challenges that extend beyond what one might expect. Tensions exist that are difficult to resolve in a manner favorable to all. Regarding Western working in Africa, critics may question why a local person is not filling the role of library development leader. In addition, developing a cadre of local library managers or building culturally and linguistically relevant library collections prove more problematic than one may imagine. ILD leadership demands flexibility in working with partner agencies as well as persistence in requesting that prior agreements be honored. The ILD leader must balance donor and community expectations, striving to solicit donations while remaining true to local community needs. In the following section I develop a summary discussion that centers on unresolved tensions relating to leadership in sustainable international library development.

**The ILD leader as Westerner.** One key tension in international library development is that the leadership is from outside the partner country. Few would object to the idea that leaders are the most qualified to create policies and priorities for their organizations. The inherent tension that occurs within ILD is that the leaders are not native to the community they serve. As Westerners, their policies and priorities may carry a cultural bias or be based on their needs, depriving the partner organization the opportunity to control their own development. Two questions address this tension: how do these two leaders view themselves and their roles within their programs, and how do they work with partners to assure they are creating culturally relevant procedures that address local development goals?

Mary and Karen have both donated years of their lives to creating ILD programs. They acknowledge that they are privileged to have the means to perform this work without salary. They are both passionate about bringing libraries to communities, especially to children. They are very hard workers, putting in many more than 40 hours each week. Karen and Mary have confidence in their personal abilities and do not see a future where they would give up their leadership roles in totality, except when they speak of retirement. They have worked hard to achieve their present success and, like most other people, would be pained to release total control to others. At this time, they both feel that they play a vital management role and the ILD programs would suffer without their presence.

In response to the question of why a local person is not performing this work, it may be that few local people have the same resources at their disposal as do Westerners such as Mary and Karen. Being born in affluent countries such as the United States and Canada, they have certain privileges unavailable to the majority of people in developing countries such as access to higher education and to Western donors and other resources.

Perhaps in the future, ILD programs such as WALP and SALP will function under bilateral leadership in that local leadership works to ensure culturally relevant policies to achieve national development goals, while Western leaders manage donations and other appropriate tasks. ILD programs could also evolve into projects supported completely by local government without the need for foreign donations to construct new libraries and supply books. One thing is clear, if these two ILD programs are truly working towards sustainability, they need to be developing management capacity to a greater extent, a tension discussed later in this section.

As Westerners having lived in Africa for many years, Karen and Mary have dealt with

numerous government officials, politicians, and administrators. Through these interactions they have learned local protocols and successful communication strategies. They also know the importance of speaking with the right people, of allowing local officials to receive recognition for their support, and letting nationals work out issues among themselves. In dealing with governmental leaders and administrators, Karen and Mary see themselves as neither outsider nor insider. Both of these women have lived and worked in Africa for decades yet still have people question why a local person is not coming forward to do this work.

**Filling management roles.** At this point, I believe both ILD programs would fail to continue without Mary's and Karen's leadership, or at least under the leadership of other Westerners willing to devote the same amount of time and effort. Currently neither ILD program has local management set up that could manage donor relations, financial negotiations, and other relevant managerial tasks.

In filling the role of mid-level management for ILD programs, there are the questions of who to hire, what level salary, and who will pay the salary. If an ILD programs recruits Western volunteers to fill these roles, they will save on salaries. This allows funds to be used in the building of new library buildings. A drawback to this plan is that it does not further the development of a cadre of mid-level local management. In my opinion, it is preferable to hire a resident within the country to fill this role, but then the question will be, who pays their salary? Partner organizations may balk at paying an additional salary, especially if they are having difficulty paying those already employed by the ILD program. And if the partner organization does agree to pay the salary, would the ILD program lose the right to make the hiring decision or guide the individual's work? In this situation, do the mid-level managers

take their orders from the ILD leader or from the partner organization?

