PUBLIC LIBRARIES
IMPROVING FARMERS' LIVES

eifl PUBLIC LIBRARY
INNOVATION
PROGRAMME

EIFL's Public Library Innovation Programme advances community development by enabling public libraries to implement innovative ideas that use technology to improve people's lives and livelihoods.

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COVER PHOTO: Farmers use computers at Bwera Information Centre in Western Uganda. The centre is one of five libraries taking part in Maendeleo Foundation's Connect Uganda Pilot Project. Photo by Elaisha Stokes.

MAENDELEO FOUNDATION (UGANDA)

Libraries' local language database connects farmers in four regions

LAUNCHED IN APRIL 2012

The 'Connect Uganda' Pilot Project works through five rural libraries and helps farming families to improve their incomes. The project is a partnership between Maendeleo Foundation and the Uganda Community Libraries Association (UgCLA). In less than a year, the project trained 700 farmers and others in the community to use computers and to access agricultural information online. Working with experts from Makerere University, librarians translated agricultural information into local languages. The project helped farmers petition the government to supply them with disease-resistant coffee plants; to identify new species of trees, and encouraged youth to take up farming as a career.

MODERN METHODS: Alex Thabulenga, chairman of the Kyempara Bee Farmers' Association, says association members have almost doubled the amount of honey they produce since finding information on the internet about new varieties of bees and modern beekeeping equipment. Farmers use the internet at Bwera Information Centre, one of five libraries taking part in the Connect Uganda project.

"WE ARE SO GLAD THAT WE NO LONGER HAVE TO WAIT FOR MIDDLEMEN TO KNOW MARKET PRICES FOR OUR HONEY."

ALEX THABULENGA, CHAIRMAN OF THE KYEMPARA BEE FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF UGANDA (UGANDA)

Library uses internet and mobile phones to support women farmers

LAUNCHED IN APRIL 2012

National Library of Uganda (NLU) provided the first ever computer training for women farmers in Kyangatto Village in Uganda's Central Region. The service has led to formation of a women's group with 60 members, who meet regularly after working in the fields and attend computer classes at a local school, NLU's partner. The women are using the internet to look for information, e-mail and Facebook for communication, and Excel to keep their farm records. The service includes mobile phone text messages (SMS) to alert the women about market prices, the weather, plant diseases and how to access credit. "I was always disappointed because I could not find markets to sell my products, and they piled up. But now, through the SMS alerts I know where to sell my products at the best prices, and on time!" said Ms Esther Sserwanga, development leader in the Kyangatto Women's Group.

NEW LEARNERS: National Library of Uganda provided the first ever computer training for women farmers in Kyangatto Village in Uganda's Central Region.

"THROUGH THE LIBRARY'S SMS ALERTS I KNOW WHERE TO SELL MY PRODUCTS AT THE BEST PRICES, AND ON TIME."

ESTHER SSERWANGA, DEVELOPMENT LEADER IN THE KYANGATTO WOMEN'S GROUP

RWENZORI INFORMATION NETWORK (UGANDA)

Library smart phone service combats plant pests and diseases

LAUNCHED IN APRIL 2012

In less than a year (2012/13) this service, which uses smart phones and other technology, helped more than 850 farmers in Kasese District (Western Region) to find solutions to plant diseases. Working through Busongora Rural Information Centre (BRIC), a community library, Rwenzori Information Network equipped 20 volunteer plant doctors (agricultural extension workers who provide practical advice to farmers) with smart phones. They use the smart phones to take photographs of diseased plants, and send them to experts who identify problems and offer solutions via email or mobile phone text messages (SMS). The service also trained over 112 farmers and other community members to use computers, and set up a web-portal for farmers with links to agricultural information and support agencies.

HEALTHY PLANTS: The library's smart phone service enables farmers to send SMS messages to plant experts to ask for advice about combating plant pests and diseases.

