This report was produced by the NGO Street Library Ghana. It provides information about the celebration of International Children’s Book Day in Ghana, including the goals and purpose of the event, along with an evaluation of its success. This report also serves as an account and record of the events that took place at Ghana’s celebration of International Children’s Book Day in the community of Damang Ahwerase on July 12th, 2013.
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[Introduction]

International Children’s Book Day is celebrated across the world. It is a day set aside to shed light on the importance of children’s literature and to promote reading among children. International Children’s Book Day has been in existence since 1967, but until July 12th, 2013, there had never been a celebration of it in Ghana. This sparked the desire of Sub Sahara Publishers and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY-Ghana) to partner with the NGO, Street Library Ghana to hold the first Ghanaian celebration of International Children’s Book Day.

Ghana has an abysmal literacy rate. In 2010, the World Bank measured in at 67%. Statistics like these make celebration like International Children’s Book Day all the more vital in Ghana. To improve Ghana’s literacy rate, a good place to start is with the children. It is important that we foster a love of reading among children in Ghana and draw the nation’s attention to the importance children learning to read and reading often. International Children’s Book Day presented a perfect opportunity to do this.
The planning of International Children’s Book Day was done with the goals of spreading the joy of reading and influencing children to read and expand their knowledge. In order to do this, activities that encouraged developing strong reading comprehension and deep, creative thinking were chosen for the celebration. Children and their schools were rewarded with prizes for displaying an achievement of these skills by means of a quiz competition, a debate, and a creative writing contest. These activities not only encouraged the children to develop these skills, but they did so in a fun and interactive way that supports the idea that reading is an enjoyable activity whose benefits will be rewarded in life.

Important people in the community were also invited to the celebration to give speeches addressing the importance of reading. It was our hope that seeing and hearing notable people stress reading and the importance of knowledge in this world would encourage the children to become more serious about reading. Also, the celebration presented an opportunity to distribute a donation of books to all of the schools in attendance. This part of the celebration directly addressed the problem of the limited amount of reading resources available to the children, and it did so in a way that symbolized the importance of books as things to be cherished.
[Attendance at the Event]

**Schools:**

- Christ Care School
- Diko Islamic International School
- Anoff M/A J.H.S and Primary
- Duayeden Primary and JHS
- Anhuntém Damang L/A J.H.S
- Damang Presby Primary
- Ramas Foundation International School
- J’ann Royal School

*Approximately 500 children were present*

**Dignitaries:**

- Chief & Queen and Elders of Damang numbering 13
- Elders from Ahwerase
- Elders from Kwesitenten
- Hon. Mark Amoako Dompreh (MCE of Nsawam-Adoagyiri Municipality)
- Madam Jane Sabina Obeng (Ghana Education Service Director)
- Madam AkossOfori-Mensah (Founder and Director of Sub-Sahara Publishers)
- Ms. Deborah Ahenkorah (Executive Director-Golden Baobab)
- HayfordSiaw (Founder & President- Street Library)
[Sponsors and Partners]

Sponsors:

The High Commission of Canada
The Ghana Book Development Council
Blue Springs

Partners:

GOLDEN BAOBAB

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The Quiz Competition:

Two students from each school were selected by their school to compete in a quiz competition. The students were read a book by Ms. Deborah Ahenkorah, the Executive Director of the NGO Golden Baobab, and were then asked questions about the story read to them. The school that answered the most questions correctly won the competition.

Winner:

Christ Care School
Representatives: Charity Owusu
Prince Nyarko

Runner-up:

Ramas Foundation International School:
Representatives: Seko Kwame
Mary Owusu

Other Participants:

Duayeden Primary
DamangPresby
Anoff Primary
Diko Primary
The Debate:

Two students were selected by their school to represent it in a debate. The statement being argued was: *Books are more important than computers.* Three schools, Diko, Duayeden, and Anoff, presented arguments that disagreed with the statement while Ramas and Damang argued in favor of the statement. The debate was judged by two Street Library Ghana volunteers and the Executive Director of Golden Baobab. Each school was judged based on the coherence, language, and research used in their argument in addition to the confidence exuded by the speaker and the team’s response to other arguments presented. Each debate team was given a score out of a possible 150 points.

