



Annual Report 2017

‘Education isn’t about acquiring knowledge; it’s about developing capabilities: literacy and numeracy, acting responsibly towards others, taking initiative, working creatively and collaboratively. But most importantly, it should endow you with the ability and desire to keep on learning.’

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & FOUNDER

PATRICK WEIL

Dear Friends,

From political upheavals to natural disasters, 2017 forced us to test our resolve and capacities to defend the values we hold most dear to us – equal rights and dignity for all, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged – amidst a world seemingly turned upside down.

In a year that emboldened broadcasting of alternative facts and misinformation, in a year that exposed the lingering remnants of racism and inequality, Libraries Without Borders positioned itself. We created innovative tools to combat the misinformation and inequity that came to a fore in 2017. For over a decade, we have worked to democratize access to information by bringing resources into some of the most remote, isolated, desolate and disadvantaged corners of the world. In places like Haiti, we partnered with university systems to build physical libraries and provide capacity-building for local librarians. In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, we created mobile libraries – attached to the back of a bicycle – that brought vital resources to children and adults in areas devastated by the quake. From there, we created the Ideas Box, a mobile multimedia center and learning center that allows us to set-up the infrastructure of a library under any circumstances. We have since deployed the Ideas Box in Burundi, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Greece. Today, our ethos and this tool – the Ideas Box – has driven our groundbreaking peacebuilding efforts in Colombia, where we are exploring the impact of libraries and community centers as tools for reconciliation in post-conflict societies. In the United States, we focus on meeting people who lack access to information where they are – whether that's a laundromat, parking lot, convalescent home or community center. Thanks to the IdeasCube – a mini Ideas Box – we can bring resources into untraditional outreach spaces, allowing us to equip vulnerable and underserved communities with the tools and training they need to fully participate in society. By leveraging our international expertise and adapting our best practices from the field, we have innovatively and effectively addressed the needs of people living in the Bronx, Detroit and Washington, D.C., where local leaders have given us acknowledgment and recognition for our efforts.

In 2018 and beyond, we will build upon these successes by scaling up, iterating and improving our programs. We are committed to strengthening relationships with our partners as well as building new relationships with partners who can help us expand to other communities across the United States that stand to benefit from our expertise and innovations.

On behalf of our Board and LWB colleagues, I thank you for your continued belief and support in our mission!

Patrick Weil
Founder, Chairman & CEO of Libraries Without Borders

MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

PETER SAHLINS

Since the 2016 elections, we have collectively experienced outrage, disbelief, frustration, and despair. We have reflected, struggled, marched, and resisted; we have given our time and our money to worthy efforts that seek to preserve our democratic values and ideals. And therein lies the glimmer of a renewed sense of hope, the knowledge that millions of citizens at all levels of society are experiencing, some for the first time, from school board meetings to the halls of Congress, to advocate not just for the rule of law but for the broader precepts of social justice.

Libraries Without Borders is not a political organization. Yet within the maelstrom of misinformation and alternative facts, in the attacks on immigrants, the racial injustice, the stripping away of social protections, and the continued growth of income inequality, LWB's work in the United States must articulate our general BSF mission – access to information, knowledge, and culture for all – in ways that address the pressing challenges of the current U.S. political climate. Now more than ever, we recognize that people need to have access to *reliable* and *credible* information, and that it is important to equip those without skills or training with understanding and knowledge that is relevant to their lives. Since digital media and the Internet are the principal sources of information, Libraries Without Borders has become a strong actor and advocate of digital equity in the United States.

Digital equity is the principle that all people have not only a right to access the Internet, but that they learn how to understand and apply relevant information to fully participate in society. This past year, Libraries Without Borders created programs that promote digital inclusion to ensure the most disadvantaged and precarious people have access to, and know how to make use of, information technology.

Through the **Wash & Learn** program in the Bronx and Detroit, we worked with local nonprofits and public libraries to design programs aimed at increasing digital literacy, early learning, and professional development skills. In partnership with **Peer 2 Peer University**, we hosted in-person, online study groups that gave community members in Detroit the opportunity to gain marketable digital skills. Through the **Legal Literacy Initiative**, we curated and created legal resources that were easy to understand and readily available in places that were convenient to the community members who needed them most.

