

Namibia's Regional Libraries

Final Report of the Regional Study and Resource Center (RSRC) Activity Evaluation



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TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL CHANGE GROUP

The Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School explores the design, use, and effects of information and communication technologies in communities facing social and economic challenges. With experience in 50 countries, TASCHA brings together a multidisciplinary network of social scientists, engineers, and development practitioners to conduct research, advance knowledge, create public resources, and improve policy and program design. Our purpose? To spark innovation and opportunities for those who need it most.

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ABSTRACT

The Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington's Information School was commissioned by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to conduct a performance evaluation of Namibia's regional libraries, officially called the Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity. The Activity included the construction of three regional libraries in underserved areas of Namibia in an effort to improve access to information resources, training materials and programs, and study facilities. The performance evaluation comprises a set of quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the regional libraries. This is the final report of the evaluation.

KEYWORDS

Libraries, Regional Resource and Study Center, RSRC, Namibia, evaluation, ICTD, ICT4D, M&E, impact, Millennium Challenge Corporation, MCC

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List of Acronyms

AFLIA – African Library and Information Associations and Institutions
CINA – Community Information Needs Assessment
COSDEC – Community Skills Development Center
EIFL – Electronic Information for Libraries
EQ – Evaluation Question
IFLA – The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
ILMS – Integrated Library Management System
IREX – The International Research and Exchanges Board
IUM – International University of Management
MCA-N – Millennium Challenge Account Namibia
MCC – Millennium Challenge Corporation
MLS – Master of Library Science
MoE – Ministry of Education, fka. See MoEAC.
MoEAC – Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, Namibia
NAMCOL – Namibian College of Open Learning
NLAS – Namibia Library and Archives Service
NLIC – Namibia Library and Information Council
NUST – Namibia University of Science and Technology
NPC – National Planning Commission
RSRC – Regional Study and Resource Center
SME – Small and Medium Enterprises
TASCHA – Technology & Social Change Group
UKS – Universal Knowledge Software
UNAM – The University of Namibia
VTC – Vocational Training Center

Executive Summary

Overview of Compact and intervention evaluated

As part of its Compact with the Government of Namibia, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded the Regional Study and Resource Center (RSRC) Activity. The RSRC Activity constructed and developed programming for three regional libraries with accompanying mobile units. The entire Compact was \$304.5 million, of which the budget for this Activity was \$20.8 million (actual expenditure \$18.9 million). The regional libraries have been designed as major new resources in each of the three initial locations -- Oshakati (Oshana Region), Helao Nafidi (Oshana Region), and Gobabis (Omaheke Region). Their design, collections, staffing, and areas of emphasis are meant to offer a range of specific services and activities to patrons and to their communities, to highlight the importance of literacy and learning to every age and income level, and to signal the urgency of promoting a “culture of reading and learning” throughout the entire country. If the regional libraries succeed in achieving their aspirations, their successes should be apparent in the lives and activities of their patrons, in their communities, and in Namibia more generally.

Evaluation type, questions, methodology

This ex-post performance evaluation employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the regional libraries.

This final performance evaluation was designed to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact?
2. What types of resources and programming are the regional libraries providing?
3. Who uses the regional libraries, and what do they do?
4. Do students, job-seekers and businesspeople report outcomes such as improved test scores, job-seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by regional libraries?
5. How sustainable are the regional libraries?
6. How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the regional libraries?
7. What is the influence of the regional libraries beyond their walls?

This performance evaluation employed a mixed methods approach, involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation was split into two components, where the first focused on documenting the implementation of the intervention. Data collection for Component 1 was undertaken March-April 2015. The second component focused on outcomes of the intervention and involved two rounds of data collection, which were conducted July-August 2017 and July-

October 2018. Component 2 assessed the extent to which patrons met their information goals, the contribution of the libraries to learning and income generation outcomes, the capacity of the libraries to provide and sustain a wide range of information services, and the role of leadership in supporting the vision and growth of the regional libraries. Evaluators analyzed data from seven methods, triangulating the results to generate salient and robust findings. The exposure period was approximately 34-48 months, from September 2014 when the libraries opened to the public, until the data collection window July 2017 to September 2018.

Component 2 employed the following seven data collection methods:

1. Cross-sectional surveys of 450 (2017) and 423 (2018) regional library patrons
2. Panel studies of 40 learners and 36 business section patrons
3. Interviews of various RSRC Activity key informants and regional library staff
4. Focus group discussions with learners, students, business section patrons and educators
5. Secondary data, including regional library administrative reports and electronic system-generated data
6. Media reports
7. Observations

The Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) adheres to academic standards of objectivity and independence. This evaluation reflects the independent assessment of TASCHA's researchers. The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of MCC or any other U.S. Government entity.

Implementation summary

The RSRC Activity was implemented in partnership with the National Library and Archive Services (NLAS), a division of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC).

The Compact came to an end in September 2014, and the three regional libraries were opened to the public in September and November of 2014. The following table shows the original performance targets and their achievement levels. It's important to note that the libraries were completed two years later than planned. In order to conduct a meaningful analysis, this table shifts the targets to comparable years for which actual data is available.