Winner:

Anhuntem Damang L/A J.H.S
Representatives:
Gideon Dovi
Lyrical Oduro

Runner-up:

Diko Islamic International School
Representatives:
Comfort Mekpor
Linda Dafua

Participants:

Duayeden L/H
Prince Osei Elvis & Solomon Allotey

Ramas Foundation International School
Representatives: Elvis Amponsah and Vingo Albertha

Anoff M/A J.H.S
The Creative Writing Competition:

Previous to the celebration, students at each school were asked to submit a short story that responded to one of three prompt options:

1. Your teacher comes into the room and places a book on the desk. The book begins to move. Write about what adventure occurs when the book is opened and tell what you learn from this adventure.
2. You can fly. Write about an adventure you had when you were flying and tell what you learned from this adventure.
3. There is a door at your school that is always locked and that you are not allowed to enter. One day, the door is open and you go inside. Tell a story about what is behind the door and the adventure you have.

Winners were selected from each school and were awarded with a prize from the NGO Golden Baobab.

Winners:

Hellen Egbetor  
Diko Islamic International School

Michal Boateng  
Anhuntam Damang L/A J.H.S

Rebecca Dede  
Christ Care School

Solomon Ameyikpa  
Anoff

Thompson Ofohusene  
Duayedden L/A Primary

Mary Adjei  
Ramas Foundation

Nicholas Akomea  
Duayedden L/A Primary
Guest Speakers:

Both the Hon. Mark Amoako Dompreh and Madam Jane Sabina Obeng delivered speeches at the celebration. The speeches both revolved around the importance of learning, with Madam Jane Sabina Obeng strongly encouraging children to utilize the books available to them and the Hon. Mark Amoako stressing the value of knowledge that is acquired through reading. Following is a transcript of the speech given by the Municipal Chief Executive, the Hon. Mark Amoako Dompreh.

Hon. Mark Amoako Dompreh’s Speech:

THE HONOURABLE MINISTER;
THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION;
NANANOM;
PARENTS AND GAURDIANS;
PUPILS;
OUR FRIENDS FROM THE MEDIA;
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;
ALL PROTOCOL OBSERVED.

Today marks International Children’s Book Day (ICDB) and Providence would, through the instrumentality of the Management and Board of Street Library Ghana, have me speak to the theme Celebrating Children’s Books and Inspiring Love for Reading.

I would first of all like to thank the Almighty God for such a moment as this in the history of our civilization and of our young democracy where we have become more conscious than ever before of the primary role of reading and learning in shaping the lives of our children and ultimately of our dear nation.

I would also like to thank Nananom for opening their doors for such an all important event as this to be hosted on their soil.
Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to Street Library Ghana for this noble vision. I understand that through the support of their partners Street Library Ghana would be donating 1000 books for the Libraries of many of our schools today.

In the same vein one would like to appreciate Tigo- Ghana, Reach for Change-Sweden, The Global fund for Children – USA Viasat 1, BAYER – Germany and finally Abel & Cole-UK for their support towards the Street Library project.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is rather unfortunate that Children’s books have not been given the attention they deserve. Books of this nature are usually poorly written or inadequately financed. The qualifications of many such authors is also a suspect. In some cases the motif of writing is purely economic and not necessarily educational.

This notwithstanding, some writers have done amazing works in churning out books that are tailored to meet the varied expectations of young readers.

Many a Publisher would rather publish books meant for the adult population than invest in our young ones. On this score one would like to congratulate Asempa publishers and the few others who have over the years demonstrated an unflinching commitment to seeing to the publication of very useful and necessary materials needed for the holistic upbringing of the child. May I use this occasion to encourage all publishers to at least as part of their social responsibility embark on a campaign to publish more books meant for children.

Ladies and gentlemen I would want to submit to you that it is an imperative to encourage our young ones to read if indeed we want a better Ghana. The saying that “a reader today a leader tomorrow” could not be more apposite.

The Good Book says “Train up a child the way he should go and when he is old he would not depart from it”. When children are encouraged to read, when children inculcate the habit of reading, they invariably grow to become well informed, well adjusted, well balanced and knowledgeable adults who in no small way contribute significantly to the building of a great nation.
Ladies and gentlemen we cannot afford for our children to be ignorant. Daniel prophesied in Biblical times that knowledge and understanding shall be the stability of our times. One of the many ills that has plagued our society is the twin evil of ignorance and apathy.

