



## **Home language books for refugee children in New Zealand Yamada IBBY grant funded January 2018**

### **Overview and purpose of project**

Storylines/IBBYNZ was delighted to be awarded the grant of USD 5000 to initiate a project to provide books in home languages to children arriving in New Zealand as refugees.

New Zealand annually receives 1,000 refugees from a wide range of countries, (soon to increase to 1,500), who arrive in groups six times during the year. Many are families with school aged children who have experienced very difficult

circumstances, firstly in fleeing their homeland to seek asylum in a second country and then, as part of the long process of applying for, and gaining refugee status, they may wait for months and in some cases years, in a camp, for the chance to be selected for resettlement by a host nation.

We in Storylines/NZIBBY,, as all in IBBY strongly believe in the power of language and story through books that are accessible to help children build their feelings of identity and cultural belonging.

On arrival in New Zealand, refugee families spend six weeks at the Centre for Refugee Education before being settled in towns and cities around New Zealand. During this time, the refugee children attend the Auckland University of Technology (AUT)-managed school at the Centre where they are provided with language and literacy lessons and an introduction to New Zealand culture. The school is well resourced with literacy learning materials in English but very few reading materials for the children and their families their home languages are available.

The languages of refugees coming to New Zealand are currently as follows: Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Somali, Amharic, Swahili, and Rohingya.

### **The project to date**

During 2018, following confirmation of the Yamada grant, we drew on a range of personal contacts, including our IBBY colleagues, to source books in the languages of the refugees who were in the groups arriving in New Zealand.

150 books, predominantly picture books, graphic novels, and non-fiction books for younger readers, were procured and donated to the classroom libraries at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The focus on these genres was because they could be shared by young people of all ages and their families. They were written in the children's home language, and by authors/illustrators from these countries or countries with similar languages (e.g. Arabic is the home language for several countries from which the refugees come).

The home countries of the refugee children in 2018 were Afghanistan, Myanmar/Burma/Rohingya, Colombia, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Syria. While it was not possible to obtain children's books in the home languages of all children in residence during the period the books were given to the Centre, books in the following languages were presented: Arabic, Burmese, Karen (Myanmar), Chin (Myanmar), Dari, Farsi, Pashto, Punjabi, Spanish and Tamil.

Books were procured through a range of sources:

- Purchased from international bookshops and distributors identified through contacts of the directors of the project
- Purchased from agencies and individuals identified through professional connections and internet searches.
- Gifted to the project by National Sections of IBBY

We have been overwhelmed by the support and generosity of IBBY National sections and are particularly grateful to

- Hashmatullah Hayat and Yousef Mohammad (Afghanistan) and Zohreh Ghaeni (Iran) for books in Dari, Farsi and Pashto
- Hasmig Chahinian (France) and Jehan Helou (Palestine) for books in Arabic

Our wonderful colleagues have donated books, and in some instances the costs of postage/shipping costs. Hasmig and Zoreh kindly transported books to the Bologna Children's Book Fair for Frances Plumpton to bring back to New Zealand.

Other books were obtained through personal contact with the Yangong Bookshop in Myanmar (Burmese, Karen and Chen), with Crimson Earth, book distributors in Singapore (Tamil and Pashtu). We also purchased books through Amazon in Spanish on the advice of Colombian colleagues

In all instances the quality and appropriateness of the books for the refugee children was ascertained through consultation with IBBY colleagues in national sections; on arrival in New Zealand first language speakers of each language, working with the Mangere Refugee Centre read each book to confirm the quality of the language and appropriateness of the content for the refugee children.

On arrival in New Zealand the books were catalogued and covered by Storylines volunteers who are trained librarians. (insert photo of Maria, Libby and Frances with books)



**Maria Hayward (Director of Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre), Libby Limbrick and Frances Plumpton.**

Toward the end of the year a ceremony was held at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre School to formally present 147 books to the Principal of the school and to the teachers and children. The excitement of the children and their families in viewing the books in the bookrack, with one boy from Afghanistan exclaiming in Farsi... " *But I can read this book!*"

The following photos are taken at the presentation of the books and show the presentation of the books, the books on display and groups of children being read to from the books by their families or interpreters.





## **Programme in 2019**

Early in 2019 another group of refugees arrived at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. In this group are children whose home language are, Amharic Javanese, Kinyawanda, Punjabi Rohingya, Somali, Tygrinya, Swahili, and Urdu, , in addition to the languages of the earlier groups. At the time of writing this report we are contacting sources from whom we can purchase books. Again we are grateful to support our IBBY colleagues: Murti Bunata (INABBY) is donating a book in Javanese, the publication of which was supported by an IBBY grant; additional books in Indonesian are also being purchased through Murti. Liz Page and Hasming Chahinian have also facilitated the purchase of books in languages that have been hard to access for example Tygrinya, Amharic and books for children from French speaking African nations. Carole Bloch has put us in touch with Bakame Editions in Rwanda from whom we can purchase books in Kinyawanda. These books, we hope, will be given to the School within the next few months.

While many people's generosity has enabled us to 'stretch' the Yamada grant to cover expenditure not only in 2018 but 2019, the success of the project today has convinced us, and others, that funding needs to be found so that the programme is sustainable. We are currently applying to potential funders.

Dr Libby Limbrick (University of Auckland) and Dr Nicola Daly (University of Waikato) have initiated a small research study to ascertain the impact project and provide feedback on the administration of the project

## **Summary of expenditure to date**

As at the end of January 2019 we have spent less than 50% of the Yamada IBBY grant. Expenditure has covered the costs and postage for the books, book covering materials and a press release about the presentation of the books to the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre.

In summary, Storylines Children's Literature Trust of New Zealand/ IBBY NZ is extremely grateful to the Yamada IBBY fund for facilitating us to support young refugees to know that, their home language and culture are valued as they settle in their new home after many years of stress and disruption.

Libby Limbrick and Frances Plumpton

Storylines Children's Literature Trust of New Zealand/ IBBY NZ