Table 3: Monitoring targets: Actuals vs targets

Monitoring Target	Target ¹	Actual
Number of regional libraries completed and opened to visitors (2014)	3	3
Percent of positions staffed (2018)	100%	76%
Total number of annual visits to the 3 regional libraries (2017)	100,000	249,292
Total number of library loans at the 3 regional libraries (2016)	32,000	5,322
Total number of library loans at the three libraries' mobile library units (2015)	1,980	N/A

Note: Dates in parentheses refer to the actuals.

An analysis of MCA-N's targets provides an incomplete picture of library performance. The RSRC Activity succeeded in constructing and equipping three new public libraries that are impressive facilities in the communities they serve. Significantly, the libraries have continuously attracted large numbers of visitors -- nearly 250,000 in 2017, or 2.5 times the amount anticipated in the Compact. Visitation is arguably the strongest indicator of success: if the libraries were not providing valuable services people would not come. On the other hand, staffing -- a critical indicator for successful library operations -- falls short of achieving its target of 100%. Two of the libraries gradually improved staffing over time, increasing to upward of 80% staffed, whereas the third library's staffing situation has declined over time to just more than 50% staffed. Additionally, the figures on book lending are far below targets. In part this is a reflection of the rising popularity of internet resources. Figures on book lending are further complicated by the inoperability of the mobile library units, which were expected to loan library items to outlying areas.

Findings

This evaluation was conducted during a severe economic downturn in Namibia, a situation that resulted in the slashing of budgets across all ministries. The libraries were similarly impacted, with cuts exceeding 75%. This is important context for interpreting this evaluation's findings. The successes are all the more impressive given the libraries were making do with few resources. The pressures imposed by the budgetary constraints were real and formidable.

¹ Target figures were originally expected to be attained by 2014 (end of Compact) on the assumption that the libraries would have been operational by then. The targets from the original M&E plan correspond to the first, second, or third year of operation. We selected actual data corresponding to these years of operation.

The regional libraries are heavily used community facilities

- There were nearly a quarter of a million visits to the three libraries in 2017, 2.5 times the adjusted Compact target
- Most patrons are highly satisfied and view the library as the only place in the area with the resources they need
- The libraries have different visitation trajectories

The regional libraries are teeming with activity. They are active facilities that have exceeded their visitation target by 2.5 times (nearly a quarter of a million visits in 2017; the adjusted target by year 3 was 100,000). Coupled with very high satisfaction rates and a large proportion of patrons reporting that the library is the only place in the area with the resources they need, the libraries are clearly filling a critical role in their communities.

However, the three libraries exhibit different visitation patterns. Oshana is clearly the most heavily used, accounting for about two-thirds of total visits. The project implementers anticipated this given its location in a more densely populated area. Monthly visitation dipped slightly from 2017 to 2018, but otherwise the library appears to be in high demand. Ohangwena has seen its visitation grow over the three years, by 65% from 2016 to 2017, and another 10% from 2017 to 2018. Omaheke had a strong 63% increase from 2016 to 2017, but in 2018 returned to 2016 levels.

The libraries provide a wide range of popular services

- Computers and internet access exhibit very high demand across all three libraries
- Computer training was provided to over 3,000 people over three years
- Printing and photocopying services are affordable and highly used, but budget constraints have hampered maintenance and new ink cartridge purchases
- Books are particularly important for learners, mostly those that are for library use only. Circulated resources are less popular, in part due to few resources for collections development
- Study spaces are a particularly valuable service
- Job search and application assistance are the most popular business section services. Patrons would like to see more workshops and trainings related to business development and vocational skills
- The children's section is heavily used, with many reading programs offered
- School library services for coordinating with area schools have been hampered by budget constraints
- The mobile library units have largely failed due to inoperable vehicles and lack of budget for travel allowances, petrol, and maintenance

The libraries provide a wide range of services from computer training and business programs to printing services and study spaces. This evaluation focused on nine services that the evaluators found to be most significant to patrons. As expected, the computers and internet access are in

high demand -- a critical resource especially considering the large proportion of patrons who lack these resources at home. Similarly, computer training classes are also very popular, with patrons requesting more advanced courses.

Printing and photocopying are highly used services that benefit many patrons, including by supporting business and job-search activities. However, these are also areas of high dissatisfaction, on account of the frequency with which the machines are out of ink and paper or in disrepair -- a consequence of operating budget cuts.

The popularity of internet access appears to have come at the cost of book circulation which is a trend seen around the world. Indeed, book circulation has significantly (more than four-fold) missed the Compact target. That said, books and other printed resources are highly valued, especially by learners who use them for school assignments -- something that does not show up in the circulation data since these resources are used in the library only. Many patrons have expressed a desire for improved collections.

The study spaces are a very important feature of the libraries. For many, the study space allows them to concentrate on their schoolwork away from home and distractions.

The libraries were conceived to support job-seekers and people aiming to start businesses or advance their careers. The business section has offered some services for these groups, especially in the areas of job search and career guidance, but budget cuts led to a sharp decline in the number of workshops and trainings. There is ongoing demand for more programs.

