Tsoga o itirele

Bakgoma Community Library as a model for rural Libraries in South Africa[1]

Samuel Mojapelo and Mpho Ngoepe

The necessity for the provision of community libraries by South Africa's Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), even in disadvantaged rural villages in largely rural provinces such as Limpopo Province, cannot be overemphasised. Librarians Karla Strand and Johannes Britz tell us that:

> Many South Africans, particularly those in rural areas, are still living under conditions of information poverty, which we define as that situation in which people, within a specific context, do not have the required skills, abilities, and/or material means to access and use information in a meaningful way to address their needs.[2]

In the post-apartheid era, "the right of access to information and knowledge as a human right is now an established part of South African law."[3] Community libraries which are responsive to the wide-ranging needs of their users are critical in ensuring an informed public.[4]

The ongoing transition from apartheid to democracy involves building a democratic regime while, at the same time, trying to recover from generations of unequal access to information and knowledge. Indeed, community libraries can make a particularly meaningful contribution towards a better life for citizens in disadvantaged rural communities. This is particularly true

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[1] *"Tsoga o itirele"* means "Wake up and do it for yourself!"

[2] Karla J Strand and Johannes J Britz, "The Evolving Role of Public Libraries in South Africa in Addressing Information Poverty: A Historical Context" *Library Management* 39, 6-7 (2018): 364-374.

[3] Department of Arts and Culture (DAC). *National Policy for Library and Information Services in South Africa: The Final Draft.* (2018) [online resource] https://www.nlsa.ac.za/condgrant/images/PDF/Draft-4-Final-14-March-2.pdf

[4] The terms "community" and "public libraries" are used interchangeably throughout this article.

for the majority of citizens in disadvantaged rural communities in Limpopo who are generally characterised by information-poor environments owing to inadequate provision of community library services. In the absence of a library, rural dwellers, especially learners, rely on teachers for information and to make their career choices. Making informed career choices by relying on a single source is not wise. Public libraries can close such gaps.[5] The DAC emphasises "the importance of the Library and Information Services (LIS) sector as an integral part of the knowledge economy, sustainable development and inclusive growth."[6]

A myriad of library resources in varying formats are needed for socio-economic development of rural citizens who are characterised by high poverty levels, high unemployment rates, high illiteracy rates and diseases. For example, rural community libraries can infuse awareness among rural dwellers regarding the sources of information and encourage them to make use of this information. Lack of access to these information sources is viewed by rural citizens as a barrier to socio-economic development. While community libraries are critical, they are, nonetheless, underrated developmental agencies.[7] Furthermore, the community library in a rural setting can convert those who are illiterate into potential library users. Clearly, to quench their wide-ranging information needs, multiple users need a wide range of information sources in community libraries. Efficient rural community libraries and information services can uplift and enhance the quality of life of ordinary rural people in the villages and through their outreach programmes, activities and services.

However, the uneven distribution and provision of public libraries in all South African communities across the country is glaring and well-documented. Jeanette Mostert, who has studied the provision of information services across the nation, has pointed out that "information provision serv-

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[5]Mpho Ngoepe, Samuel Mojapelo, Noko Ngoepe and Thomas Van der Walt "Bridging the Information Gap Through Career Expos to Rural School Learners in the Makgabeng Village in Limpopo Province in South Africa" I*nnovation: Journal of Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa* 55, 2 (2017): 26-41.

[6]DAC, "National Policy for Library and Information Services," Final Draft: (2018), i.

[7]Genevieve Hart "The "Tricky Business" of Dual-Use School Community Libraries: A Case Study in Rural South Africa" *Libri,* 61 (2011): 211-225.

ices to the general public have, since their inception in South Africa, been biased towards the white minority in the community" in consequence of the apartheid ideology of separate development.[8] As a result of this legacy, South Africa had a backlog of 2,732 unbuilt and/or dysfunctional public libraries in 2013, emphasising that the majority of citizens nationwide still lacked equitable access to information and knowledge.[9] This is even more true for citizens who are situated in disadvantaged rural communities which were marginalised during the dark days of apartheid.

The DAC indicates that R19 billion is needed to address the backlog.[10] Even with the rolling out of community libraries through the library conditional grant by the DAC, Limpopo still has a backlog of about 200 community libraries.