Libraries Without Borders believes access to technology and connectivity to the Internet enables people of all backgrounds to access opportunities that may vastly improve their lives. But access alone is not sufficient. Access must be curated in the pursuit of digital literacy – a concept that includes basic literacy, numeracy, and financial, legal, and health literacy. Through curation and training, LWB is working to ensure that disadvantaged and precarious communities and individuals can participate in society, make decisions about their lives, and confront the conditions that result in inequality.

It has been a difficult and dispiriting year, but also a year of learning and of hope. The team of LWB in the U.S., supported by the Paris home office, is striking out in new directions that will help identify our organization and its mission to all stakeholders. Digital literacy and digital inclusion are not problems that make the headlines, themselves filled with the daily assaults on our democracy. But they are critical in guaranteeing that all citizens, and especially those in conditions of economic, legal, and medical risk, know how to defend themselves and their rights in an increasingly hostile political environment. Looking towards the future, it is my hope that Libraries Without Borders in the United States will continue on this trajectory that that can transform the lives of millions now living in this country.

Peter Sahlins
Deputy Chairman, Libraries Without Borders

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ALLISTER CHANG

Dear Friends,

This is an exciting time for Libraries Without Borders. As the 2017 Annual Report demonstrates, we have accomplished so much over the past year; from launching new programs to forging new partnerships to tripling our staff, 2017 was undoubtedly a banner year for our small, but noble organization. Reflecting upon everything that we have achieved to date, I cannot help but feel immense gratitude for supporters like you, the people who have made it possible for us to transform the lives of vulnerable communities in the United States and abroad.

When I visited one of our “Wash & Learn” programs last summer, I was taken aback by a conversation I had with a young man at the laundromat. An unemployed high school dropout on the cusp of his twenties, he was doing a load of laundry when the brightly colored “Wash & Learn” sign and Chromebooks caught his eye. I told him about the program and, knowing he was on the job hunt, suggested he take a look at the resume-building resources we had curated. But he wasn’t interested. “None of the jobs that I’m applying for require a resume,” he said. His response has stuck with me ever since because it echoes the sentiments of many people in the communities we serve. Recognizing this reality — that **access to resources and technology is not enough to change people’s mindsets or their lives** — has compelled Libraries Without Borders to rethink the purpose and scope of the work we are doing.

Over the past few months, we have spent much time reflecting on what our true value add is as an organization. Although we create and install technology, we are not an edtech company. While we curate high quality content, we are not content experts. And even though we provide access to the Internet and web-based resources offline, we are not a

telecoms or Internet service provider. What, then, do we bring to the table? During this period of contemplation, we harkened back to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. I'll spare you the philosophy lesson, but in essence, this story seeks to show humanity the relationship between education and truth. It argues the purpose of education is not to give us truth, but rather to "dispose us to the truth." In this sense, we should regard education as a capacity-building experience, one that equips us with the knowledge to find the truth, but more importantly, one that gives us the desire and willingness to learn what that truth is.

Through this thought exercise, we came to realize the true value of Libraries Without Borders. Beyond technology, tools and training, we equip vulnerable individuals with the skills and confidence they need to become resilient and resourceful, lifelong learners. By forging strong partnerships and building trust among local nonprofits, community organizations, and small businesses — partnerships that often endure long after we are gone — we are able to meet people where they are: at the laundromat, in a worker's center, at church, or in a convalescent home. In these informal community spaces, we gain access to communities at a time when they are free and willing to accept the resources we have to offer. In turn, by streamlining, clarifying, contextualizing and packing this information into easily digestible formats that are readily applicable to their lives, we ensure communities get a hold of *accessible* information. Ultimately, this shift toward accessibility will fundamentally transform how the people we serve consume and apply critical information to their lives, thereby laying the foundation for systemic change.

As we continue to test, iterate and improve our programs in an effort to better serve vulnerable people, we will maintain the close relationships we establish with community members and nonprofits to continuously ensure our efforts align with local needs. By expanding the scope of our work from a singular focus on access to a holistic focus on accessibility, we will change ecosystems of learning for generations to come. Thank you for joining us on this exciting journey!

