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Patrick Plonski
BFA Executive Director
Minnesota Administrative Headquarters
253 East 4th St., 200, St. Paul
MN 55101 USA

Dear Executive Director,

I hope and pray that this letter finds you well.

RE: REPORT ON THE SHIPMENT OF 574 BOOKS FROM BOOKS FOR AFRICA

Reference is made to the caption above.

Once again with gratitude I acknowledge receipt of a 40 feet container with 574 boxes of seminary (theological), primary and secondary school, and university books. Additionally, I received very few pastoral items, pens and pencils.

Prior to the arrival of the container, arrangements were made to ensure that all key documents required for clearance are in place. The work was a bit hard but I managed to do that using my own resources. The container arrived safely at our premise. We had an empty container of the same size which was used to load the books. Six men were hired to unpack the books from the container with books to our empty one. The university paid for such a work.

Our plan was to call all school with the need of books and distribute to them. The plan was not feasible because of the political situation of that time and most school closed for annual leave. The campaigns and elections made us delay to give the books to schools. However, the books that were meant to our library were taken to the library for processing and use.

Given the difficult of knowing which specific schools are in desperate need of books, we had to make a survey particularly schools at Iringa municipality to identify which school are lacking such resources. This took some time and of course made us delay to start given the books to intended schools. We also used our library social network, and requests previously made by some heads of schools requesting assistance of books. When the exercise of identifying the schools was in place we immediately started calling the schools to come and collect the books. This also helped us to get more requests from schools heard of this good news from schools already got the books.

The number of schools, colleges, and universities received the books are listed in the separate list attached to this email. The university books were many and useful. We thought we should not keep this knowledge to our university alone. So we decided to give some of the books to other colleges that asked us to assist. We gave the books to Amani Centre in Njombe region. The centre offers various certificate and diploma courses. We also gave the books to Mtwivila community library with the understanding that all type of users will use such a library. Some of the books given to the ELCT, Mwanza for they had a college and wanted the books; and some were given to ELCT, South Central Diocese, Makete, Iringa.

The diocese has a teachers training college and asked if we have some books for them. Having books from BFA it was an opportunity to them to have such books.

In view of the low level of English to most of our primary school children, the books were mostly given to English Medium primary schools. With the understanding that the medium of instruction in secondary school is English, every secondary school that required books was given.

I expected an immediate and long-term feedback from recipients of books from Books for Africa. The immediate feedback as to the quality and usefulness of the books were obvious during distribution. Most representatives of schools appreciated the donation and were very much thankful to you for such valuable resources for students and teachers. The first recipients of books decided even to tell other of the value of the books and to request from us if we still have them. This was a good indication that the books were helpful to those received. In addition to this kind of feedback, some schools wrote appreciation letters. One of the letters is attached to this document. Some of the letters were written in Swahili so I found it not necessary to include them. In general the letters had one key theme of thanking for this wonderful contribution to schools and universities.

I think it is worth pointing out some of the success stories: one recipient (St. James Secondary school when he was in my office after he had received the books said, "How much should the school pay for all these books. The books are very good and will make the students use our library which had no books at all." The man was surprised to hear from me that the only cost that you have incurred is to come and pick up the books. He was very excited. I guess this is one of the persons who went and told others to come and get the books. Another person, Father Ulungi of St. Dominic primary and secondary schools, after he had collected books for the two schools, he called me and said "the books you gave us are not sufficient to our needs. I am coming tomorrow to get more". I told him that there are more schools that have not yet come to collect the books, and so I will not give you more books. The father replied, "I think you do not know how valuable these books are to us. I will certainly come because those who have not yet come to collect their allocations is a sure indication that they are not in need of such books". I asked him to be patient and will see if we will remain with something for him.

We also posted in the social media networks on the books we give to schools as donation from BFA. Most librarians were very curious to know about the books and wanted to receive such books for their libraries. However, we were not able to give them the books because all were given to other schools and libraries. This was a sign that most libraries need books. Probably we need to arrange with you to get more books to quench the thirst of books in our libraries with empty shelves. The hunger for books in most of our libraries cannot be sufficiently be fed with dwindling budgets for such resources. You are the people who can assist at least to address such a hunger of books situation.

To get long-term feedback I have planned to visit some schools which are at Iringa municipality and get the feedback from students and teachers. This will help us to see the actual needs of the students and teachers and also we will have time to teach the students the reading skills and the value of libraries for their academic performance and critical thinking.

As you know I am in charge of the University of Iringa Library. I am the one to report on the feedback regarding the books we received. The pictures of books processed and those in the process of processing for use have been selected by various academic staff. The faculty and students make use of the books and in fact they fill the gap following the scarcity of resources to procure new books. The Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs recommended the donation and were the ones to suggest some schools

and colleges to be assisted with these books. These university books are instrumental for most of the programmes we offer at our university. I, on behalf of the management, extend my sincere appreciation for this huge gift we have never been able to receive since the inception of the university. May the almighty God bless you exceedingly.

As I said earlier on, the hunger for books in our country is still huge. I am very optimistic that you will continue working with me to ensure that the Southern part of Tanzania and other parts of Tanzania as well gets such wonderful donation enable our children and university students to realize their dreams of quality education.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Cornelius Simba