Limpopo has the highest number (98%) of no-fee schools in the country.[11] These schools are categorised in quintiles 1-3 because of their poor socio-economic backgrounds associated with the apartheid era prior to 1994. Unfortunately, schools in quintiles 1-3 are still underfunded and under-resourced, meaning they are lacking such educational resources as well-resourced and functional libraries and laboratories.

The DAC indicates that 94% of the schools in the province operate without libraries, which adversely affects teaching and learning outcomes meaning that most teachers and learners in the province do not have equitable access to the educational resources for curriculum-related accomplishments. This is one of the reasons the province is battling to produce good Grade 12 results. Without exposure to reading materials, teachers and learners are not regular readers and they therefore lack the reading skills, reading habits and reading culture crucial to obtain information and knowledge. World-wide, South Africa is at the bottom of the international ranking list of learners who perform badly in reading, writing and numeracy. According to the National Reading Coalition:

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[8] Jeanette Mostert "Information Provision Services in South Africa: A Comparative Study" *Library Management* 20, 1 (1999): 19-26.

[9] DAC, "National Policy," Final Draft: (2018), 55.

[10] DAC, "National Policy," Final Draft: (2018), 67.

[11] DAC, "National Policy," Final Draft: (2018), 57.

The 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) tested Grade 4 and Grade 5 reading in approximately 50 participating countries, including South Africa. PIRLS tested Grade 5 learners in isiZulu, English and Afrikaans and found that 49% of children could not read at the lowest benchmark of below 400 out of a possible 1000 points, while this did rise to 78% when Grade 4 children were tested in their home languages. The results also indicated that learners in South African rural public schools performed worse than their urban counterparts in languages. Overall, the performance of South African learners in this international benchmarking assessment remained at the bottom of the study rankings.[12]

It stands to reason that well-resourced and smoothly functional community libraries can play a critical role in the provision of information sources to support school curricula and boost learner outcomes. As Genevieve Hart and Sandy Zinn have pointed out: "The use of public libraries by school learners has increased dramatically since [the] introduction [of Curriculum 2005]" by the Department of Education.[13] The DAC states that:

Millions of young people, those in the poorer quintiles of our schooling, are deprived of the reading and information resources assumed in other advantaged sectors to be necessary for effective learning. The lack of school LIS clearly is affecting other components of the ecosystem—with pressures on public and university librarians to fill the gaps. ... School learners pack public libraries to their capacity in the afternoons, working on their research assignments and homework. These are the learners who are able to make their way to the library after school; but two high school

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[12]National Reading Coalition. A Plan to get the Nation Reading: Joint Efforts of Government and Civil Society to Improve Reading. Unpublished draft, (2019), 3.

[13]Genevieve Hart and Sandy Zinn, "The Conundrum of School Libraries in South Africa" in Theo J D Bothma, Peter Underwood and P.atrick Ngulube, (editors). *Libraries for the Future: Progress and Development of South African Libraries* (Pretoria: LIASA, 2007), 91.

learners in a small town library reminded us that most of
their classmates have to catch their transport home to out-
lying areas straight after school.[14]

The NEIMS (National Education Infrastructure Management System) indi-
cates that only a few (7%) schools in the country (mostly former Model C
schools), have well-resourced and functional school libraries. These are the
schools with the best teachers and the best educational resources, and there-
fore the schools producing excellent learner outcomes.[15]

Shortage of school and community libraries in the province is a nightmare
that has had a negative effect on the learner outcomes. Missouw indicates
that most citizens in rural villages in South Africa generally live in environ-
ments devoid of books and literature due to historical disparities and socio-
economic reasons.[16] Owing to high poverty levels, most adults in rural vil-
lages cannot even afford to buy reading materials such as books, newspapers
and magazines. The South African Book Development Council confirms
that "73% of South Africans over the age of 16 are not interested in reading,
while 58% of homes in the country do not have a single leisure book."[17]

Several models required consideration and investigation. In view of the
way schools are distributed in rural villages, Samuel Mojapelo proposed a
cluster library model for provision of the educational resources for under-
resourced schools in mostly rural provinces such as Limpopo.[18] However, in
this model, community members would be excluded as the users of the
model because of the high specialisation of the information sources for meet-
ing teaching and learning obligations of the curriculum.

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[14]DAC, "National Policy for Library and Information Services," Final Draft:
(2018), 11-12; 56.