Cordially,

Allister Chang
Executive Director, Libraries Without Borders

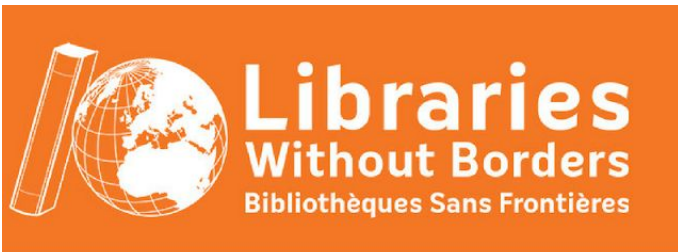


OUR MISSION

“To advance digital equity by providing vulnerable, isolated and disadvantaged communities with access to easy-to-understand, relevant and reliable information & inspire lifelong learning.”

OUR VISION

Expanding access to information is essential to promote literacy and resilience, and to cultivate an informed and engaged society. In a world increasingly threatened by natural and human-made disasters, in which the benefits of modernity are not extended to all, Libraries Without Borders has re-imagined the purpose and scope of libraries to advance education, promote good health, combat poverty and equip vulnerable communities with the tools and skills needed to enjoy their fundamental human rights. By identifying best practices for curating content and developing technology and training that ensures critical information gets into the hands of the people who need it most, we are transforming the library for the 21st century and beyond.



Understanding Our Mission



DIGITAL EQUITY

The belief that all people deserve access to digital technology, resources, and tools, as well as the capacity to understand and apply relevant information acquired from these tools to fully participate in a growing technologically-dependent society.



VULNERABLE

The diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard. Most often associated with poverty, but can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenseless in the face of risk, shock or stress (IFRC.org)



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The "individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern" in order to improve the quality of the community, such as volunteering, being involved in governmental actions, or participating in local organizations (APA).



ACCESS VS. ACCESSIBILITY

Access is the ability to find information. Accessibility is the acknowledgement of access, as well as the ability to navigate through the plethora of the information at your fingertips, determining what is useful, relevant, and true.



ENTREPRENEURIAL ENTERPRISE

We take part in the evolution of the librarian's profession towards an entrepreneurial approach and the development of the measurement of the economic and social impacts of libraries.

OUR PROGRAMS

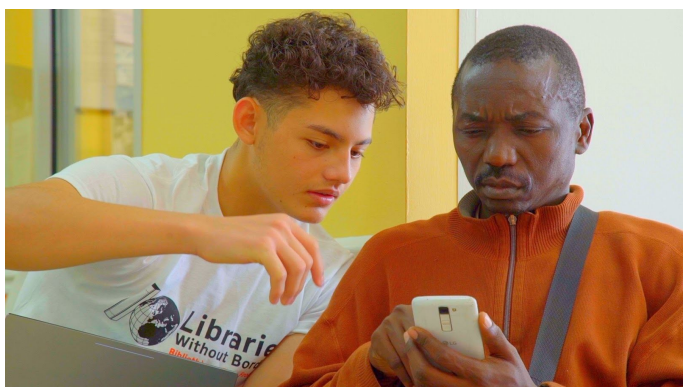
US-Based Programs : At A Glance

The Wash & Learn Program



In 2017, LWB launched the Wash & Learn program, which creates pop-up libraries inside laundromats. By partnering with the Coin Laundromat Association, we ran pilots in Detroit and the Bronx. Today, we plan to expand to other cities across the US.

The Legal Literacy Initiative



People who don't know their rights can't protect themselves when those rights have been violated. Recognizing this, LWB launched the Legal Literacy Initiative, which brings easy-to-understand legal information to vulnerable people at places they regularly visit. In 2017, we ran pilots in laundromats, community centers and convalescent homes.

Health Literacy in Minnesota

LWB will create pop-up health libraries in laundromats across Minnesota, targeting communities with high rates of chronic illness and poor overall health. In partnership with the Brainerd Public Library and the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, we will curate content and facilitate trainings to increase accessibility of public health information and improve health outcomes.

The Ideas Box in Puerto Rico

To address the devastating impact of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico, LWB will partner with local organizations in San Juan to create a community resource center where residents can access educational programming, health resources and innovative multimedia technology through the Ideas Box.