Mary's and Karen's strategies for building capacity in human resources reflect a proactive course, are cost-effective, and help to build capacity to meet future training needs. By providing training in children's librarianship they are not only filling their own needs but helping to build capacity for other libraries as well. Mary is working with the Library Science program at the national university to strengthen the professional cadre of librarians by enlisting a Fulbright scholar. Karen is taking training to regional, country, and international libraries. The choice of Mary to recruit VSO volunteers has many benefits including a long-term investment of continued service, especially if she receives successive volunteers. Enlisting VSO volunteers is also cost-effective.

**Balancing donor and community expectations.** One challenge for ILD leaders is promotion of their ILD program to prospective Western donors, balancing the positive aspects with problematic realities of international development. Leaders need to portray their ILD programs in a positive manner in order to gain the confidence of donors. As the saying goes, "who would invest in the Titanic?" If attendance at the library is low or the partner agency is not meeting their obligations, how much information needs to be shared with the donors? What is the line between successful promotion and unethical withholding of potentially damaging or disappointing information?

In addition, ILD leaders need to represent their programs in a fashion recognizable to their Western donors as "libraries" but also to respond to the local community by creating culturally relevant programs and resources not typical of Western libraries. Books, reading, and literacy are central to winning the support of Western donors and the government (to support development goals) but fun activities and programs are central to drawing in the

children. A central role of the ILD leader may be educating donors about the differences between African libraries that respond to community needs as opposed to traditional Western libraries.

**Building a collection.** It may be impossible for ILD leaders to avoid criticism about their library book collections. People evaluating the collections may criticize the lack of culturally relevant or local language items, not realizing the many complicating factors in ILD collection development. Core book collections created by donations will very much reflect their Western origin, but the alternative, purchasing books locally, will drain an ILD program of funds that could be used for building new library structures elsewhere. And even if ILD programs are willing to invest financial resources into purchasing local publications, these materials are limited in supply. As stated in the literature review, ninety-five percent of books published in Africa are education-based with the large majority being textbooks (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011; Wafawarowa, 2006). Individuals lack the disposable income to purchase books, making it unprofitable for publishers and authors to produce books for pleasure-reading (Odaga, 1998; Wafawarowa, 2006).

In the literature review for best practices in book aid, critics mentioned that the majority of donated books are in English or French and that very few are in local languages (IFLA Reading Section, 2003; Mchombu, 1998). What is not reflected in the literature is the very real problem of locating books in local languages due to the economic realities of publishing such items. Even though experts recognize that it is advantageous for children to begin reading in their first language (Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011; Khorana, 2006), there is a recognized shortage of indigenous language books due to a variety of issues including persons lacking disposable income to purchase books and the lack of sufficient readers in any

one language to make it economically feasible to publish in numerous languages (Khorana, 1998; Odaga, 1998).

ILD leaders may have prominent advisory board members or donors suggesting books to include in the libraries, books that may not have otherwise been included. It may be politically imprudent to do otherwise. A case in point: Mary included the Nancy Drew series in the SALP book collection as suggested by a respected local advisor even though the collection development policy specifically advised against series books for older readers or books that reflect an affluent lifestyle. This is not a situation specific to ILD leaders. Libraries everywhere must deal with honoring the wishes of prominent individuals in relation to collection development policies.

**Working with partner organizations.** Another tension in international development is that ILD leaders need to be willing to relinquish some key responsibilities, due to the fact that many ILD leaders are working in partnership with local organizations or governments. In the creation of any sustainable aid project, there is a large amount of give and take. In some situations, ILD leaders do not have control over the hiring decisions in the libraries. I believe this is in the spirit of sustainability, recognizing that if local agencies are paying the salaries, they have the right to hire whom they choose. Yet problems may arise when partner agencies hire staff based on personal connections or mandated criteria instead of skills or qualifications. Since the success of the library is so dependent on skilled, engaged, and energetic personnel, hiring the right people is of utmost importance.