The children's section, while not a target of this evaluation, offers reading programs and other activities to encourage reading and support basic literacy. The programs appear popular and well used (with regional variance), with key informants and staff expressing the critical need of fostering a reading culture among the very young.

Regional library school librarians have worked closely with area schools to support the operation of school libraries. However, budget constraints at both the regional libraries and the school libraries have limited the impact of this Activity.

Mobile library units were conceived as a key element of library outreach, given the country's low population density with vast swaths of underserved rural areas. Unfortunately, due to a combination of faulty construction and budget constraints for travel allowances, petrol, and maintenance, the mobile library units have largely failed to achieve their objectives. As a work-around, staff at Ohangwena and Oshana reported using government cars to deliver books to outlying areas.

The libraries are particularly popular among learners and students, but also job-seekers, the self-employed, wage earners, and children.

Learners (high school equivalent):

- Many come from low resource households (one-third below upper poverty line; 25% do not have electricity at home)²
- Many are “non-traditional” -- 42% enrolled in NAMCOL (the Namibian College of Open Learning), and one-third in their twenties
- Make extensive use of the libraries for studying (top three reasons for using the library are all school-related)

Students (post-secondary):

- Somewhat better off than learners (one-fourth below upper poverty line; 25% do not have electricity at home)
- Highest proportion attend distance education institutions
- Are more recreational users compared to learners (top three reasons are entertainment, study, and relax/socialize)

Job-seekers:

- Younger and more economically vulnerable than other business section patrons
- Use library for job search and career preparation and also to read news, play games/watch video, and socialize

Self-employed:

- Older and greater proportion of post-secondary education (nearly one quarter)
- Most intensive library users (twice per week on average)

Wage earners:

- More financially secure
- More recreational use of the libraries (read news, play games/watch video)

Females:

- Visit library somewhat less frequently than males
- Larger proportion use library for education- or work-related purposes

² The upper poverty line is US\$38/month, according to World Bank definitions. For reference, 18% of Namibia’s population was at or below the upper poverty line in the year 2015-2016.

This evaluation focused on learners, students, and business section patrons (job-seekers, self-employed, and wage earners).

Many library patrons come from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of both income and household amenities. Within our sample, over one-third of job-seekers live below the upper poverty line, and close to one-half do not have electricity at home. Only one-quarter of learners have a home computer which is a critical resource especially for the over 40% of this group that attends distance education. Overall, there was not great variation across location.

All target groups used the libraries for instrumental purposes -- studying for school, searching for a job, or gaining a new skill. Additionally, they engaged in recreational activities, including catching up on the news, playing games, and socializing.

In general females visit the library somewhat less frequently than males--possibly due to home obligations or safety concerns about walking alone to the library. However, a larger proportion of females use the library for education- or work/employment-related purposes, and females participate in programs, workshops, and trainings at a higher rate than males.

Patrons report positive education and work-related outcomes

Among **learners**, patron survey first-order outcomes included:

- Gaining new skills (51%)
- Better understanding of things learned in school (64%)
- Finding information that helped them contribute to class discussions (42%)

Leading to second-order self-reported outcomes as a result of using the library:

- Better able to complete school assignments (60%)
- Better grades on assignments (55%) and tests/quizzes (42%)

A longitudinal panel study reinforced these second-order findings:

- Percent of exams for which panel respondents used the library increased from 50% to 75%
- Over 90% of initial and final panel respondents reported the library had a somewhat or highly significant impact on their grades

Among **business section** users, patron survey first-order outcomes included:

- Increased skills related to job and employment activities (60%)
- Better understand things at work (48% of self-employed; 57% of wage earners)
- Finding information that helped them contribute in work discussions (43% of self-employed; 50% of wage earners)

Leading to second-order self-reported outcomes as a result of using the library:

- Better able to complete tasks at their jobs (61% of self-employed; 52% of wage earners)
- Increased income (39% of self-employed; 16% of wage earners)
- Getting a job (16% of wage earners; 9% of self-employed; 1% of job-seekers)

A longitudinal panel survey reinforced the importance of the library for business users, though the trend was downwards:

- Percent of panel respondents reporting that the library was “very important” or “absolutely essential” for achieving their employment and income needs started at 84% and one year later ended at 77%

This evaluation explored outcomes among learners and business section patrons (comprised of job-seekers, self-employed, and wage earners) drawing on data from the patron survey, a longitudinal panel study, and FGDs. Questions about outcomes were typically phrased to probe the direct role of the library (e.g. “gained new employment as a result of using the library”) to assess the extent to which the library was a very important factor. In practice, it is understood that outcomes such as grades and employment are the result of many factors.

Learners reported particularly strong outcomes. A high percentage of learners in the patron survey reported gaining new skills and learning things that contributed to such outcomes as improved classroom participation and grades. The longitudinal study echoed this, where the libraries continued to offer high value to learners over the one-year course of the panel survey.

However, the data also suggests there is room for improvement. Fewer respondents reported finding information for class discussions or assignments, perhaps pointing to the lack of books or digital resources tailored to their studies.

All three categories of business section users -- job-seekers, self-employed, and wage earners - reported strong first-order outcomes in the form of gaining new skills and finding information that helped them in their work performance.