US-Based Programs : A Closer Look

The Wash & Learn Program in the Bronx

Libraries Without Borders partnered with The DreamYard Project (DreamYard Prep) and the LaundryCares Foundation to launch “Wash & Learn,” a summer learning program that creates pop-up library spaces inside laundromats throughout the Bronx. The “Wash & Learn” program transforms laundromats into informal learning spaces where local residents can access high-quality literacy and professional development materials as they wait for their clothes to wash and dry. LWB decided to launch the “Wash & Learn” program in Morrisania, the poorest district in the Bronx, which is itself the poorest borough in New York City. According to Rafael Gonzalez, a resident of Morrisania, “This [...] is a neighborhood of low-income people who are living paycheck to paycheck, hoping that their children can receive some education and eventually get a good paying job so that the family can move up in the socioeconomic ladder.”

In an effort to expand opportunities for local residents, LWB created a pop-up library and learning space inside Lavanderia Express IV, a laundromat located in the heart of Morrisania. Libraries Without Borders equipped this laundromat with a digital server, which created a WiFi hotspot that patrons could use to access educational content, including early learning resources and workforce development tools, at any hour of the day. This content was carefully curated by LWB in partnership with The DreamYard Project and Morrisania Branch of the New York Public Library. As community needs changed, our partners helped us keep a pulse on the resources and services that local residents required, allowing us to update and adapt content in real time.

Although the digital library played a central role in “Wash & Learn,” the program’s ultimate success rested on the effectiveness of on-site facilitators, who truly brought the library’s content to life. These facilitators were students from the local high school, DreamYard Prep, whom LWB staff trained on how to make materials readily applicable to patrons’ everyday

lives. LWB also shared best practices on how to engage with community members, help users navigate the digital library's resources, answer questions about content, and track requests for additional information. Facilitators also directed laundromat patrons to enrichment opportunities at the New York Public Library (NYPL), namely its summer reading program.

The facilitators were managed by Rudy Blanco, the Digital Learning Director at DreamYard Prep, and an award-winning educator and community activist in his own right. Under his guidance, the student facilitators — who ranged in age from 14 to 18 — gained the opportunity to develop skills that are essential for future success; they gained hard skills like creating a project timeline or securing an MOU, as well as soft skills like problem-solving, adaptive thinking and interpersonal communication.

In 2018, LWB will continue fostering relationships with the DreamYard Project, Morrisania Library, and other community organizations in the Bronx. We are committed to providing low-income families in the community with opportunities to access literacy and professional development tools at times and places that are convenient and accessible, and will keep working and innovating with our local partners to ensure that we are responsive to community needs in the next iteration of the “Wash & Learn” program in the Bronx.

The Wash & Learn Program in Detroit

Libraries Without Borders launched “Wash & Learn,” a summer learning program that creates pop-up library spaces in laundromats throughout Detroit. In partnership with the Knight Foundation, the United Way of Southeast Michigan, Brilliant Detroit, the Parkman Branch of the Detroit Public Library, the Mayor's Office of the City of Detroit, and the LaundryCares Foundation, this program transformed two laundromats in Detroit — Coinless Laundromat on Oakman Boulevard and Fit & Fold Laundry on 2nd Avenue — into informal learning spaces where patrons could access high-quality early learning and literacy materials while they did their laundry.

Libraries Without Borders equipped each laundromat with a digital library server, which established a WiFi hotspot that laundromat patrons could use to access pre-loaded educational content at any hour of the day. With the help of partnering organizations, LWB curated materials relevant to the needs of local patrons. Our partners also helped ensure that we kept a pulse on the changing needs of the community for each laundromat, enabling us to update and adapt content in real time.

Over the summer, our local partners took turns staffing the “Wash & Learn” program. The Parkman Branch offered a modified version of its summer reading program for young children who are otherwise idle at the laundromat. According to Qumisha Goss, a librarian from the Parkman Branch who led many of the summer reading sessions, “The ‘Wash & Learn’ program introduced families to the resources available at the Detroit Public Library. We started to see laundromat patrons at the library, and vice versa.”

Brilliant Detroit and the United Way of Southeast Michigan also hosted early learning activities, which they adapted for this non-traditional learning environment. Cindy Eggleton, Co-Founder and CEO of Brilliant Detroit, believes that this approach, which “meets families

where they are and provides them with the resources that promote literacy and intergenerational learning is critical to building kid success.” Stacy Lorne, a Detroit-native who serves as the Program Coordinator for “Wash & Learn” in Detroit, believes the success of this pilot reflects the “support of our allies and the prospect that this program might gain enough momentum to become a permanent fixture in the community.”

