

BOOKS FOR AFRICA



SPRING 2002

NEWSLETTER

The Sky's the Limit

There is a series of documentary films that trace the progress of a group of kids from age seven on, checking back in with them every seven years. The first film is known as *7 Up*, with subsequent ones called *14 Up*, *21 Up*—you get the idea.

Since 1988, Books For Africa (BFA) has shipped more than seven million books to children in Africa. Because each book passes through the hands of dozens of children, there's no telling how many millions of young Kenyans and Ugandans and Nigerians and Ghanians have held and read their first fairy tale or worked their first math problems with these books.

Just imagine the movies we could make if we could revisit just a few of these children. There's no telling how many got their first glimpses of a world beyond their village in an encyclopedia that arrived in a BFA shipment. In the fourteen years since

those first books arrived, some of these children have left their villages, gone on to college, gotten jobs.

There's no end of things that appeared in some of these seven million books that unlocked secrets kept from anyone who can't read—how cells divide, the history of colonization and the fight for independence in Africa, men who walked on the moon or planted a flag at the South Pole, Shakespeare's sonnets, Agatha Christie's whodunits, the wisdom of ancient Greece.

Isaac Gyan lives in Mampong-Akuapem, a village in Ghana. He wrote to us to tell us how much a single book would mean to him:

"It is my greatest pleasure to write you this epistle. In all events, I know for sure that you are doing well. I am a boy of eighteen years of age and a student. Reading storybooks is my hobby and more important they polish

and broaden my knowledge of English language. I therefore entreat you if you could kindly send me a storybook in order that I could score my goal. I shall much appreciate your kindness."

Imagine Isaac times seven million, and you start to see what Books For Africa has accomplished in its fourteen years of operation.

Seven million is far from enough. Given the estimated 370 million children living in Africa, we would need to multiply our efforts by 50 million just to get a single book in each child's hands. Not being able to do it all at once is no reason not to start, and the best of all possible reasons for continuing. Since 1990, the overall literacy rate in sub-Saharan Africa has climbed from 41 percent to 54 percent in 2000.

If you wonder what this has to do with you, consider that sub-Saharan Africa represents one-tenth of the
continued on next page

President of Tanzania Set to Visit Minnesota in May

BFA will host a Gala Dinner Celebration in President Mkapa's honor on Monday, May 13, 2002. For more information, please see the back page of this newsletter or the BFA website: www.booksforafrica.org. We hope you can join us!

A Unique Partnership:

Follett Educational Services and Books For Africa

Follett Educational Services, headquartered in Woodbridge, Illinois, is the largest buyer and seller of used textbooks in America. Follett contracts with schools throughout the Midwest for their surplus and discarded textbooks, teacher's editions and/or unused workbooks. Those books that have a resale value are refurbished and sold at a reduced cost to schools who are unable to afford new books. Books that can't be resold are now available to BFA. Since the program began in February, Follett has donated thousands of books to BFA in this new and unique partnership.

On the Minnesota end, volunteers and staff at BFA's St. Paul warehouse carefully sort through Follett shipments and choose only books that are appropriate and in useable condition to send to Africa. Those that do not meet BFA's criteria are recycled through Follett's environmentally responsible recycling program. As a result of this collaboration, BFA's greatest challenge is no longer obtaining enough books; it's raising enough dollars to ship all these wonderful books to Africa. Your continued support will help us meet this goal. Thank you.

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world's population, with 40 percent living below the poverty line. As the events of September 11 brought home to each of us, the world is no longer one in which anyone can live blindly behind national borders. The best

defense for a peaceful and prosperous way of life is worldwide trade in information and ideas, aired and shared by educated and open-minded people.

With your help, Books For Africa will send at least another million books this year, and another million or

more every year for as long as it takes. Each book will be read by at least 25 children, children who will create jobs, lead with wisdom, and make smart personal choices about health and the environment. Seven million...and UP. With your help, the sky's the limit.

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8/1/2001 – 2/28/2002

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13 Years 22 Countries 7 Million Books

A Gala Dinner Celebration

The Books For Africa board of directors
cordially invites you to celebrate
our partnership with Tanzania
with honored guest

His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa
President of The United Republic of Tanzania

Monday, May 13, 2002
6:00 PM

Radisson Riverfront Hotel
11 East Kellogg Avenue
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Black tie or national attire optional