



Project targets hard-to-reach groups

Overview

This review is based on “Impact planning and assessment – making it happen. Vietnam and Indonesia” by Quynh Truc Phan, Prijosesilo Tryono and Titi Rosalina, and “Impact planning and assessment – making it happen. Botswana” by Resego Taolo.

Online at Vietnam’s post offices

A unique feature of the GL project in Vietnam, which began in 2011, is that it also involves providing public access computing (PAC) through Cultural Post Offices (CPOs). These offer basic post office and information services at commune level – many of which are too short of funds and human resources to sustain a public library service.

The Vietnam project concentrates on rural areas and is particularly interested in hard-to-reach or disadvantaged groups such as women, ethnic groups, poor people, farmers, and students living in rural areas.

A needs assessment is currently being conducted to determine local service requirements and to establish what public access is currently available and what the ICT and support requirements will be for each library or CPO. Baseline surveys aim to assess people’s involvement with and attitudes towards public libraries, computers and the Internet before the introduction of PAC into public libraries and CPOs.

The intention is to survey a total of 2,880 users and non-users of public libraries/CPOs. The next phase involves introducing ICT and training support into the first 12 provinces. By the end of the program this coverage will have extended to include 40 provincial libraries, 378 district libraries and 1,572 commune CPOs or libraries.

Indonesia focus on libraries in challenging areas

The PerpuSeru nationwide library development project was launched in Indonesia in 2012 as part of GL. In its first phase, 35 district public libraries were identified, some chosen on the basis of set criteria to reflect particular concerns about public access computing in challenging areas. All will receive information technology hardware and software as well as library staff training and advocacy development.

A baseline study will include a survey of library users and the general public and other forms of data-collection covering, for example, current target library user profiles, library services, human resource capabilities, community expectation of their target library, and perceptions of the use of libraries.

Botswana PAC increases library membership

Users and members of the general public in Botswana (where the four-year implementation of the GL project began in 2009) had not yet considered, according to the first impact assessment, the library as the first choice for computer use, preferring to use home, work, school, or internet cafes. However, the study was conducted at a time when public access to ICT was mostly available at the public libraries in major population centres.

Resego Taolo of the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (ACHAP) – a partner in the GL project – said: “It will be interesting to conduct another study when public access to ICT is available in the rural areas and remotest parts of the country where access is almost non-existent, be it through internet cafes or any other public access venues. It would be interesting to observe and study how rural communities use and perceive public access to technology in their smaller public libraries in the form of VRRs.”

Even so libraries with public access to ICT experienced an increase in membership while those without it had an overall decline. And libraries ranked high in library users' and the general public's assessment of effective primary sources of information.

In Botswana, the implementation of GL – popularly known as the Sesigo project – is a collaboration between ACHAP and the government through the Botswana National Library Service.

Findings of the annual impact study suggest that libraries and computers and Internet play a key role in community and national development as sources of information and knowledge. It is however worth noting that while public libraries are still expected to provide computer and internet services, only 24 per cent of the targeted 78 libraries provide access to technology.

Comment

In Vietnam the GL initiative has led to the provision of public access computing at Cultural Post Offices in addition to local libraries. In Indonesia, the first phase of a nationwide library development project, launched in October 2012, identified 35 district public libraries to receive IT hardware and software, as well as library staff training and advocacy development. In Botswana libraries with public access to ICT experienced an increase in membership, while those without it experienced an overall decline.

References

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Taolo, R, (2012), "Impact planning and assessment – making it happen. Botswana", *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 38-43, ISSN: 1467-8047.

Potential quotations

The Vietnam project concentrates on rural areas and is particularly interested in hard-to-reach or disadvantaged groups.

In Botswana the library was not considered the first choice for computer use.

Indonesian libraries will receive IT hardware and software as well as library staff training.

Keywords: Global Libraries initiative, Public libraries, Sesigo project, Botswana, Indonesia, Vietnam