By continuously innovating —from how we forge community partnerships to how we staff our programs—Libraries Without Borders plans to expand the “Wash & Learn” model to other cities across the United States.

The Legal Literacy Initiative

Background on Legal Literacy

In the wake of rapidly-changing immigration laws and travel policies, many people in the United States felt confused, angry and disempowered. We heard a story about a grandmother who was not allowed to reunite with her family in Chicago because she traveled to Iran for the holidays, of a father who was stopped by police for having a broken tail light then summarily deported back to Mexico, and of a soon-to-be 18 year-old who learned he was undocumented — his parents brought him over as a toddler — and now his dreams of college and hopes for the future were now in limbo. In LWB’s own programs, we witnessed participants grow increasingly concerned about legal issues pertaining to their immigration status. As we delved deeper into the issue, we realized a shocking amount of people lack a basic understanding of their legal rights and the law, not only with regard to immigration, but also in terms of housing, domestic violence, divorce, and wage theft, among a variety of topics. In an effort to help people know and understand their legal rights, we began to develop the concept of “Legal Literacy.”

Legal Literacy is the ability to read and understand legal information, and the capacity to apply relevant laws and concepts to one’s life. A legally literate person has a basic understanding of their rights, which allows them to fully participate in society. Libraries Without Borders created “The Legal Literacy Initiative” to empower people from all backgrounds with the legal knowledge and skills needed to fully exercise their rights, and to advocate for change when existing laws and practices inhibit the free exercise of such rights.

The Legal Literacy Initiative in Action

In November 2017, Libraries Without Borders launched the Legal Literacy Initiative, an outreach program that creates pop-up learning spaces in places where people who need legal support regularly congregate, including churches, schools and community centers. In partnership with legal aid organizations, local libraries and nonprofits, we curated, contextualized and simplified legal resources according to the explicit needs and concerns of the community. We also drew from the expertise of LWB’s Legal Literacy Advisory Board, comprised of leading practitioners, preeminent legal scholars, and thought leaders in the field. With their oversight, we ensured that all content shared with community members was relevant to their circumstances and reliable in reflecting current laws and policies.

Libraries Without Borders launched the first pilot of the Legal Literacy Initiative at the CASA de Maryland Welcome Center, located in Wheaton, Maryland. In this center, day laborers gather early every morning in search of work, which many have difficulty finding because of their undocumented status. The vast majority of the day laborers who visit the Welcome Center are immigrants and refugees from Latin America. To respond to the needs of this community, Libraries Without Borders collaborated with teachers, administrators and students at the International Academy at the Francis L. Cardozo Education Campus, a Washington, DC high school specifically designed around the needs of recently arrived immigrant students. In Cardozo's International Academy, over 80% of students had arrived to the United States within the last two years.

Since many of the students at the International Academy at Cardozo came from the same communities as the day laborers at CASA's Welcome Center, we decided to train them on how to be facilitators for the Legal Literacy pilot. At first, we installed a digital server inside the Welcome Center, which emitted a 24 hour intranet signal that any Wi-Fi enabled device could access. This server held a wealth of legal resources that the LWB team curated based on the needs and concerns of day laborers at the center. Then we equipped students with tablets and laptops, and taught them how to navigate the server's resources as well as how to guide people at the center to find resources on their own. We also partnered with local legal aid organizations that agreed to help any clients from the Welcome Center that we referred to them.

The Legal Literacy pilot in Maryland took place early morning every Saturday of Fall 2017. The program was a tremendous success of multiple levels. First, it empowered day laborers with the legal resources they needed to make decisions about their immigration status, employer disputes, wage theft, and various other topics. Second, it provided students from the International Academy with an opportunity to give back to their community while also developing critical professional, academic and life skills. Third, it revealed opportunities to improve how we deliver information in informal spaces, and prompted us to develop a new platform to better serve the needs of vulnerable communities.

The second iteration of the Legal Literacy Initiative served an entirely new community: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) living in Washington, DC's Chinatown. This program targets members of the AAPI community because these individuals are particularly marginalized in comparison to other minority groups in the city. The majority are foreign-born, have limited English proficiency, and/or live 200% below the federal poverty line. Through this program, LWB staff and volunteers visit residents of a convalescent home for Chinese community members on a weekly basis. During sessions, LWB provides residents with information on health and legal aid through face-to-face interactions in their native language, Mandarin. LWB also teaches residents how to access this information using a beta web platform, which we plan to officially unveil in Summer 2018.