[15]NEIMS (National Education Infrastructure Management System): Reports,
May 2011, Table 7: Libraries Summary Grid [online resource] https://edulibpreto-
ria.files.wordpress.com/2008/01/school-infrastructure-report-2011.pdf.

[16]Themba Missouw, "Reading is a Gateway to the World" *City Press* (9 October
2011): 6 [online resource] *SAMedia* (subscription required).

[17]Elitha van der Sandt (CEO of the SABDC) interviewed on *Radio 702* (01
June 2018) [online resource] https://www.702.co.za/articles/305947/a-staggering-
73-of-over-16-s-not-interested-in-reading-sa-book-council

[18]Samuel Maredi Mojapelo, "Educational Resources for Under-Resourced
Schools in the Limpopo Province: Proposed Library Model" *Mousaion* 34, 4 (2018):
11.

Mobile libraries can also provide community members, teachers and learners with information sources. Although there are many challenges in operating mobile libraries, they are excellent models to provide those living in remote rural communities with the necessary informational resources.

The most suitable model, which has the potential to offer community members, teachers and learners access to the information sources, is the community-school library model proposed by Genevieve Hart:

> In the South African situation, where millions are out of reach of libraries and information services, the sharing of resources among schools and their local communities certainly is an attractive option.[19]

Sophia Le Roux has defined the term "community-school library" as:

> an integrated public and school library service, operating from a single building according to an agreement between the school and another tax-supported agency or agencies, for example, provincial or local government authority. It aims to serve learners, educators, and the community (general public) ...[20]

With a shortage of community libraries in South Africa in general—and in Limpopo in particular—citizens need to wake up and do it for themselves. However, establishing a library in a rural setting is a highly complex and difficult task in view of the daunting challenges such as lack of funding, electricity, water, roads and digital infrastructure. Funding is naturally the primary key to the success of the roll-out of LIS to the remote rural areas of South Africa.[21]

The case study below provides background on how Bakgoma Community Library was established by community members in a rural village of South

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[19]Hart, "The "Tricky Business" of Dual-Use School Community Libraries," 2.

[20]Sophia Le Roux, "School-Community Libraries: Some Guidelines for a Possible Model for South Africa." Thesis (MLS), University of Pretoria, 2001, 19; Sally Witbooi, "Setting up a Joint-Use Library Facility: Testing an African Model in Wesbank, Western Cape" *Innovation* 32 (2006): 42-54.

[21]S N Mokgaboki, "Extending Community Library and Information Services to Rural Areas: The Challenges that Lie Ahead" *South African Journal of Libraries and Information Science*, 68, 1 (2002): 78-79.

Africa's Limpopo Province, to address the historical legacy of information-poverty emanating from the shortage of libraries in rural communities.

The information poverty environment in South Africa in historical context

When the Nationalist government came to power in 1948 the long-practiced separation of races in South Africa was formally legislated to promote apartheid ideology and philosophy ("separate development").[22] The apartheid system of government, which created and entrenched huge inequalities in all sectors and facets of life in South Africa, was influenced by its policies, whether physical, social, cultural, political or economic. And today, twenty-six years into the new political dispensation in South Africa, the majority of the citizens—particularly in disadvantaged rural villages—still feel the brunt of its impact. As Mojapelo points out, apartheid rule between 1948 and 1994 left South Africa with a legacy of many societal challenges—including the dearth of libraries which the new democratic government is trying to address and redress.[23] However, progress is retarded by corruption, as well as by the burning of libraries during community protests.

During apartheid, allocation of resources essential for socio-economic development was along racial lines. Karla Strand and Johannes Britz have shone a spotlight on the extent to which that allocation of public libraries favoured the white population at the expense of their black counterparts.[24] The apartheid regime promulgated legislation to ensure that a range of apartheid ideologies were implemented for the separate development of the different population groups in the country. The impact on South African society of some of the Acts promulgated was disastrous, in particular and most significantly the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act no. 55 of 1949 ;[25] the Immorality Act no. 23 of 1957;[26] the Population Registration Act no. 30 of 1950;[27] the Group Areas Act no. 41 of 1950;[28] the Reservation of Sepa-

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[22]Strand and Britz, "The Evolving Role of Public Libraries."

