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An Assessment of the Impact of Book  
Aid International (BAI) on the  
Development of Libraries in Kano State,  
Nigeria

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## **An Assessment of the Impact of Book Aid International (BAI) on the Development of Libraries in Kano State, Nigeria**

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### **Introduction**

Book Aid International (BAI) is a British Non-Governmental Organization that collects books donated from libraries, publishers, educational institutions, and individuals in the United Kingdom (UK) and distributes them to developing countries to support education, training, and publishing (Sharples 1999). BAI was set up in 1954 by Hermione Countess of Ranfurly, and was then called "Ranfurly Library Service." Lady Ranfurly saw the shortage of books among children in the Bahamas when her husband served as Governor General there. She began gathering books from the UK and re-distributing them to schools and libraries in the Bahamas. After Lady Ranfurly and her husband returned to the UK, she expanded the book distribution to other developing countries.

BAI provides more than 750,000 books each year to more than forty of the poorest countries in the world. More than 85% of the books go to sub-Saharan African countries, including Nigeria (BAI 2001). BAI has established connections with other organizations with similar objectives, including the British Council (Dawakin Kudu 2002). In order for BAI to cover all parts of Nigeria, distribution committees were set up in Lagos and Eastern States. In 1996, Western and Northern states set up their programs (British Council 1997).

Dawakin Kudu (2002) discusses the objectives of BAI, including the advancement of education and literacy in developing countries:

- By distributing reading and information materials regardless of their medium to developing and other countries in need for educational purposes;
- By distributing consignments of such materials to Public libraries, Universities, Colleges. Schools, Hospital, Youth and Children's Centers and other NGOs; in according to local need and priorities;
- By engaging in activities designed to enhance the use of books, reading and other information materials in developing countries.

Dawakin Kudu further reveals that BAI has had the problem of a lack of feedback from the recipients, and a lack of up-to-date records of what was donated. Because of this, BAI was unable to justify itself or to address the problems of recipients effectively. Nassarawa (2003) stresses the need for BAI and its partners to work together strategically. He further argues that since BAI is working in rapidly changing situations, the programme must be able to demonstrate its impact to gain support for founders and other stakeholders.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Bello and Augi (1993) discusses the primary significance of books in any library collection. They remain the central mode of preservation, promotion, and propagation of culture, and knowledge. Although libraries traditionally acquire books through direct purchases, loan, exchange, or donations, libraries in the developing nations have relied on donation as a major method of acquiring books. Ojo-Igbinoba (1997) discusses the deplorable state of library purchasing power, asserting that in developing counties such as Nigeria, economic conditions may create a situation in which donations are the primary way that material is acquired. It is this economic situation that has brought the intervention of donor agencies such as BAI.

It is in this context that the researcher seeks to determine whether the large numbers of books donated to libraries by BAI are relevant to the intellectual needs of the libraries and their users. The uncertainty of this question led the researcher to investigate empirically, and to offer suggestions on how to improve such services for the donor and the beneficiaries.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study was designed to assess the impact of BAI on the development of libraries in Kano State, Nigeria. The study examines:

- The presence of BAI
- The level of satisfaction
- The number of books received through the programme
- The relevancy of the books

### **Research Questions**

- How effective is BAI in improving libraries in Kano state?
- What level of satisfaction is derived by participating libraries?
- How many books and other information resources each library participating in the programme received so far?
- How relevant are the books to individual library needs?

### **Methodology**

The survey research technique was used for this study, with questionnaire items used to solicit data from the respondents. The population comprises eighteen libraries in Kano state who are BAI participants. All of them were sent a questionnaire addressed to the library director. Sixteen libraries responded.

### **Analysis of Data**

**Table 1. Library Governance**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Federal	5	31.25
Kano state	10	62.5
NGO	1	6.25
Total	16	100

Table 1 shows the governance of participating libraries. More than 60 percent are governed by the state, while nearly one third are federal government libraries.

**Table 2. Institution types**

Rating	Frequency	Percent age (%)
University	2	12.5
College/polytechnic	7	43.75
Public library	1	6.25
Special/research library	6	37.5
Total	16	100

Table 2 shows that the largest group of institutions is the seven (43.75%) college or polytechnic libraries, followed by six (37.5%) special or research libraries, two (12.5%) university libraries, and one (12.5%) public library. This indicates that the programme covers different types of libraries in the state.

**Table 3. Method of Joining BAI**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Official invitation	8	50
Colleagues	3	18.75
Solicitation	5	31.25
Total	16	100

Table 3 shows the method through which libraries join BAI, in which eight (50%) were invited officially, while three (18.75%) heard of the programme through colleagues, and five (31.25%) were solicited to join.

**Table 4. Date of Joining**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1997 -1998	7	43.75
1998- 2000	3	18.75
2000-2002	2	12.50
2002-2005	4	25
total	16	100

Table 4 shows the year(s) when individual libraries joined the scheme. Seven (43.75%) joined in 1997-98, while three (18.75) joined in 1998-2000 moreso, two (12.50) in 2002-2005 respectively, and four (25%) between 2002 and 2005. A majority of libraries were invited to take part in the programme at its inception.