Second-order outcomes were mixed. On the one hand, increased income as a result of using the library was high (39% of self-employed and 16% of wage earners), especially considering the overall economic situation. The gap is understandable since wage-earners have less control over their salary than the self-employed. On the other hand, the percentage of business section users gaining new employment was low, especially among the unemployed (1%). However, this figure may vastly underrepresent the actual role of the library if patrons who got jobs stopped coming to the library (and thus were not captured in the data). All of these figures need to be viewed in light of the poor economic situation and the lack of jobs in the country.

Again, the data also suggests room for improvement. Among panel participants, the number of times over the past four weeks that the library helped with completing a work-related task or

increasing one's income steadily declined. This may be attributed to decreased library use or possibly they had exhausted the library's trainings and resources (FGDs, for instance, pointed to a strong demand for more advanced trainings).

Females reported stronger education outcomes, males work-related outcomes.

Sustainability remains a challenge

- Library operating budgets cut dramatically in 2017 due to national economic situation
- Staffing levels improved in two libraries but declined in the third
- Budget cuts hinder provision of outreach and business services, as well as computer maintenance, printing, and staff training
- Lack of sustainability plan hampers strategic planning

The libraries provide a wide range of services from computer training and business programs to printing services and study spaces. Two factors in particular have hindered the capacity of the libraries to sustain high quality services – budget cuts (more than 75% in 2017) and staffing challenges (85% staffing levels in two libraries; 50% in the third). The development of a thorough sustainability plan is very important, both to fully weather the current budgetary situation and to identify priority areas for investment to help keep the libraries meeting essential services.

Leadership is generally supportive, with opportunities for improvement

- Leadership is striving to uphold library vision, despite budgetary constraints
- Regions appear to have different capacities or prioritization levels to support the libraries
- Libraries have formed local partnerships with businesses and other organizations to sustain important programs
- MoEAC has been less active at forging ministry-level partnerships
- No other regional libraries completed, although one was nearing completion before being halted due to the national economic situation

Overall, NLAS, regional MoEAC directorates, and the chief librarians are striving to uphold the original vision of the libraries. Leadership recognizes that the libraries are important resources and have worked hard to maintain basic library services with limited financial resources. They also recognize that staff are under strain and that patrons are frustrated when services like photocopying are unavailable. Regionally, two of the directorates have been particularly proactive with the third seemingly making the libraries less of a priority. Each of the libraries has formed partnerships with local businesses and government agencies, which has allowed the libraries to shift some of the financial burden. MoEAC has not been as active at forging higher-level, strategic partnerships across ministries, though this remains a goal. While no other regional libraries have been completed, one was nearing completion before being halted due to the economic situation.

Next steps

This is the final report, revised based on feedback from MCC and stakeholders in Namibia. The evaluation is complete.

1. Introduction

This report presents final findings of an evaluation of the Namibia regional libraries, officially the Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity. The final report is the final of three evaluation reports prepared by the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School, under contract from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).

2. Overview of the Compact and the RSRC Activity

As part of its Compact with the Government of Namibia, the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) funded the Regional Study and Resource Center (RSRC) Activity. The RSRC Activity constructed and developed programming for three regional libraries with accompanying mobile units. The entire Compact was \$304.5 million, of which the budget for this activity was \$20.8 million (actual expenditure \$18.9 million). The regional libraries have been designed as major new resources in each of the three initial locations -- Oshakati (Oshana Region), Ohangwena (Ohangwena Region), and Gobabis (Omaheke Region). Their design, collections, staffing, and areas of emphasis are meant to offer a range of specific services and activities to patrons and in their communities, to highlight the importance of literacy and learning to every age and income level, and to signal the urgency of promoting a “learning culture” throughout the entire country. If the regional libraries succeed in achieving their aspirations, their successes should be apparent in the lives and activities of their patrons, in their communities, and in Namibia more generally.

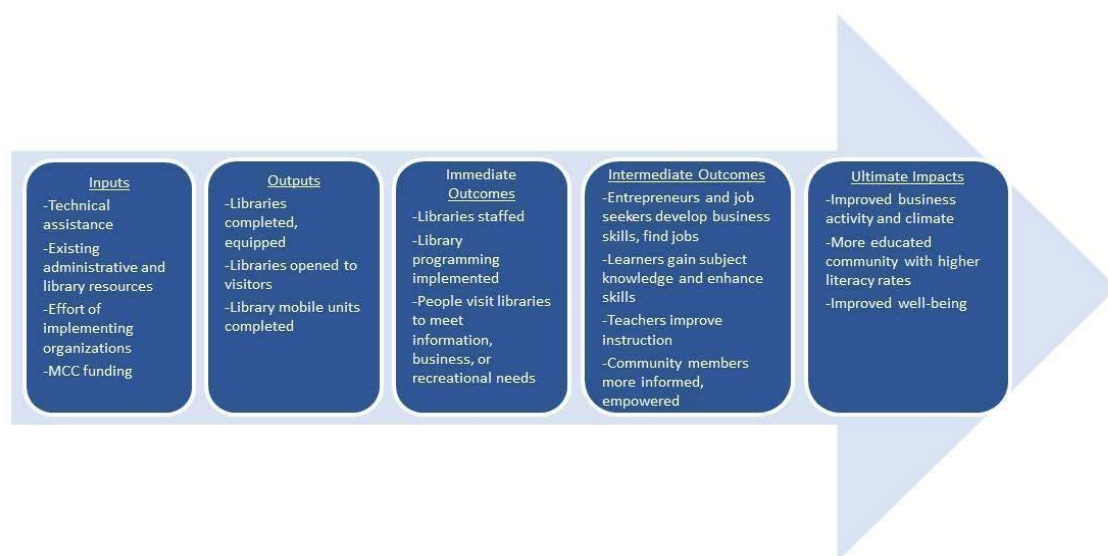
The Compact came to an end in September 2014, and the three regional libraries were opened to the public in September and November of 2014.