In the situation that the partner agency cannot meet a prior agreement of paying staff salaries, leaders must decide how best to approach the situation. This situation can lead to lowered morale for the ILD program librarians and staff. They may come to the ILD leader

for help in such matters, requesting that the ILD program step in to pay missing salaries. To do so could prove damaging to the individuals in the long run and result in the loss of pension benefits from the government. In order to assure that the salaries are being paid by the partner organization demands time and effort in communicating with appropriate administration, sometimes at many levels. In this role, the leader is serving as a proponent of the library staff, ensuring their ongoing salaries and benefits from a local source, as opposed to taking the sometimes easier route of just paying the salaries themselves.

ILD leaders that have partnerships with local agencies or governments need to deal with lack of control of other matters as well. Partner support is often based on one leader, a politician or administrator that supports a cause. With changes in political office, that support can be discontinued. A Memorandum of Understanding signed by one official can be disregarded by another.

A question critical to the future success of international library development is what if partnering organizations are unable to provide the local resources necessary to sustain libraries? This situation does not necessarily mean failure for the ILD libraries as long as the donor is willing to monitor the situation and help as needed. Who is to say how long is *too long* for an NGO to provide development aid? The definition of sustainable aid by the Brundtland Commission reads, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, 1987). This gives a significant amount of leeway in terms of withdrawal of foreign aid.

If sustainability for international library development proves not to be a viable option, is there an alternative? As reflected in the literature on sustainability, many scholars and writers doubt the future success of sustainable aid (Easterly, 2006; Kremer & Miguel, 2008;

Ravichandran & Rajashree, 2007; Theroux, 2003). What is crucially important for aid to be effective, according to the *Paris Declaration*, is that the aid be delivered in a predictable and timely fashion (OECD, 2005). A viable alternative to sustainable library development is for continuous bilateral library development. If sustainability in the future proves an unrealistic goal, the ILD programs could remain to help with many aspects of library development. Perhaps, the important consideration should be the continuation of quality services to the community, regardless who pays for it.

### **Addressing the Gaps**

This research contributes to the literature on book aid and international library development in three previously unexplored areas. It presents benefits of ILD programs previously unrecognized in the literature; it provides feedback based on the experience of ILD leaders about potential negative effects of book aid; and it pioneers the topic of sustainability in ILD programs. Previous literature focused mainly on book aid programs and the quality of the book collections. This research focuses instead on international library development which includes not only supplying books but building libraries, training library staff, creating beneficial programming, and establishing partnerships with local educational organizations.

Previously unidentified benefits supply more than just access to books; they include the library as a welcoming and beneficial environment, positive interactions with library staff, culturally relevant and interesting programs, and educational opportunities. These identified benefits can be used as examples with which to compare other ILD program that supply collections of books and limited training.

This dissertation also addresses potential negative effects of ILD. To address these issues,

I bring in the voice of ILD leaders, previously unrepresented in the research literature. This research asks ILD leaders to explain their efforts to avoid negative consequences, taking the discussion from theoretical to experience-based. In doing so I discovered complex issues associated with the major criticisms of book aid, such as the lack of local language publications and lack of capacity building in human resources.

And lastly, this research addresses the matter of sustainability in international library development, a topic previously unexplored in the literature. I question the reality of sustainable libraries in economically challenged countries. As illustrated through the interviews with the ILD leaders, the future of sustainable libraries is impossible to predict. This research unveils the realities of partner organizations unable or unwilling to honor their agreement to pay librarian salaries, the importance of community and government support, and the evolving nature of libraries in Africa.

### **Limitations**

The most significant limitation of this study is that it is told from the perspective of Western leaders by a Western researcher/observer. Missing are the voices of WALP and SALP staff, local government officials, politicians, patrons, and community members. As stated in my methodology chapter, I focused on interviewing Western leaders instead of ILD librarians and staff for two reasons: insufficient time to build trust and rapport with library staff that is necessary to gather open and honest data, and risks involved for library staff to be involved in qualitative interviews (they could suffer negative consequences as a result of their opinions).

An additional limitation to this research is the potential bias of the leaders to portray their ILD program in a positive light. Since the majority of their funding comes from donations, it

is logical that they emphasize positive aspects of their ILD programs and steer clear of topics or situations that could negatively affect donor support.