[23]Mojapelo, "The Internet and Use in Public Libraries in Limpopo Province, South Africa" *Public Library Quarterly* 39, 3 (2020): 265-282; Mojapelo, "Educational Resources," 2.

[24]Strand and Britz, "The Evolving Role of Public Libraries."

[25]The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act banned mixed marriages between "Europeans ("whites) and "non-Europeans" (blacks).

rate Amenities Act no. 49 of 1953[29] and the Bantu Education Act no. 47 of 1953.[30]

All levels of education for blacks were badly affected by the Bantu Education Act. The large majority of black learners attended underfunded and under-resourced schools in the homelands reserved specifically for different ethnic groups and throughout the country.

Equal Education has noted that:

> An important part of apartheid was to make sure that black, coloured and Indian children received inferior education. Schools were separated according to race. Learners who went to white schools were given a quality education but black, coloured and Indian students received a poor education under the Bantu Education system.[31]

In 1991, the apartheid government introduced semi-private structures known as "Model C" whites-only schools. The term "model C" is still in common use in the new democratic dispensation to describe these formerly

[26]The original Immorality Act was enacted in 1927 by the South African parliament outlawing sexual relations between whites and other races in the country. The aim of the Act was to keep whites as a pure race to promote white supremacy.

[27]According to the Act, all citizens in the country were classified and registered into four racial categories, White, Coloured, "Asiatic" (Indian) and "Native" (later "Bantu" or African). Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation and Apartheid.* Third edition (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). Racial characteristics such as skin colour were used to classify and register people.

[28]The *Group Areas Act* enforced racial zoning and occupation of lands by different population groups and "was just one of the many laws passed that would prove to have lasting effects in South Africa by controlling where people were allowed to live, work, and travel," Strand and Britz, "The Evolving Role of Public Libraries.". Under this Act, blacks were confined to the disadvantaged homelands and townships. Owing to high poverty and unemployment levels in homelands and townships, blacks were forced to migrate into white suburbs for jobs. However, the apartheid government implemented influx control policies including the carrying of passes or dompas (identity documents) to restrict black people from "invading" white communities.

[29]The Separate Amenities Act, supported the Group Areas Act, legalising and enforcing separate facilities, buildings and services for the different population groups in the country. Black and white learners were barred from attending schoolstogether and, in terms of of this Act, library provisions for blacks were effectively controlled, separated and thoroughly policed.

whites-only government schools. These schools were well-resourced with functional school libraries, laboratories and sports fields.

Meanwhile, as the black government schools were without adequate educational resources such as school libraries and laboratories, black learners were destined to remain servants in white employ, in companies headed by white masters, "destined to be unthinking cogs in the labour machine, in no need of libraries."[32] Blacks were, of course, denied access to the rich informational library resources on the shelves of the public libraries in the white communities.

The lingering legacy of this Act, which defined and entrenched the separation of educational resources on racial grounds, means that South Africa now has a backlog of 2,732 public or community libraries. It is incontestable that the situation in provinces made up of two or more former homelands—such as Limpopo and Eastern Cape—are woefully inadequate.

The Act also created huge infrastructural backlogs in communities occupied by blacks during apartheid. With poor roads infrastructure in most disadvantaged rural communities, the provision of mobile libraries (which would enable rural villagers to access information and knowledge) poses profound challenges. It is unfortunate that most citizens in information-poor environments are characterised by high unemployment and poverty levels. The existing inequitable educational and informational divides are presently exacerbated by the challenges and problems continuing to retard access to digital resources in most disadvantaged rural communities.

Only 7% of South Africa's schools are well-resourced (and with functional libraries) at the time of writing, demonstrating conclusively that the full impact of this Act are still felt by black learners in disadvantaged rural villages twenty-six years into our new democratic dispensation.

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[30]Under this Act, for blacks to meet the labour requirements of their white masters, they were subjected to the inferior quality education termed "Bantu Education." The word "bantu" was a derogatory term meaning all black people irrespective of ethnic groups.

[31]Equal Education, *We Can't Afford Not To: Costing the Provision of Functional School Libraries in South African Public Schools.* Second edition (Khayelitsha: Equal Education, 2011).

[32]Hart and Zinn, *The Conundrum of Schools in South Africa* (2007).

Table 2:-1: Apartheid Government Spending on Racially Segregated Education

White learners	R 1211
Indian learners	R 771
Coloured learners	R 498
Black learners	R 146

Source: Equal Education (2011): 1.