**Table 5. Number of Books Received**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
50-100	4	25
100-200	1	6.25
200-300	3	18.75
300 or more	8	50
Total	16	100

Table 5 shows that eight libraries, i.e., 50 percent of respondents, received 300 or more books from BAI, three (18.75%) received 200-300, while four (25%) received 50-100, and only one (6. 25%)

received 100-200, books. The fact that half the libraries in the programme have received 300 or more books since its inception shows the benefit to participants of BAI.

**Table 6 Other Materials Received**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Journal(s)	11	68.75
Document(s)and report	4	25
Other	1	6.25
Total	16	100

Eleven libraries (68.75%) received journals as well as books. Four (25%) received reports and only one received any other material type. The programme does not restrict itself to the provision of books, but includes other educational resources that facilitate teaching, learning, and research.

**Table 7. Libraries' Financial Position Prior to BAI**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adequate to buy foreign and local books	3	18.75
Adequate to buy local books only	7	43.75
Inadequate to buy both foreign and local books	6	37.5
Total	16	100

Table 7 shows libraries' financial position prior to the BAI programme. Three (18.75%) could afford both local and foreign books, while seven (43.75%) could buy locally published books only, and six (37.75%) could not afford to buy any books. This is not surprising, considering the fact that the majority of our libraries are financially handicapped because of the ever-decreasing of budget allocations to libraries by the government.

**Table 8. Degree of Improvement**

Assessment	Frequency	Percentages
Highly improved	7	43.75 (%)
Improved	5	31.25
Fairly improved	4	25
Total	16	100

Table 8 above, shows respondents' opinions regarding their library's improvement through the BAI programme. Seven (43.75%) feel that their library was highly improved, while five (31.25%) responded "improved," and four (25%) of the total respondents indicated that their libraries were fairly improved.

**Table 9. Level of Satisfaction**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly satisfied	4	25.00
Satisfied	9	56.25
No opinion	3	18.75
Total	16	100

Table 9 above shows the level of satisfaction of libraries with BAI. Four (25.00%) were highly satisfied, while nine (56.25%) were satisfied. Only three (18.75%) had no opinion. A large majority are satisfied with the scheme, perhaps due to a large volume of books and other educational materials received.

**Table 10. Overall Assessment of BAI**

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	4	25.00
Very good	9	56.25
Other	3	18.75
Total	16	100

Table 10 shows the overall assessment of BAI in libraries in the state. Four (25.00%) rated it as excellent, while nine (56.25%) rated it very good, and only three (18.75%) had no opinion.

### Findings and Discussion

The foregoing demonstrates that BAI has been a success in Kano state since its inception. It has proven to be a laudable programme that should be sustained. The programme has benefited almost all types of libraries in the state. A summary of the findings of the study are:

- Books are the most common resources
- The programme is viable and participating libraries want to see it continue
- Participants are satisfied with the programme and are benefitting from it
- There is no identifiable specialization in the selection and provision of the resources: libraries accept what they get. The titles that all libraries receive, though valuable, are inadequate for the needs and demands of the individual libraries' patrons.
- Libraries' purchasing power before the advent of BAI are very low.
- Libraries have received from 100-300 books from the programme
- BAI is the only major source of foreign and expensive library resources.

### Recommendations

Although the international donor agencies are a great resource, there is a need to tap other state or national donor agencies that could contribute financially to the common body, or embark on a project in a specific location. Locally-based intervention could help immensely in the provision and production especially of local literature.

International, national, and local donor agencies are partners in progress, but incorporating end-users, or at least their representatives, in planning will definitely yield greater results. Friends of the library organizations will among others help entice both state and local donor agencies to the libraries' projects.

It is essential to create a common format for measuring the success or otherwise of these projects. The measurement tools could include:

Presentation of statistics, including:

- Use of resources
- User satisfaction
- Desire for new projects and services

Initiating new book aid projects by either governmental, non-governmental, or philanthropic organizations is crucial. Such ventures will improve the quality and quantity of collections, and ensure the supply of a variety of resources in different formats. It could also form the basis for library cooperation for resource-sharing, and could also provide an opportunity for improving local publishing through encouragement of local authors by allocating special funds. The cooperative interventions of both international and local ventures could positively affect the funding of libraries.

### Conclusion

Book aid from anywhere (internationally, national, or locally) is indispensable to the survival and relevance of our libraries. BAI and its programmes have created an impressive hope and a brighter horizon for the libraries both public, academic, special, and school. Shelves have grown with current and appropriate literatures of varied disciplines. Libraries have started fulfilling their role as repositories of knowledge, and library services have been supported and improved by better collections. Finally, the necessity of fashioning commonly acceptable formats of project initiation, measurement of success, and gathering feedback are an essential part of future success for BAI and similar programmes.

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