### **Revisiting the Conceptual Framework**

In my conceptual framework, I focused on interviewing ILD leaders to better understand the unrecognized benefits of book aid, the negative aspects of ILD programs as development aid, and the viability of sustainable international library development. In reflection, I would not focus solely on the sustainable model in my framework but broaden to include investigation of an additional model—ongoing bilateral partnerships. The choice of focusing on sustainable development and the eventual withdrawal of aid limited my examination of a seemingly viable alternative.

The conceptual framework for the subject of sustainability—breaking it up into four areas: economic, political, social, and cultural—worked very well. It helped to organize a very complex topic that touches every aspect of the human experience.

### **Implications**

This research has implications for all groups involved in international library development: ILD leaders, partner organizations, ILD library staff, and Western educators involved in international education. Through review of the findings and discussion, I summarize several points and how these implications may be addressed by the targeted groups.

For the leaders of SALP and WALP: The book collections reflect Western donations. It is true that the collections are quality books but they reflect their Western origins.

Understandably this is due to the fact that the majority of books are received as donations from Americans and Canadians, that there are few publications in local languages, and that

the publishing industry in these two countries is only beginning to grow. To address this situation in the future, the ILD leaders are encouraged to continue their efforts to identify and purchase additional regional materials in order to strengthen the local book industry and to reflect the culture and languages of the community. As more materials are acquired, library staff should re-evaluate previous donations and work to create a more culturally relevant collection.

For the leaders of ILD programs and partner organizations: It is impossible to forecast the future of sustainable ILD programs in these two African countries. As examples show, partner organizations were unable to honor written agreements to pay the salaries of librarian and library staff. The ILD leaders are optimistic about new partnerships with national organizations. As discussed by the ILD leaders, no one knows what the future holds, whether governments will have the money in the future to support libraries independent of foreign aid. It is recommended that the ILD programs continue to build partnerships, sign agreements, and strive for library sustainability but recognize that the future is unpredictable. Both partners need to remain accountable, transparent, and flexible.

For the leaders of ILD programs, partner organizations, and ILD librarians and staff: Human capacity resources for children's librarianship need to be strengthened. This study concludes that well trained and engaged librarians and staff are necessary for successful libraries. It also points to a lack of mid-level managers and trainers. Currently the ILD programs are taking the lead on capacity building for human resources but the partnering agencies need to assume responsibility for training and education, as well as for paying the salaries of mid-level managers and trainers. ILD programs are to serve in an advisory role as needed.

For ILD leaders and ILD librarians and staff: The success for African libraries is dependent on more than quality book collections. The libraries serve as a welcoming and engaging physical space that offers culturally relevant and interesting programs and educational opportunities. Their success is dependent on the librarians and library staff. In order for staff to maintain enthusiasm for such endeavors, it is necessary they receive adequate support in the form of feedback, training, and monetary support.

For Westerners involved with international education and book aid: Be aware of the needs and development priorities of the partner agency. Communicate with the partner to ensure that a real need, defined by the community, is being fulfilled. Strive to work with local advisors and leaders to find relevant solutions, not solutions based on Western models.

### **Further Research**

As stated in the limitations of this research, revisiting the issue of international library development from the African perspective is a logical direction for future research. Interviews with ILD library staff, government officials, politicians, and community members would give a voice to development partners. In this study one could examine the realities of working for an ILD program, including the workload and mindset of librarians and their very important role in determining the success of the libraries. In talking with local government officials and politicians, one could get a better idea of attitudes towards libraries and the realities of working within an African municipality or within the national government.

A different study would be to look at the success ratio for sustainable development projects in grass-roots organizations versus local government versus national government. Are international library development projects more likely to find the support, leadership, and funding at one level other the others? What are some of the problems/benefits associated

with each level of organization?

And lastly, one could research African publishing industry for children's books in local languages. This research would investigate resources available to help African libraries create library book collections that are more representative of regional culture, languages, and interests. This research could take the form of a narrative of the existing publishing industry in African countries, address next steps necessary to increase local publishing, analyze how many books are available per language, and create an annotated bibliography of available titles.