> **"AS A RESULT OF THE PLANT DOCTORS' ADVICE AND INFORMATION, I HAVE SEEN A GREAT REDUCTION OF PESTS AND DISEASES IN MY ORANGE ORCHARD."**
>
> *FRANCIS BAITA, FARMERS' GROUP LEADER*

AGYAULI COMMUNITY LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRE (NEPAL)

Library uses ICT to provide practical answers to farmers' questions

LAUNCHED IN JUNE 2011

The library serves Nawalparasi district, where over 80% of people are small-scale farmers. It connects farmers to agricultural experts and answers their questions through the internet, radio and film. In less than a year (2011/12), the library's Practical Answers service received 995 questions on topics including organic farming, plant diseases and funding. Working with MEDICT (Mobilization for Education and Development through ICT) the library provides information relevant to the local context and builds farmers' ICT and business skills. In 2012 the service won an EIFL Public Library Innovation Award for contribution to economic wellbeing of the community.

INCREASED YIELDS: Mushroom farmers say their yields and incomes have increase as a result of Agyauli Community Library's ICT training and information service.

"I BOUGHT STATIONERY FOR MY CHILDREN AND PAID THEIR SCHOOL FEES WITH THE MONEY EARNED FROM VEGETABLE FARMING."

FUL KUMARI MAHATO, LIBRARY TRAINEE

KLINTAINE PUBLIC LIBRARY (LATVIA)

Webinars link rural libraries and build farmers' knowledge

LAUNCHED IN NOVEMBER 2011

"We rural folk do not have time to read long laws and regulations, and I was glad to receive answers to my questions during the webinar," a farmer, Mrs Mārīte Ramata, told librarians. In just one year 2011/12, the library organized eight webinars on topics including accessing European Union agricultural subsidies, taxes, farm accounting and organic farming. Webcasts through 20 rural public libraries attracted 1,878 viewers. The service has inspired the Ministry of Agriculture to use webinars for their regional agricultural conferences, and the Agricultural Data Centre now organizes an annual seminar in the library, which the library webcasts.

LEARNING ONLINE: Farmers attend a webinar in Klintaine Public Library.

PASVALYS 'MARIUS KATILISKIS' PUBLIC LIBRARY (LITHUANIA)

Libr-A information and business development service for farmers

LAUNCHED IN NOVEMBER 2011

Pasvalys Municipality was so impressed by Libr-A that they included the library in their plans for local business and e-government service infrastructure development. Libr-A reaches farmers through a network of 34 branch libraries. The service includes free access to ICT and ICT training, an agricultural web-portal, Pasvalys Soil, with advertising space for farm produce, and a desktop publishing centre where librarians help farmers design marketing leaflets and business cards. In less than a year (2011/12), the library trained over 120 farmers, entrepreneurs and rural librarians to use ICT, worked with farmers to publish 600 leaflets and 200 product labels, and attracted 68 advertisements to the web-portal.

FARMER'S PARADISE: Pasvalys 'Marius Katiliskis' Public Library takes ICT to agricultural markets and fares, and conducts ICT training in the 'Farmer's Paradise' tent.

REGIONAL PUBLIC AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY 'GOCE DELCEV' – STIP (MACEDONIA)

Library on wheels helps farmers apply for grants and subsidies

LAUNCHED IN NOVEMBER 2011
This library service led to a 20% increase in the number of farmers applying for agricultural production grants in 2012 in the municipalities of Stip and Karbinci in Eastern Macedonia. The library takes ICT to villages that do not have libraries in an INFOBUS equipped with Wi-Fi internet, laptop computers and stocked with books and journals for farmers. In less than a year (2011/12), working with the government farm support agency, librarians organized 30 seminars attracting 357 participants; provided individual guidance for 145 farmers to apply for grants, and trained 42 farmers to use ICT. The library also developed the web-portal for farmers, with links to information about subsidies, support agencies and articles about farming methods.

MOBILE SERVICE: Farmers search the shelves in the library's INFOBUS which brings computers, the internet and literature about modern farming methods to villages that do not have libraries. Librarians train farmers to use the computers to apply for grants and subsidies.