2.1 Program logic

The Namibia Regional Library program logic, which guides this evaluation of the RSRC Activity, is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Namibia Regional Library program logic

Source: MCC. (2015). Summary of Component 1 Evaluation Report, p.2



Specifically, the regional libraries have established the following operational goals:

Table 4: Regional library operational goals

Area	Goal
Staff	• Facilities fully staffed • Clear staff roles and responsibilities • Strong staff performance • Staff design programs that serve community needs
IT	• IT and equipment available to staff and public
Facilities	• Welcoming spaces conducive to use by all patrons
Leadership	• Strategic partners add reach, strength, and capacity to regional library programs • Leadership ensures regional libraries are learning organizations continually striving to meet community needs
Mobile library units	• Mobile library units strategically providing regional library services to remote communities

2.2 Program participants and geographic coverage

2.2.1 Program participants

Stakeholders of the RSRC sub-activity (NLAS, MCA-N, and MCC) delineated five participant groups (i.e., intended users of the regional libraries):

1. Learners (secondary school students)
2. Business section patrons (job-seekers, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), self-employed patrons)
3. General community members (for reading, IT access, information needs in health, e-government, agriculture, etc.)
4. Children (pre-primary through primary school)
5. Other targeted groups (e.g. adult learners, distance learners, IT learners, and other disadvantaged groups as defined by each RSRC)

The primary target participants for the regional library evaluation are the first two groups – learners and business section patrons – with a secondary target being general community members.

One of the major findings of interim evaluation was the large number of post-secondary students which far exceeded general community members. Accordingly, the evaluators modified the final round of data collection to focus on this group as well, replacing general community members as a group of interest.

2.2.2 Geographic coverage

The three sites covered by this evaluation are:

- The Ohangwena Regional Library located in the town of Helao Nafidi.
- The Omaheke Regional Library located in the town of Gobabis
- The Oshana Regional Library located in the town of Oshakati

The Oshana, Ohangwena, and Omaheke regions were deemed to have a stronger need for regional library services than other regions in the country. The regions were selected on the basis of need – including population density, poverty level, a limited presence of libraries, and/or low secondary school performance – as well as opportunity for a regional library to achieve high impact. The long-term plan is for the government to establish regional libraries in each of the country's 14 regions.

2.2.3 Implementation summary

2.2.3.1 Summary of implementation

The RSRC Activity was implemented in partnership with the National Library and Archive Services (NLAS), a division of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture (MoEAC).

2.2.3.2 Costs

The budget for the RSRC Activity was \$20.8 million. The actual cost was \$18,856,071. The Activity came in under budget primarily due to favorable fluctuations in foreign exchange rates. The rates changed from about US\$1 to NA\$7 to at the start of the implementation phase to nearly US\$1 to NA\$14 toward the end. With the US dollar gaining purchasing power, major expense items such as construction cost less than anticipated. Additionally, the budget included a contingency fund that had been established to mitigate exchange rate losses, but because exchange rates improved, the contingency funds were released toward the end of the implementation period but not entirely spent.

2.2.3.3 Monitoring targets

An analysis of MCA-N's targets provides an incomplete picture of library performance. The RSRC Activity succeeded in constructing and equipping three new public libraries that are impressive facilities in the communities they serve. Significantly, the libraries have continuously attracted large numbers of visitors -- nearly 250,000 in 2017, or 2.5 times the amount anticipated in the Compact. Visitation is arguably the strongest indicator of success: if the libraries were not providing valuable services, people would not come. On the other hand, staffing -- a critical indicator for successful library operations -- falls short of achieving its target of 100% staffed. Two of the libraries gradually improved staffing over time, increasing to upward of 80% staffed, whereas the third library's staffing situation has declined over time to just more than 50% staffed. Additionally, the figures on book lending are far below targets. In part this is a reflection of the rising popularity of internet resources. Figures on book lending are further complicated by the inoperability of the mobile library units, which were expected to loan library items to outlying areas.

It's important to note that the libraries were completed two years later than planned. In order to conduct a meaningful analysis, the following table shifts the targets to comparable years for which actual data is available.

Table 3. Monitoring targets: actuals vs targets

Monitoring Target	Target³	Actual
Number of regional libraries completed and opened to visitors (2014)	3	3
Percent of positions staffed (2018)	100%	76%
Total number of annual visits to the 3 regional libraries (2017)	100,000	249,292
Total number of library loans at the 3 regional libraries (2016)	32,000	5,322
Total number of library loans at the three libraries' mobile library units	1,980	N/A

Note: Dates in parentheses refer to the actuals.