### **Reflections on Professional and Personal Development Post-Dissertation**

In summary, I would like to close this dissertation with thoughts about how this research guides my professional career and altered my personal beliefs about foreign aid and non-profit organizations. From a professional perspective, this research and the completion of the Doctoral degree will prove advantageous to my career in several aspects. My first priority is to restructure my dissertation to produce an article to submit for publication, helping to further disseminate the data and to strengthen my vita for post-tenure review and request for promotion to Professor. Additionally, my knowledge of ILD programs serves me well as the program chair of the International Sustainable Library Development Interest Group of the American Library Association. As for professional employment, I plan on remaining in my current professional position for at least two year more years but realize attaining the Doctoral degree and the selection of dissertation topic opens up additional employment opportunities such as working internationally or sharing my ILD expertise in an educational setting.

My research has made me aware of the potential negative consequences of foreign aid.

This awareness has made me sensitive to the rhetoric of non-profit agencies and the need to thoroughly investigate a non-profit agency before committing time or money. I am much more skeptical of what is written on an agency's Web site, analyzing supposed "successes" of non-profits and differentiating between future projections and realized accomplishments. I investigate how much of donated funds are used to cover "administrative" costs and the potential for creating dependency on foreign aid. My current mindset is very different than at the beginning of this research, somewhere between the ethical responsibility of Peter Singer—as privileged Westerners we are obliged to contribute a part of our earnings to help others in developing countries; and the pessimistic reflection of Paul Theroux—confirming the failure of non-profit agencies to make a noticeable difference in the lives of the majority of Africans. I plan on continuing my involvement in promoting international development, describing my attitude as willing but cautious.

Have we learned from the mistakes of the past? Perhaps the most valuable lesson to be learned from those who went before us, is that those that caused damage by their "good work," either as missionaries, colonialists, development workers, or book donors, they strongly believed that they were doing good, or least what they defined as good. They were unable to comprehend how their actions might have a damaging effect, particularly long-term damage.

"Do-gooders." A tainted phrase associated with those that intervene in the affairs of others in order to do what they believe is "good." I ask myself if my support of international library development is based by my own background, being raised by a mother who loved to read, spending long summer hours at the library, bringing home armfuls of books. How many kids are still doing this, even in the United States? And how relevant are libraries and books to the

lives of the people I met in the slums near the WALP and SALP libraries? Would my donations and service work be better placed in a different cause, a different charity? On the other hand, with so many people not taking any interest in philanthropy, I do not feel it is my right to criticize anyone's choice of charity. I will not judge anyone's choice of charity while so many people donate no money at all.

Having written all of the above, I maintain my stance of supporting international library development. In recognition that in the future, it may be proven that my chosen cause was full of misguided good-deeds, I will take that risk. I choose to support something dear to my heart, the joy of reading. I hope that through these efforts, librarians will guide children to interesting and engaging books, helping them succeed in their academic endeavors and widening their world view. I trust that this can happen based on two particular libraries that I visited in Africa, libraries with fabulous engaged librarians, children that returned on a daily basis, and a warm and inviting atmosphere. I choose to continue being a do-gooder as opposed to a do-nothing.

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## **Appendix I. Interview Questions**

### **Interview #1**

How did you become involved with library development?

What was your inspiration to begin this work?

What exactly do you do in your role as a leader of an international library development program?

What constitutes a typical day in your life?

How does your international library development program benefit individuals?

How does your international library development program benefit the communities?

What do you feel is the biggest draw for children in your libraries?

What are some lasting effects on the lives of the children that visit your libraries? How is access to books going to help these children in the long run?

To what extent is increased literacy the objective of your international library development program?

How do you think the ability to read and write changes people's lives?

What factors do you believe contribute to the illiteracy rate in [West Africa country] (20% male, 24% female) / [Southern Africa country] (17% male; 32% female)?

What do you believe ensures success for a program such as yours?