The story is told of a Pastor who was rather disappointed that things were not “happening” in his church and so he asked one of his elders “what is wrong with our church? Is it ignorance or apathy?”. The elder replied “I don’t know and I don’t care”. No wonder nothing much was happening in that church!!! May this never be said of or said by any Ghanaian.

Ladies and gentlemen, once again I submit to you that a person who is ignorant and couldn’t be bothered is a threat to himself or herself and the society at large. No wonder the Bible says “my people perish for lack of knowledge”. Needless to say that as light dispels darkness so knowledge dispels ignorance. That is the very reason why we ought to keep urging our young ones to read and acquire knowledge and the competencies necessary to survive and thrive in this highly competitive global village of ours; and a sure way to acquire knowledge is through reading.

Any society that does not place emphasis on reading especially reading at an early age produces leaders with the caliber of the elder I spoke to you earlier about – ignorant and apathetic!!!

In the recent history of our civilization, developing countries especially Africans have had high levels of illiteracy. It has often been said euphemistically that “if you want to hide something from a black man, hide it in a book”. I am pleased to declare that that era is long gone. Programmes such as this which seeks to inspire a love for reading among children in Ghana are destined to reverse the systemic cycle of ignorance in our society.

Ladies and gentlemen, our forebears won our independence for us through their sweat and blood, is it too much if we are required to maintain our independence through a culture of excellence, diligence, conscientiousness and critical thinking
acquired through learning? This I believe is what the NGO called Street Library the main organizers of this event and other NGO’S are striving to achieve.

Today as we commemorate International Children’s Book Day, let us all put our hands on deck. I call upon parents, guardians, caregivers, teachers, pastors, chiefs, corporate Ghana and all well meaning Ghanaians, let us encourage our children to read and to study.

Reading is a form of thinking.

As they read their brains and minds are being developed.

As our children read they acquire problem solving skills needed to build our nation.

As they read they become more creative and innovative.

As they read they gain confidence and the boldness required to challenge the status quo.

As our young ones read they mature in their thinking and are able to stand tall and match their compatriots in other parts of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen let us give these young ones a chance. Let the private sector partner with government to build libraries in every community. Let’s educate our children! Let us stop child labour and give every Ghanaian child a chance to contribute to society, an opportunity to become “somebody”. For in the world in which we live today, “the pen is mightier than the sword” as Gucci Merciny aptly puts it.

God bless our children

God bless Street Library Ghana and

God bless you all.
Street Library Ghana’s Goals

Reading Hubs:

Street Library Ghana is working towards establishing stationary libraries around Ghana. To begin this process, it will start with the communities that the mobile van services, and who were also all in attendance at the celebration. Street Library Ghana plans to construct kiosks at each of the communities to serve as “reading hubs”. Street Library Ghana will supply books to each reading hub where they will be stored and lent out to the children to read. The area surrounding the reading hubs will also function as peaceful environments where students and children may read. Street Library’s first reading hub is currently under construction in the community of Anoff.

Presentation of Books:

Each school in attendance at the event was presented with a box full of children’s books by the local chiefs present. These books are meant to serve as the beginning of each school’s library. Street Library Ghana is initiating a program that brings books to schools so that they are able to start their own libraries to be utilized by teachers and students during the school day. Street Library Ghana plans to loan more books to the schools as it’s own supply grows. It is Street Library’s hope that creating libraries at the schools will help the teachers teach the children to read better so that they are able to benefit more from their time at the Street Library session in their community each week.
[Conclusion]

Evaluation:

The planned events ran smoothly the day of the celebration. The children who served as representatives of their schools were well-prepared and the rest of the student bodies were engaged as the competition and debate occurred. The enthusiasm with which the children and schools received their prizes attest to the achievement of the goal to emphasize the importance and rewards of reading.

The speeches delivered were effective in pointing out the benefits of reading and were aimed to influence children to read as much as possible.

The presentation of books to each of the schools spread joy across the celebration. Highlighting the children’s happiness to have more material to read and the likelihood that the books will have a significant positive effect on reading in the schools.

Future Work:

Street Library Ghana will continue to strive to improve literacy across Ghana. It is constantly working to spread its influence further and further. Currently, we are focusing on increasing our funding and our supply of books so that we are able to expand and to establish as many stationary libraries, reading hubs, as possible. We hope to make the joy that comes from reading achievable for children without access to adequate reading resources, and to improve the literacy of all Ghanaian children.