



**International
Federation of
Library
Associations and Institutions**

Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion IV – IFLA and EIFL Response

IFLA and its partners (IREX and EIFL) believe that libraries are important partners for development and they contribute in multiple ways to achieving the SDGs. Libraries are an existing funded network that reaches the local level and that can be used to deliver programmes, and inclusive governmental and institutional initiatives.

Moreover, libraries can provide skills and resources to help the population achieve literacy, and access research, information and data. Libraries also enhance public access to the internet and ICT inclusion, not just in developing countries, but even in the richest (for example [in the US](#), where representatives acknowledge their role with citizens who do not have a computer or broadband at home).

In 2016, IFLA launched the International Advocacy Programme, a capacity building tool designed to promote and support the role libraries have in the implementation of the SDGs. Below are some of the concrete stories IFLA and its partners (IREX, EIFL, Beyond Access) have chosen to highlight how libraries are active in connecting the next billions and achieve the SDGs.

SDGs 8 and 17 – coding for kids and agriculture subsidies, Romania

Public access to ICT and training at libraries helps individuals to learn skills that can be used for attaining a job and increase their economic opportunities. The mediated help individuals receive in libraries helps them to develop new competences and navigate better the internet environment when looking for job or completing online applications.

- Romania has one of the fastest growing IT sectors in Central and Eastern Europe and needs a technologically savvy population. In 2017, Progress Foundation and Etic Association launched a project in 29 rural libraries to develop the coding skills of over 450 children. This project aims at starting a coding movement in Romania. By 2020, 2000 kids approximately are expected to complete classes and 200 clubs to be launched in Romanian rural libraries (**SDG 8.2, SDG 17.8**).
- The socioeconomic development libraries enable is evident in the collaboration between libraries and farmers that took place in Romania between 2011 and 2014. At that time, Romanian libraries were able to earmark \$1.25 million for 116,000 farmers. An additional \$205 million of agricultural subsidies were received thanks to the work of librarians who helped farmers to fill online financial applications, giving access to support for increasing skills and promoting job-creation, amongst other things. Each library tailored the program according to local needs and so that the farmer could apply for his subsidies without having to travel to other locations, saving also time and money (**SDG 8.2, SDG 17.8**).

SDG 8 – Providing access to legal information (ILO)

A key factor in ensuring that all can benefit from decent work is the possibility to enforce labour rights. Yet too many people struggle to access the information which allows them to be informed, let alone protected. Working with Cornell University Libraries and Yale Law School, the International Labour Organisation has set up GOALI, a programme giving online access to legal information and research with a specific focus on labour law.

- Even as internet connectivity grows, there is a significant gap in the content to which people have access, often linked to high prices charged by academic publishers and copyright restrictions. Tackling this is an essential ingredient of efforts to ‘enable’ the next billion. Following on from efforts to find solutions for access to scientific and medical journals for people in less-developed countries, Cornell University Libraries, Yale Law School and the International Labour Organisation have worked together to launch Global Online Access to Legal Information ([GOALI](#)). This collaboration between libraries and other is making it possible for researchers, lawyers and NGOs in developing countries to access key legal information, making it possible to defend better the rights of workers (**SDG 8.8**).

SDG 17 – improving access to education, Kenya, Bangladesh (EIFL, Beyond Access)

*Libraries are a global network of community- based institutions ready to support patrons with information literacy classes to improve education at the local level while impacting development at national scale. Libraries have a tremendous role in connecting communities to technology and improving the lives of disadvantaged children by giving them the capacity to make news of new possibilities (**SDG 17.8**).*

- In the largest informal settlement in Africa, Kibera, the Kenyan National Library, Practical Action and Berkley Foundation set up a community library to facilitate access to information and equalize opportunities among poorer children. Through the project “Kids on the Tab” local children were instructed using computer tablets. The project had a tremendous impact and not only the kids who benefitted from the program received their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education but, for the first time, were admitted to national high schools (**SDG 17.8**).
- In Bangladesh, literacy campaigns for all targeted disadvantaged children throughout the country. Rural libraries served as hubs for learning and the librarians were trained on literacy instruction and the use of technology to promote reading. Students benefitted greatly from the activities and IREX and Save the Children signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Public Library in Bangladesh to be able to reach gradually most of the children (**SDG 17.8**).