### **Interview #2**

Do you think there are potential negative effects from foreign aid to Africa? Have you witnessed negative effects of aid in [name of country]?

Do you think there are potential negative effects from international book aid / library development in Africa? If yes, what would these be?

How do you work to avoid these negative side effects?

How do you think international book aid affects the local publishing industry?

What is your philosophy about children reading in local languages vs. reading in English?

Does your program supply books in regional languages? Tell me a bit about collecting materials in regional languages.

Where do you obtain the majority of books in your libraries?

How do you decide what books to include in your collections?

Does your program work towards rectifying the educational discrepancy between male and female students?

In my visits to Western and Southern Africa, I perceived that the true value of the libraries was not in the books but in the library as place. How would you reply to my observation?

What do you think is the opinion of Africans about libraries? About books? About reading?

Many people claim that libraries set up by foreigners do not meet the cultural needs of Africans, indeed that the concept of a storage house for books is irrelevant to Africans, their culture being based in the oral tradition. What measures do you take to insure cultural sensitivity/relevancy?

### **Interview #3**

What role do you see the local communities playing in the ongoing management and operation of the libraries?

How are your relationships with African governments affected by the fact that you are a Westerner?

Does the fact that you are a Westerner hinder your efforts in any way? In other ways, how does it work to your benefit?

Tell me about your interactions with the [name of country] government.

Are the local governments supportive? Can you give me specific examples of the local governments being supportive?

Do you have examples of the local government showing a lack of support for your efforts?

Are the local governments upholding the agreed-upon division of support (ie. paying salaries and utilities)? If not, what are contributing factors to their inability to pay?

Have you encountered corruption within the government or local agencies? Would you be willing to share an example?

When I visited Africa, I was surprised by the large number of people who approached me for help, through requests for cash, personal items, or help with migration to the United States. How do you deal with these requests?

What autonomy do you give to the resident workers at your libraries?

To what extent do you remain involved in the decision making for day-to-day operations in the individual libraries?

What is your relationship with the regional staff members?

What do you see as your future role in the ongoing management and operation of the libraries?

Does your long-term plan include withdraw of aid from established libraries or do you see your involvement as a long-term affair?

Do you believe sustainability is a realistic option for libraries in Africa, that is, the ability for libraries to thrive without aid from foreign agencies?

If your answer is no, what needs to happen for international library programs to be sustainable, that is, to thrive without aid from foreign agencies?

If your answer is yes, how do you envision this taking place?

## **Appendix II. Advice for Westerners Creating an ILD Program**

The following is a section giving advice to the new ILD leader, presenting basic information for creating a library in a developing country. This section is written from my perspective of researcher, an academic that has spoken with many ILD leaders and observed libraries in Africa, Central America, and South America. Much of the information focuses on the importance of human interaction, knowing the community, finding and hiring the right staff, and creating relationships with other ILD programs, community members, and local officials/politicians. I also discuss some of the questions that I hear frequently from persons interested in creating an ILD program, such as where to find funding, how to handle book donations, and where to go for additional advice.

First of all, know the community. Your first priority should be meeting their needs. If you have lived within the region for a number of years and had contact with residents, you will be better informed of local culture, social norms, and development needs. Speak with community leaders to explore how your ILD program will help accomplish the recognized development goals of the community. Identify your patron base; some ILD libraries are built in the center of school compounds, providing services to students. Others are built in the poorest areas of the city, serving as a community center as well as a library. Perhaps you will be partnering with a non-profit group that is already established and serving a specified patron base, such as street kids or indigenous families.

Starter funds will be necessary. You may provide these funds yourself or have

successfully persuaded donors to take the leap of faith in your international library development project. The ability to persuade potential donors of the worthiness of your cause is a special talent and at the beginning, time consuming. Begin by establishing one small library. By creating one successful library, you convince potential donors and partner agencies that your ILD program is sustainable, worthy of their support. As your ILD program flourishes, your donor base will grow.