³ Target figures were originally expected to be attained by 2014 (end of Compact) on the assumption that the libraries would have been operational by then. The targets from the original M&E plan correspond to the first, second, or third year of operation. We selected actual data corresponding to these years of operation.

3. Literature review

The literature review submitted December 2013 served as a reference for developing the evaluation design. The evaluators drew on specific insights from evaluations referenced in the literature review to refine the instruments, sampling strategies, and analysis plan. A section on library outcomes was added to the review in June 2018 to contextualize the findings in this evaluation. (See Annex 9.4)

The literature review identifies several evaluation reports focused on public library systems at the national or sub-national level. Most of these large-scale evaluations examine libraries in Europe, North America, or Oceania with the (explicit or implicit) purpose of demonstrating the value of publicly funded library services. As such, most of these focus on measuring library utilization and the perceived outcomes or impacts of use as opposed to measuring library activities and operations – and this is particularly true of multi-country studies based in developing or transitioning countries. Those reports that do include library activities take a summative rather than formative approach.

Studies on educational outcomes suggested public libraries support positive behaviors and motivation, but that these do not necessarily translate into better grades. A comparative study (Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, South Korea, and the U.S.) found that the level of benefits from public library use was perceived differently across countries, and the two most significant benefits from public library use were found in reading and self-education (Vakkari et al., 2016). For learners in the U.S., Bhatt (2010: 151) found an association between library use and a child doing more homework and a decrease in misbehavior compared to their peers. Research from Denmark (Nielsen and Borlund, 2011: 106) found the supportive environment of public libraries for independent learning generated a sense of freedom to do or learn things at a comfortable pace and enabled learners to explore a topic of interest in-depth. However, the hypothesis that “students who have access to and use a rural village library would have higher [overall grade average] than students who do not” was not supported by a study on library users and non-users in Uganda (Dent and Goodman, 2015: 57).

Studies on business-related outcomes were mixed. In a study in Lithuania and Latvia, 64% of Lithuanian respondents mentioned that library internet access led to improved performance at work, and 60% responded that they saved money by using the internet at libraries. Respondents reported they used library services to save time, access a wider range of publications, use e-banking, download films, and communicate with friends with no cost (Pabērza and Rutkauskiene, 2010). Gichohi et al.’s (2017) study explored how information needs of small-scale business enterprises (SBEs) were addressed by public libraries in Meru County, Kenya. It found that their level of awareness of public or community libraries as sources of business information was lower compared to alternative channels, such as suppliers, fellow businessmen/women, customers, the internet, social media groups, college or university business libraries, and churches .

This evaluation contributes to the existing literature in several regards:

- The evaluation is broader in scope than other evaluations on library systems in that it follows the life of the regional libraries from construction through the first years of operation rather than evaluating a system that has been in existence for decades.
- The evaluation examines implementation, performance, and outcomes of the library rather than exclusively focusing on service utilization or outcomes/impacts.
- The evaluation focuses on a pilot project enabled by donor funding and is intended to influence the development of other regional libraries in the country.
- This evaluation is also different because it will comment on the degree to which the regional libraries are likely to create a ripple effect in regard to the country's reading habits and learning culture.

4. Evaluation design

4.1 Evaluation type

MCC has contracted the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) at the University of Washington Information School to design and implement a performance evaluation of the Namibia Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRC) Activity.

The evaluation is ex-post and employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to answer questions related to the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the regional libraries.

The evaluation does not examine financial documents or employ intervention counterfactuals. Approaches such as return on investment, benefit-cost analysis, economic impact assessment, and randomized controlled trials are beyond the scope of this evaluation. Patron outcomes are based on self-reported data.

4.2 Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions were divided into two components.

Component 1 addressed the evaluation question:

EQ1: Was the MCC investment implemented according to plan?

Component 2 addresses the evaluation questions:

EQ2: What types of resources and programming are the regional libraries providing?

EQ3: Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do?

EQ4: Do students, job-seekers, and businesspeople report outcomes such as improved test scores, job seeking, and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by regional libraries?

EQ5: How sustainable are the regional libraries?

EQ6: How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the regional libraries?

EQ7: What is the influence of the regional libraries beyond their walls?

The Component 2 interim report focused primarily on evaluation questions 2 and 3, with a lighter touch on the other questions. The interim report also adopted a more formative evaluation orientation in order to provide Namibia stakeholders with information to make improvements to the regional libraries.

4.2.1 Country specific and international policy relevance of evaluation

This evaluation has been designed to serve the needs of two major stakeholders -- MCC and the Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS) -- while also contributing to the broader literature around the role of public libraries in meeting individual and community information needs and supporting national development goals.

For MCC, the evaluation provides a summative assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of its investment in the regional libraries from the planning phase through the first years of their operation. In this way, the evaluation aims to inform MCC's ongoing strategies for education-sector investments while also performing an accountability function for the American people.