This underfunding of black learners under apartheid demonstrates dramatically the extent to which black schools were left offering poor education without libraries and laboratories. Tragically, this legacy of under-funded and under-resourced schooling for blacks is still visible nearly three decades into the new democratic South Africa and, with most rural villages lacking community or public libraries, the situation is even worse. The senseless destruction and burning of public libraries by protesters simply exacerbates the situation.

However, even without resources, some communities have taken upon themselves to create their own libraries and one exemplar is Bakgoma Community Library.

Background to the Bakgoma Community Library

Bakgoma Library is a rural community library founded by Mr Lekanka Petrus Thoka in 2006 to serve the diverse information needs of the rural people of the area. Thoka has been a teacher in Makgabeng, formerly known as Bochum, in Limpopo for a long time. He is also a published author having written many novels and poetry collections in Northern Sotho.[33]

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[33]See, for example: Lekanka Petrus Thoka, *Ngwedi le Dinaledi* (Pietersburg: Bateleur Books, 1996); Thoka and Tlou E Setumu, *Na re Dirang?: Northern Sotho Short Stories* (Polokwane: J P Publishers, 2005); Thoka [and others], *Bohloko bja Matlakaneng / Mosekaseki wa Puku "Mabonwa" M.S. Mashabela* (Polokwane: J P Publishers, 2006); Thoka [and others], *Green Mamba* (Polokwane: J P Publishers, 2007); Thoka, *Ditshehlana* (Treves: Lekanka Publishers & Heritage, 2018); *Diaila o Hwile!* (Treves: Lekanka Publishers & Heritage, 2018); Thoka and N F Ngwepe, *Nkabe le Bitswa* (Treves: Lekanka Thoka, 2018).

Fig.2-1. Original Bakgoma Community Library in two-roomed garage
Source: Lekanka Petrus Thoka

Lack of community and functional school libraries in Makgabeng and surrounding areas inspired Lekanka Thoka to come up with the idea of establishing a rural community library to cater for the information needs of citizens in three disadvantaged rural villages, namely, Bavaria, Kgotsoro and Makobe. Three indunas from the three villages were also involved in the project. According to Lekanka Thoka, the aim of establishing a library facility in an area was to fight illiteracy, to prevent learners from roaming streets and to reduce crime in the surrounding villages. "Bakgoma" is an acronym which represents three rural villages, namely, Bavaria, Kgotsoro and Makobe.

The library's motto is "*Re fihlile re lapile*" which literally means "We arrived when we were exhausted." The inspiration of the motto, according to Thoka, is that by the time the library was fully functional, most of the founding members were either very old or had departed. As a result, the motto was phrased to honour the members. Thoka has even composed a

poem for Bakgoma Community Library published in one of his anthologies. A library board was constituted and consisted of the members as reflected in the following table:

Table 2:-2: Founder members of the Bakgoma Community Library

Village	Board members
Bavaria	M P Matlala, L S Seopa, W M Sethowa & P A Phukubje
Kgotsoro	M S Ramaru, M J Malete, A Moabelo, R Ngoepe & M Manaka
Makobe	M L Manyelo, L P Thoka, K D Matlala, P M Kgolo, M R Ramoroka, M W Setho and N Thema

The official launch of the two-room garage as an initial community library took place on 24 September 2007, presided by the African National Congress veterans TT Cholo and Ike Maphoto.

Fig.2-2. Plaque on the new building naming founding members of the Library
Source: Lekanka Petrus Thoka

The Bakgoma Community Library Case Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the process of establishing a library facility in that rural area with the view to capture lessons learnt, as well as the efforts by the villagers to identify a building to serve as a library.

To collect in-depth data from the participants, the study adopted a qualitative research approach. The participants were interviewed telephonically and a structured interview schedule was used to collect data. Before data were collected, the researchers obtained ethical clearance.

Only half of the sixteen board members were available for interviews. One of the researchers visited the library twice. Data were analysed thematically. To ensure anonymity, the participants are referred as "Participant" followed by a letter as follows: Participant A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H.