"MY HUSBAND AND I PARTICIPATED IN THIS TRAINING, AND WE LEARNED THAT WE CAN APPLY FOR SUBSIDIES FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SOUR CHERRY TREES. BEFORE, WE WERE NOT AWARE OF THIS INFORMATION!"
LEPA STOLKOVSKA, TARINCI VILLAGE

PUBLIC LIBRARY 'RADISLAV NIKCEVIC' (SERBIA)

AgroLib online market improves sales of farm produce

LAUNCHED IN MAY 2010

A 2012 impact survey shows how this innovative service, which works through four village libraries in central Serbia, is improving farmers' lives. The AgroLib-Ja service combines free ICT access and skills training, a web portal and online market, books and articles about agriculture and public lectures. The majority of farmers surveyed said they used the service to look for agricultural information; over 70% said the service helped them increase production, and 50% said the information helped increase their sales. "On the very first day that I opened a profile on the AgroLib market, I managed to sell part of my crop – 1,500kg of quince!" Mr Zoran Milosevic, who owns a small quince orchard, told the library. AgroLib-Ja has won the library international recognition: in 2013 the service won an award for social integration from the ERSTE Foundation, and in 2014, the library won an American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects.

INCREASED SALES: Milja Jevtic, a fruit farmer in Milosevo village, has increased sales of her produce through Public Library 'Radislav Nikcevic's' AgroLib online market for farmers.

"IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE THAT IN EACH COMMUNITY THERE IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE GATHER, EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND LEARN. SUCH CENTRES SHOULD BE LIBRARIES."

BOJANA DIMITRIJEVIC, DEPUTY OF THE JAGODINA TOWN ASSEMBLY

PUBLIC LIBRARY NO. 296 PANGUIPULLI (CHILE)

Public library builds links between farmers and farm support agencies

LAUNCHED IN MAY 2010

Through a mobile computer laboratory, the library teaches farmers living in remote Andean communities in southern Chile ICT skills. In just one year (2010/11), the library trained 201 farmers to use ICT. Local farm support agencies now recognize the library as a vital link in the information chain for farmers. The library offers ICT access and training to the whole community, and has a meeting room that that open to the community and community organizations. Farm support agencies use the room to meet farmers and to present lectures, and farmers use the space to meet other farmers and to read the library's collection of agricultural books and journals.

REACHING FARMERS: Public Library No. 296 Panguipulli travels to remote farming communities in the Andes Mountains to conduct ICT training.

"EVERYTHING HAS BECOME EASIER. I DO NOT HAVE TO WAIT FOR ADVICE TO SOLVE PEST PROBLEMS OR FLOWER DISEASES. I LOOK FOR THE DISEASE ON THE INTERNET AND THEN FIND THE SOLUTION."

SILVIA LUENGO, FLOWER AND BERRY FARMER

PUBLIC LIBRARY LABORATORIO DEL ESPIRITU (COLOMBIA)

Public library internet helps rural communities find new business opportunities

LAUNCHED IN NOVEMBER 2011

The ICT for Rural Development service, including free access to ICT and ICT skills training, has sparked interest in new income generating activities in farming communities in six villages in Colombia's Antioquia district. Through the internet, a group of women farmers learnt how to make handbags from recycled cloth, and now meet every week at the library to research the internet for marketing opportunities. In just one year (2011/12)

the library trained 130 people to use ICT. The service uses the internet, community radio, local TV stations and mobile phone text messages (SMS) to bring agricultural information to fruit, vegetable and livestock farmers. In 2012 the library won an award for outstanding contribution to rural development from the Civic Development Corporation and the Rotary Club of Medellin.

NEW SKILLS: Librarians at Public Library Laboratorio Del Espiritu teach women farmers how to use computers and the internet to look for agricultural information.

"WE ALWAYS HAD TO ASK SOMEONE TO DO A FAVOUR – TO SEND AN EMAIL OR TO LOOK FOR INFORMATION. NOW WE CAN DO IT ON OUR OWN AT THE LIBRARY."
LUZ ESTELA VILLA MARTÍNEZ, FARMER

ABOUT

EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

The EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) helps connect communities in developing countries to information through public libraries by supporting creation of innovative public library services.

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For further information contact: plip@eifl.net

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