SDG 9 and 17 – community technology hubs through libraries, Myanmar (IREX)

In countries with particularly low connectivity rates, there is a great merit in making use of existing infrastructure as part of efforts to get more people online. Libraries can often provide this, and come with physical spaces, and dedicated staff, who can help make sure that projects achieve their desired outcomes.

- In 2013, the transition from 7% to an 85% mobile penetration rate (a key objective under SDG 9.c) was managed in Myanmar through community technology hubs. The technology hubs were located in libraries after a 2013 study indicated that in the country there is a network of 5,000 libraries, spread across the country with the potential to offer public access to the internet. Given their focus on learning, teaching and facilitating access to information, librarians were charged with managed the tech labs. The technology hub was created in three steps: the first included the training to the librarians, the provision of the equipment and the creation of a community of practice. The second phase included community engagement and peer-based skills development. The last step allowed the diverse sections of the communities to have access to technology and opportunities they could not access elsewhere (**SDG 9.c, SDG 17.8**).

SDGs 8, 9, 17 – Start-ups and tech Skills at Lithuanians libraries (EIFL)

Key to efforts to enable the next billion will be the possibility to develop new business ideas. Linked to this are STEM skills, which boost competitiveness and support people into high-skilled jobs. Libraries in Lithuania are helping both through giving access to their internet connections, and support to skills development.

- The National Library of Lithuania has offered a shared office space for young entrepreneurs and innovative start-ups. Young professionals and all those who need a space where to develop their ideas can visit a new Hub opened in the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The library staff encourages all “big data, open data, open government data and information analysts and other professionals of similar fields to enjoy this space”. The intent is to develop a community of practice that promotes the ideals of cooperation while contributing to the modern development of the knowledge economy in Lithuania (**SDG 8.3**).
- Most young Lithuanians students prefer social sciences and humanities to ICT and STEM subjects. However, the country needs engineers, ICT specialists to ensure that the economy grows and remains competitive, according to a recent Lithuanian labour market survey. Librarians at Kaunas Municipal ‘Vincas Kudirka’ Public Library therefore developed a series of information literacy classes and training programs to encourage young generations’ interest in ICT and science. In 2015 the library opened a learning space named ‘Future Laboratory 3D’. In the laboratory teenagers learn these skills from tech industries partners eager to collaborate with the library. Also, students receive hands-on experience while working on projects. Training is supported by careers guidance, site visits to technology companies and work experience internships. In November 2015, the first 40 students enrolled in the programme (**SDG 17.8**).

SDG 8 – Projects to support people who are unemployed and/or marginalized (EIFL)

The Sustainable Development Goals highlight the issue of intersectionality – that those who are at risk of being left behind may face multiple challenges. One example is unemployment, where it is those who tend to be marginalised for other reasons who face joblessness. Libraries, as welcoming spaces with a public service focus can be the ideal space to tackle

these problems together, and help users make the most of the internet to overcome the barriers they face.

- In 2011, the Masiphumelele Community Library helped 20 vulnerable young people find jobs and encouraged another 31 to enter further education. The library's information and communication technology (ICT) training (making use of its internet connection), coupled with more traditional careers counselling and job-readiness programme serves young people in Masiphumelele, an impoverished informal settlement near Cape Town. The project focuses on building young people's skills, confidence and employability **(SDG 8.5)**.
- In 2010 in Ruse, Bulgaria's fifth largest city, unemployment among the over-40s rose by 10%. The Lyuben Karavelov regional library recorded an increase of 70% in its users as people were looking for jobs online at the library. However, many unemployed people lacked computer skills and money for training was not an option. Librarians saw a need and with support from the EIFL Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) in 2011, the library created the KNOW service - Knowledge for Opportunities for Work. After an incentive marketing campaign, 250 people joined the librarians for free internet access and computer training programs. The project also emphasized job-seeking skills and important tools such as confidence building and access to job search counsellors. The courses also benefited other marginalized groups were targeted, including the elderly, orphans and minority groups **(SDG 8.5)**.
- In 2011, Zagreb city libraries started working with homeless people to increase their employability and confidence. The service the library offered was delivered at the homeless shelter as individuals were more comfortable receiving instruction in an environment familiar to them. Librarians taught ICT skills and job-seeking skills while social workers provided psychosocial support and confidence building skills. In a year, more than 63 people were taught ICT skills and 22 individuals obtained part-time jobs. The project has been now extended to two additional homeless shelters in the area **(SDG 8.5)**.