

For many millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa, the only access to books is through visiting a library. However, most library budgets are minimal and many libraries are dependent on donated books to form the bulk of their stock. Academic books are particularly expensive and many state-run universities cannot afford to purchase these high-cost texts which leaves services stretched and students at risk of working with out of date material.

The International African Institute (IAI) has been working with Book Aid International, a UK-based charity which works in partnership with libraries in sub-Saharan Africa providing books and training, for over eight years to help meet this need. The IAI donates copies of its publications to Book Aid International, including *Africa Bibliography*, the *International African Library* series, the *African Arguments* series and the *Readings in African Studies* series. These academic books on African history, society and development are invaluable for Book Aid International's work. These subjects are always requested by Book Aid International's partners in the higher education sector but are difficult to source in the UK. So the donations the charity receives from IAI are extra special and carefully shared between appropriate partners.

Very recently, IAI and Zed Books have donated copies of IAI publications covering a wide range of subjects, including *Africa: Why Economists Get It Wrong* by Morten Jerven, *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo, War* by Insa Nolte and *The Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone* by Krijn Peters.

One of the many universities that will benefit from these books is Zimbabwe Open University. This is the only distance-learning university in the country and operates 11 regional campuses, each with its own library. The university is growing rapidly, adding new programmes for study and a new Faculty of Information Technology & Multimedia Communication is to be opened soon. Despite difficult social and economic conditions, the libraries have achieved a lot including installing a library management system and establishing a repository. They also plan to establish ties with the Zimbabwe Prison Services to provide reading materials for inmates who are studying. With such little funding, the books that Book Aid International supplies are vital to these achievements: "*Book Aid International books are the backbone of our donations . . . Due to the prevailing economic crisis your books have come a long way in aiding our slowly growing collection.*" Mr Albert Makurumure, Director, Library and Information Services, Zimbabwe Open University.

Book Aid International works in partnership with libraries in sub-Saharan Africa providing books, training and resources to support an environment in which reading for pleasure, study and lifelong learning can flourish. Every year Book Aid International provides up to one million new books, donated by publishers, to libraries in 11 countries in Africa.

Book Aid International works with a broad range of libraries from those in schools, colleges and universities to prisons, hospitals, refugee camps, slums and under-resourced community and public libraries.

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