When asked what motivated them to establish a library in a rural village, the participants replied as follows:

Participant E indicated that

> there were no public or community libraries in rural villages in Mogalakwena and Blouberg municipalities. Even now, most schools do not have functional libraries. As teachers, we need information to prepare lessons. Learners need information sources to do their homework, assignments and research projects. Community libraries which exist are located too far geographically and, consequently, citizens had to travel some kilometres away to find and access them. To go to Polokwane to access a public library, one had to travel 90 kilometres, to Mokopane is 75 kilometres and to Lephalale is 85 kilometres.

Participant B stated that

> In 2006, Mr L P Thoka from Makobe village invited local residents to a meeting at Bakone Traditional office in Bavaria village. He told us about the idea of establishing a library facility to serve community members in three rural villages, namely, Bavaria, Kgotsoro and Makobe. All people who attended the meeting, including Kgoši Matlala, ind-

unas and councillors supported the idea. A board, initially a committee, was constituted to carry the mandate forward.

Participant F indicated that they nearly gave up as the Interim Committee had written a letter to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC) in Modimolle to inform officials about the initiative to establish a library in the area to serve rural villagers. However, the response from the department came back negative, indicating lack of budget and unwillingness by communities to use libraries. They gave an example for the dilapidated satellite library in Buckenberg that is not used by anybody because of the distance.

It became clear from the responses that the need for access to information, especially for educational purposes, motivated the establishment of the library. Another stimulus was the issue of distance to the existing libraries. Community members were not willing to travel over seventy kilometres to access the nearest library. The uneven distribution of community libraries is still a challenge, even under the new political dispensation in South Africa. The existing community libraries were in former white areas far from the black villages—an apartheid legacy. South Africa is not alone in struggling to provide library facilities in rural communities. For example, in the small rural town of Yatesville in Atlanta, GA (United States), a man named Dan White established a public library in honour his late father, to improve the lives of the Yatesville rural residents.[34]

When asked about a place to accommodate a few available library resources, Participant A replied as follows:

> There was no a building to accommodate library resources. There were no funds to build the library nor to buy books. We did not even have a site to establish a library facility. An induna from Makobe village came to our rescue by allowing the committee to use an old two-roomed garage to house the reading materials such as books donated by community members, including committee members. The committee also requested donations of the reading materi-

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[34]Dan White "The Rural Library Project: Building Libraries, Building Community" *Public Library Quarterly* 33 (2014): 108-120.

als from book publishers. Heinemann Publishers donated stationery and a wall watch [clock] in 2008.

Participant C indicated that the Board relied on donations. For example, in May 2009, Exclusive Books from Gauteng donated 265 books to the library. Mogalakwena Municipality assisted with transport. Other book publishers such as Nasou Via Africa, Ditlou, Nev, Maskew Miller Longman, J P publishers and Kalahari also donated books to the library.

Fig.2-3. View of the new Bakgoma Library showing memorial plaque
Source: Lekanka Petrus Thoka

The DSAC in Limpopo donated two computers and two printers. Furthermore, Mogalakwena Municipality donated various reference materials to the library and a Mr Mabitsela donated thirty music books to the library. In June 2009, Biblionef came on board and donated books to the value of R40,000 and the official hand-over of the donation took place on the 24 September 2009. Room to Read and the National Library of South Africa

donated books for the library. An academic also donated a twenty-four-volume encyclopaedia.

According to participants, community members donated planks to make shelves to accommodate the books. This resulted in four to five rows of shelves. Some villages also donated old and unused cupboards and old racks to shelf books. The DSAC donated one shelf and one round table. In 2008, University of South Africa donated 14 tables and 19 chairs. Mogalakwena Municipality again assisted in transporting the furniture from Pretoria to Makgabeng.

It was abundantly clear from all the participants that funds are imperative to establish a library facility and to buy library resources.

With regard to staffing issues, Participant A indicated that the committee managed to get four volunteers without any LIS qualifications to manage the materials in the "facility." Owing to the lack of any budget, these four could not even be paid a stipend. However, after the library was officially opened, six female staff members were appointed to manage the resources in the library. Two qualified librarians were appointed by the DSAC and four others were appointed by Mogalakwena Municipality. The Board was also established to manage the library as per the *King IV* report.[35]

The official launch of the two-roomed garage as Bakgoma Community Library took place on the 24 September 2007 at the Bakone Tribal Office. During the launch, Kgoši Matlala PR donated a site of about 500m² to serve as a permanent place to build the library. The Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority supported the occasion by distributing T-shirts and caps to make community members aware of the heritage as September was also a Heritage Month. It was during the celebration of Readathon as September is also a World Literacy Month.