For NLAS, a directorate within the Ministry of Education (MoE), this evaluation (including the interim evaluation report) provides a formative as well as summative assessment of the achievements of the first years of the regional libraries. It is hoped that this proves valuable for guiding ongoing program improvements for both the three evaluated regional libraries as well as for future expansions to other regions across Namibia.

Internationally, this evaluation contributes to ongoing efforts to promote the transformation of public libraries as hubs of learning, creativity, and community development. There are more than 400,000 public libraries worldwide, serving over 4.3 billion visits annually.⁴ In the developing world in particular, there are numerous initiatives to strengthen and re-orient the public library systems to align with national development plans and the global Sustainable Development Goals. This evaluation offers lessons for other countries in resource constrained-settings seeking to similarly leverage their public libraries.

4.3 Methodology

Overall, the evaluation seeks to understand the historical path the RSRC Activity has taken, current and on-going operational practices, user behaviors and opinions, and the implications for the effectiveness and sustainability of the regional libraries.

The primary approach of this evaluation is mixed methods, involving both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative approach is particularly valuable in terms of understanding the library activities' historical traces; present and future operational practices; user behaviors and opinions; and implications for the effectiveness and sustainability of operations. Quantitative methods complement qualitative methods through collection of statistical figures to provide broad user characteristics and trends in usage and outcomes. According to Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) classification of mixed-method design, the evaluation can be best categorized as convergent parallel design, which entails emphasis of both qualitative and quantitative

⁴ See IFLA Library Map of the World, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, available at <https://librarymap.ifla.org>

approaches, concurrent data collection, separate quantitative and qualitative analysis, and merging of the two strands of results for overall interpretation,⁵ with the main purpose of gaining a more complete understanding of the topics addressed by evaluation questions.

4.3.1 Data collection

The following seven data collection methods were employed:

1. Cross-sectional surveys of 450 (2017) and 423 (2018) regional library patrons
2. Panel Studies of 40 learners and 36 business section patrons
3. Interviews of various RSRC Activity key informants and regional library staff
4. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with learners, students, business section patrons, and educators
5. Secondary data, including regional library administrative reports and electronic system-generated data
6. Media reports
7. Observations

Sustainable Development Africa (SusDAf), a research firm in Namibia, carried out data collection for the patron surveys, panel studies, FGDs, and analysis of media reports. SusDAf contributed research expertise, knowledge of the local context, language familiarity, and a network of local field workers to implement these activities on the ground.

TASCHA researchers conducted the interviews with key informants and staff, as well as multiple observations at each of the regional libraries.

4.3.2 Patron group definitions

This evaluation analysis used definitions for the patron categories that vary slightly from the stratified sampling definitions. The analysis groupings were based on evaluation priorities, specifically those around learners and students (with an emphasis on youth learners) and patrons who use the regional libraries for work/job-related activities. Patron groupings used in the analyses are as follows:

4.3.2.1 Secondary learners

Secondary learners (sometimes referred to as “learners”) are those enrolled in secondary school (generally referred to as “high school students” in the United States). The evaluators use the term appropriate for the Namibia context. These respondents indicated “secondary learner” as their primary occupation. Secondary learners in grades 10 and 12 can be enrolled in a traditional secondary school or the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). NAMCOL

⁵ Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

allows students who did not pass or did poorly in one of those grades to retake it and get the appropriate certification. Individuals age 15 and above at both traditional secondary schools and NAMCOL were included in the study.

4.3.2.2 Post-secondary students

Post-secondary students (sometimes referred to as “students”) are those who indicated “post-secondary student” as their primary occupation status. They may be enrolled in university, vocational, technical, or other post-secondary institutions.

4.3.2.3 Business section patrons

Business section patrons are comprised of three categories of users who indicated their primary occupation status is one of the following: (1) currently employed for wages (part or full-time), (2) self-employed (e.g. SME owners), or (3) unemployed job-seekers. The categories were developed around individuals who have the potential to use the library to support their income or employment needs.

4.3.3 Other group definitions

Other evaluation participants included:

4.3.3.1 Educators

Administrators, teachers, and school librarians at secondary schools within each regional library catchment area who may or may not use the regional libraries.

4.3.3.2 Key informants

Government officials at the national and regional levels and people associated with librarian professional development in Namibia. Several key informant participants in Component 2 interviews also participated in Component 1 key informant interviews.