The Future of The Legal Literacy Program

The Legal Literacy Initiative is expected to expand to New Haven, Connecticut, Providence, Rhode Island, Detroit, Michigan, and Charlotte, North Carolina. In these cities, immigrants face a number of barriers in finding, navigating and understanding the overwhelming array of legal resources that exist. In turn, local nonprofits and legal aid organizations seeking to

help these communities struggle to reach them, which prevents the right information from getting into the hands of those who need it most. By partnering with local libraries, community organizations, and legal aid providers, Libraries Without Borders will continue to curate, contextualize, simplify and deliver digital legal materials that answer questions relevant to each respective community. In the near future LWB seeks to bring the Legal Literacy Initiative to West Oakland, California and Monterrey, Mexico.

Cricket Together

On June 26, 2017, Libraries Without Borders and Cricket Media launched CricketTogether, an innovative e-mentoring program for elementary school students from underserved communities in Detroit. The program connected 35 third, fourth and fifth graders with professionals from across the United States. During each mentoring session, students and mentors discussed stories and articles about a range of age-appropriate topics. After these exchanges, both students and mentors would reflect on what they discussed and then write a one-page letter summarizing their thoughts. By combining digital writing tools and relevant content with one-on-one mentorship, the students who participated in CricketTogether strengthened their literacy and reading comprehension skills, while also gaining positive role models in their lives. This program was made possible through the support of the Detroit Public Library and Matrix Human Solutions, which housed the program at one of its locations. Both organizations have pledged to expand, reinforce and sustain the educational offerings of this pilot program. According to Executive Director, Allister Chang: “It is our goal to find great local organizations and expand the efficacy of their services by equipping them with new tools like the CricketTogether platform” said Allister Chang, Executive Director of Libraries Without Borders. “We want to support our local partners to innovate without risk. In this case, we were deeply impressed with what Matrix Human Services and the Parkman Branch of the Detroit Public Library were already doing, and saw tremendous potential for them to expand their reach and impact by equipping them with the Cricket Together platform.”

International Programs

Middle East

Laying the Foundation for Expansion

Within the context of the Syrian humanitarian crisis, LWB began to partner with international organizations and regional government authorities to set-up Ideas Box programs throughout the Middle East in 2015. We have since partnered with CARE, Intersos, Terre des Hommes, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the Danish Refugee Council, and OXFAM. In Jordan, we launched Ideas Box programs in the Azraq and Za’atari refugee camps, as well as in the underprivileged Nuzha neighborhood of East Amman. Beyond Jordan, we established Ideas Box programs in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon and the Hassan Shama refugee camp in Iraq. We also operated a Koombook program in a fully serviced joint Emirati-Jordanian camp. In 2016, we officially opened a regional office in Jordan, which focused on scaling up our pilot programs in the Middle East. In light of the ever-expanding needs of countries receiving Syrian refugees, Libraries Without Borders decided to open another permanent office in Iraq later that year.

Where We Are Today

In 2017, we partnered with the Norwegian Refugee Council and a start-up called Youth Without Borders to set-up an Ideas Box in Irbid, a city in northern Jordan. At the Ideas Box, we offered professional development and training opportunities for local youth. That same year, we worked with the Danish Refugee Council to install an Ideas Box at the Nuzah Community Centre. This program supported personal development, educational achievement and the psychosocial well-being of Syrians and Jordanians. At the end of 2017, we launched an Ideas Box program at the Alwan Cultural Center in Lebanon, where we focused our efforts on promoting resilience and teaching healthy ways to cope with trauma. In 2018, LWB plans to launch 11 new Ideas Box and Koombook programs in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

Colombia

After five decades of armed conflict in Colombia between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Government of Colombia, an estimated 218,094 people have died (81% of whom were civilians) and an additional 5 million people have been displaced. In June 2016, the FARC and the Government of Colombia signed a ceasefire and a peace treaty was finalized on August 24, 2016.

During Colombia's civil conflict, many remote, rural and isolated areas that were home to indigenous peoples, FARC militias and other combatants, were largely ignored by the government for decades. At present, these communities are now grappling with the long-term effects of neglect: they lack basic supplies, housing, access to water, medical care, sanitation and educational opportunities.