Finding people who want to donate their old books to your library will not be a problem. The problem will be in sorting through all the donations to find the appropriate books, those that fit the criteria in your selection policy. To avoid a deluge of undesired books, present your selection criteria as widely as possible, perhaps through a web site for your ILD program. And if your ILD program is in a country that does not speak English, it will add a measure of difficulty to the donation process. I have known of successful book drives for children's Spanish language books, due to the growing number of Spanish-speaking residents. Also remember, many books that may be most relevant to your ILD community will not be available through donation but will need to be purchased from the partner country. Shipping the books from the United States is a sizeable expense and may be held up for long periods of time due to unforeseen complications with export/import regulations.

A key factor in creating a successful library is finding and hiring one or more engaged and industrious local individuals to work with you in creating and running the library. Finding staff with a strong skill set and a great attitude will make all the difference in library attendance. Hire this person based on their ability to interact with children. They must possess good storytelling skills, patience, and the ability to mix discipline and tenderness. These skills are more important than educational background or personal connections. They

will also need to be able to interact with visiting donors, resident politicians, and parents. Staff salaries may need to be paid initially from donations but hopefully after proving the value and attendance at the library, one can enlist the aid of a local or national agency to pay salaries and provide benefits to workers. By allowing salaries to be paid locally, it allows you to use donations to pay for the creation of additional libraries, if so desired.

Take advantage of the knowledge of others to help create a successful ILD program. Other ILD leaders are excellent sources of information. Create a cooperative relationship with other leaders in the field rather than competitive. I have met ILD leaders that are willing to share experiences and resources with others, as well as ILD leaders that are very critical of other programs in an effort to win support exclusively for their program alone. In cooperating with other ILD programs, you can make sure you are not duplicating efforts within the same region. Professional organizations such as the International Sustainable Library Development (ISLD) Interest Group, within the American Library Association (ALA) offer excellent opportunities to connect with other leaders of international library development.

Strive to win the support of the community by proving that the libraries provide beneficial services that go beyond books and literacy, services that fulfill the cultural, athletic, creative, or humanitarian needs of the community (such as a feeding program or health education). Create and maintain communication channels with local community leaders. A cooperative attitude and ability to create a partnership with local community members and officials is vital to sustainability. Remain teachable and open to advice from a wide variety of venues; fellow ILD leaders, community leaders, library staff, and children.

The ability to gain support and commitment from a variety of groups – donors, partnering agencies, advisory groups, staff, and patrons – is crucial. Leaders need to communicate their

mission and goals to others, and being Westerners, they may have additional concerns about gaining cross-cultural and regional support. Realize that actions speak louder than words in winning the trust of others. Follow through with your promises. Expect others to do the same but be patient and persistent if they do not. Some people may ask you why a local person or agency is not doing this work. Ask yourself the same question. Are you developing an ILD program that could continue in your absence? What are your long term goals? As people who put so much time and effort into establishing these ILD programs, it would be painful to relinquish control to someone else.

One quality that is beneficial to everyone, but may be particularly important to those working in international development, is to remain teachable. Humility is of utmost importance, the ability to recognize both your strengths and weaknesses and to make an earnest effort to improve where you are lacking. Ask for input from your donors, advisory boards, partner agencies, library staff, and patrons. If the ILD program local advisory board is full of wealthy, affluent individuals, many educated outside of the country, in what ways do their opinions and experience influence decisions about the library? Strive to reach all levels of society in your library community.

As an ILD leader, one is both recipient and donor of charity — requesting funds from Western donors and using those funds to build libraries and supply books to communities in developing countries. By its nature, the relationship of donor-recipient is in many ways inherently unbalanced. You have one person with an abundance that decides to give to another person. There are usually strings attached, even if those strings may be the unspoken expectations of a thank-you, in recognition of the good deed done. I would say that it is universally easier to be a donor rather than a recipient of someone else's charity. It benefits

leaders of non-profits to realize that you are performing a service in allowing others to donate to your cause, once you have convinced them of its worth. Leaders need to possess both humility and pride in receiving *and* distributing funds.

## VITA

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