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[35]The King Reports on Corporate Governance, named for Mervyn King (who chaired the first committee on corporate governance responsible for the reports) comprises a series of booklets setting out guidelines for the governance structures and operation of companies throughout South Africa. The issuing body, the King Committee on Corporate Governance of the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, launched their guidelines with three reports issued in 1994 (*King I*). *King II* was issued in 2002, *King III* in 2009 and a fourth revision (*King IV*) in 2016, as cited here. *King IV: Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa 2016* (South Africa: Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, 2016).

Funds to build a permanent library structure

Fig.2-4. The new Bakgoma Library
Source: Lekanka Petrus Thoka

Eventually, realising that villagers from three rural villages were serious and eager to have a community library, the DSAC finally came on board in 2010, five years down the line. According to Participant H:

> In 2010, the DSAC in the province approved the budget to build the permanent new building to serve as library for the villagers. The former Member of the Executive Council, Mrs Joyce Mashamba, attended the sod-turning event for the new building. On the 3 May 2014, the new building was officially opened as Bakgoma Community Library."

Participant G added that

> The new library building consists of two reading halls, one computer room with about eight computers connected to the Internet through Wi-Fi, one room where the server is housed and two activity rooms. The DSAC also took maintenance of the building, security and parking area.

The DSAC took responsibility for the library by buying resources such as tables, chairs, shelves and reading materials. The DSAC also provided eight computers which are all connected to the Wi-Fi for internet access by the villagers.

Challenges/problems in establishing the Bakgoma Community Library

Along with the opportunities there are challenges and problems facing the Bakgoma Public Library in fulfilling its mandate. The biggest challenges, according to the participants, were the conflicts between the municipality and the DSAC. For example, Participant A indicated that:

> There were conflicts with the DSAC and municipality concerning staff employment. Founder members and three young people who volunteered at the library more than ten years were not considered by the DSAC or municipality even as library assistants or cleaners when appointments were made. The municipality hired "its own" three cleaners. The DSAC also employed "its" two qualified librarians and the municipality hired only one founder member."

The second challenge related to maintenance and payments of services. Participant D indicated that:

> When the municipality fails to pay for services such as electricity bills and the internet, they are cut off for months, implying that users cannot utilise the facility. Six toilets also need maintenance.

Furthermore, according to Participant E, handover was also a challenge as of 2014, the official handing over of the library to the municipality by the DSAC was never done. There are no funds to buy library materials like newspapers.

Fig.2-5. Memorial footprints of the original Bakgoma Library members
Source: Lekanka Petrus Thoka

Despite all these setbacks, the library has a library management system to manage the collection. In physical security terms, the library has a security fence as well as 24-hour physical security guards. There is also a "rattle tattle" system to ensure security of the library materials. The library is accessible because of a tarred toad and there are ramps for citizens using wheelchairs.

Conclusion

Rural community libraries are essential to provide rural dwellers with diverse information sources to meet their multiple information needs and these are necessities for socio-economic development. With a dire shortage of well-resourced and functional school libraries, rural community libraries are essential to meet the curriculum obligations of the teachers and learners. Through their outreach programmes, community libraries can offer compu-

ter and literacy programmes to empower rural villagers. Unemployed youth can also use computers to search for employment opportunities. This is even more true in villages where unemployment rates are high.

Bakgoma Community Library can surely serve as a model for other communities in a rural setting to emulate to provide and promote public access to essential information sources. With the ongoing dire shortage of rural community libraries, particularly in disadvantaged rural communities, there is no need for villagers to fold their arms and relax. Rather, they should take note of the motto of Bakgoma Community Library, *"Tsoga o itirele"* and do it for themselves. The persistence and determination of the community leaders, picking up the baton when officaldom failed to listen to them, demonstrate the spirit of "Thuma mina"[36] in action. Indeed, rural villagers across the country would do well to emulate Bakgoma Community Library in establishing essential library and informational facilities in their own villages.

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[36]"Thuma mina," (meaning "Send me," drawn from the lyrics of the late musician Hugh Masekela), is the persistent motif and injunction of South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, as pronounced first in his inaugural State of the Nation address on 16 February 2018.