Recognizing the destabilizing impact of such conditions on the country's newfound, yet fragile peace, the Colombian government chose to prioritize "demobilization zones" as areas for economic, social and political development. By partnering with Libraries Without Borders to install Ideas Boxes in these communities, the government created communal spaces where residents could access information, educational resources, and cultural enrichment opportunities. Given its mobile design, the Ideas Box brought the Ministry of Culture and National Library of Colombia to FARC ex-combatants and civilians living in 20 special jurisdictions and other prioritized rural communities.

What was the impact of Ideas Box on people's everyday lives? According to Yoann, one of four facilitators of the Ideas Box in Colombia, the Ideas Box brought together people who had never spoken to each other before. Through the Ideas Box, "former FARC, the police, everyday civilians...people from all walks of life were able to share their stories to understand what others had experienced during the conflict."

In Conejo, a town divided by a long-standing feud between two families, the Ideas Box had an undeniably transformative impact. With its arrival, community members sought to convert a dilapidated building into a library. By working together to renovate this space, residents were able to set aside their grievances and bury past grudges. In just twenty days,

the people of Conejo not only created a library but also forged new relationships that made their community stronger and more united. “This is at the heart of the peace process—getting people from across the divide to talk and understand one another.”

African Great Lakes

In 2017, we successfully scaled the Ideas Box program we began in the Kavumu and Musasa refugee camps in Burundi to include other countries in the Great Lakes region, namely the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. Despite their specific contexts, all Ideas Box programs had a strong psycho-social impact on participants, bolstering their resilience and renewing their sense of hope.

In Kavumu, the Ideas Box gave refugees access to customized tools and resources such as Coursera for Refugees, an educational course crafted to give refugees the skills they need to transition into life in host countries. This Coursera project addressed local needs and promoted lifelong learning, personal growth and creative expression. With the help of our partner, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), in November 2017, 30 Congolese refugees graduated from the program and received certification that will enable them to pursue higher education.

Through our Ideas Box programs in the region, we created community spaces that were directly shaped by the refugees that would use them everyday. These programs undoubtedly changed the lives of many people. By bringing these resources into refugee camps, Libraries Without Borders created a lifeline that enabled refugees to pursue education and prepare for life after the refugee camp.

At present, there are over 100 Ideas Boxes in 17 countries across three continents.

Our Future Projects

Health Literacy in Minnesota

Individuals and families in Crow Wing County, Minnesota, particularly the lowest-income, face 3 key barriers to accessing public health information: Lack of transportation options, lack of trustworthy outlets to learn about existing programs, and lack of these programs' persistent availability. Libraries Without Borders (BSF) has developed a program that expands opportunities for the poorest individuals and families. BSF will partner with the Brainerd Public Library (BPL) to install e-libraries and build libraries at laundromats in low-income and underserved communities. BSF and BPL will curate content from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine's Consumer Health Resources (NNLM) and facilitate trainings of how to use MedlinePlus at laundromats in order to: 1) Answer critical questions being asked by community members regarding health information; and 2) Facilitate trainings to find quality health information resources available on the Internet so

that participants may make better informed health care decisions for themselves and to share this information with their families.

The Ideas Box in Puerto Rico

Following the devastation of Hurricane Maria, Libraries Without Borders seeks to open a permanent community resource center, built with local partners in a San Juan neighborhood, using the innovative technology and online access and resources of the Ideas Box. Created in February 2014, the innovative multimedia and learning center can connect to the internet via satellite and contains 4 laptops, 15 touchscreen tablets, 50 electronic readers, 300 hard-copy books, a cinema module with video production equipment, board and video games, toys, puppets, theatre supplies, as well as light furniture for all ages. Each Ideas Box is curated to fit the needs of the community and culture it is serving, taking into account regional languages and the community's objectives. In addition, the Ideas Box is designed to eventually be under full ownership of the community to promote continuous learning, utilization, and modification.

At Libraries Without Borders, we seek to establish a sustainable, community-driven resource center to serve a population of 10,000 children and adults that will supplement declining public resources for education, and that will offer critical, curated, and customized resources for healthcare, finance, or legal needs, as well as programs for professional development, adult literacy, and other needs determined by the community. Beyond a single resource center, we intend to make use of the transportability and customization of the Ideas Box, as well as the replicability and sustainability of programs build on web-based platforms, to reach communities throughout Puerto Rico.

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