4.3.3.3 Regional library staff

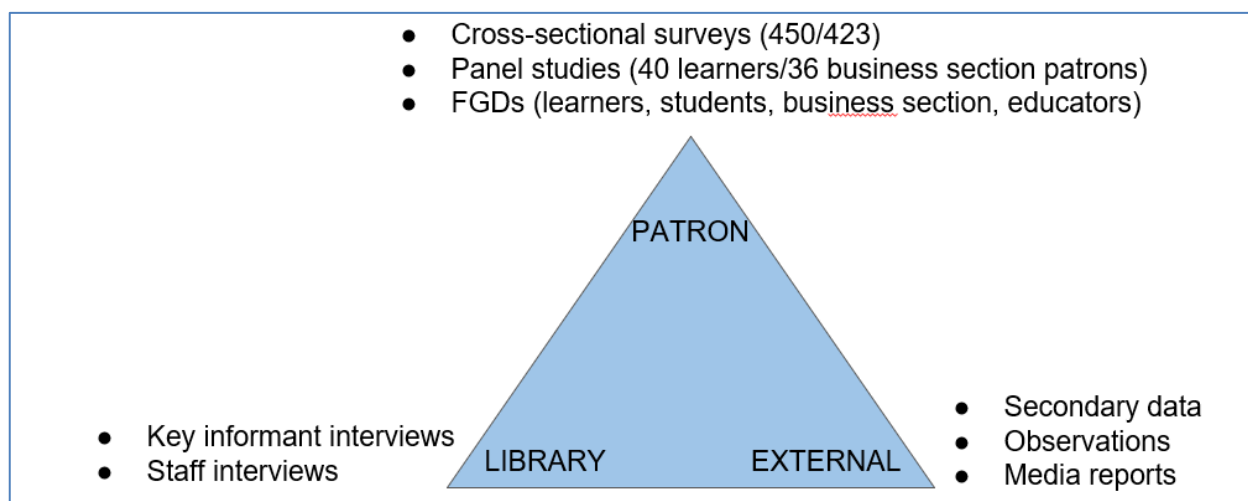
Individuals who work at the regional libraries, including the chief librarian, section heads, and IT staff.

4.3.4 Data integration

This is a mixed methods study, employing several quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the evaluation questions. This approach allows for triangulation of data to generate more robust findings. With regard to process, first the evaluators analyzed the data from each of

the methods separately for each of the evaluation questions and sub questions. Second, the evaluators generated a list of the most relevant findings and insights for each evaluation question and sub-questions. Third, the evaluators compared findings across methods for each evaluation question and sub questions, highlighting similarities and contradictions. The results of this process led to the writing of the findings for each section. Lastly, the evaluators reviewed all of the top findings for each evaluation question to identify any overarching patterns and themes.

Figure 2: Data collection methods



Note: Figures in parentheses represent the number of respondents in round 1 and round 2 respectively

4.4 Study sample

The sampling strategy was designed to capture data that represented the expectations and aspirations of the regional library designers and implementers and data which is of maximum utility going forward.

The sample sizes for each data collection method were based on knowledge of the RSRC sub-activity, its target participants, and the types of analysis to be undertaken. 2 shows the sample design and the actual sample for Round 2.

Table 4: Overview of data collection activities: design versus actual

Activity	Sample Size: Design		Sample Size: Actual
	Total/Regional Library	Total/Round	Round 2
Patron surveys: Stratified one-third each secondary learners, students, business section patrons	140	420 140 per group	423 Total 187 Secondary learners 96 Post-secondary students 140 Business patrons
Panel study: Learners	20	60	40*
Panel study: Business section patrons	20	60	36*
Interviews: Key informants	n/a	10	9
Interviews: Regional library staff	5-7	15-20	15
FGD: Learners	6-8	18-24	15
FGD: Students	6-8	18-24	11
FGD: Business section patrons	8-10	24-30	18
FGD: Educators	6-8	18-24	33
Observations	1-2	3-6	6

* Note: the value indicates the sample size of the final panel survey, the last activity that took place in this method. Additional data on attrition through the panel study can be found in Annex 9.3.

The other methods include system-generated data, administrative reports, and media analysis. Analysis of data from these three methods are included in the findings section.

4.4.1 Explanations for differences

As shown in the table above, there are differences between the sample targets and the actual sample achieved during fieldwork. The explanations below are for round two (July-September 2018).

Patron surveys: Challenges were encountered obtaining the desired population of post-secondary student patrons at the Omaheke Library, and, to a lesser extent, Ohangwena, due to the relatively limited number of higher education institutions in those areas. Oversampling was conducted on secondary learners across all three regional libraries.

Panel interviews: The panel study was designed to include a total of 40 patrons (20 secondary school learners and 20 business section patrons) to be randomly selected for participation from each regional library. This was structured to achieve a total sample size of 120 patrons across the three regional libraries. The sample was pulled from the respective secondary school learner patrons and business section patrons interviewed in the patron surveys. The design also included 1) an attempt for equal gender breakdown for both secondary learners and business section patrons, 2) reflection of different visitation frequencies, and 3) only inclusion of those in grades 11 and below. Age was not stratified.

Due to challenges in obtaining sufficient numbers of secondary learner patrons at some of the libraries, the above strategy was adapted and included the following:

- All secondary learner patrons interviewed in the patron survey at the Oshana Regional Library were invited for panel interviews
- All female secondary school learner patrons at the Ohangwena Regional Library interviewed in the patron survey were invited for panel interviews

Attrition was seen in the panel study, although tests determined that drop-outs from the initial panel interview and survey were not associated with any quantitative or categorical responses in those instruments. Data on attrition through the panel study can be found in Annex 9.3.

FGDs: The initial plan was to recruit secondary school learner patrons, business section patrons, and general population patrons purposively from the list of patrons who participated in the patron survey. Educators were to be recruited with support from the Chief Librarian as educators were initially found not to make regular or much use of the regional libraries.

It was difficult to recruit patrons to participate, resulting in FGDs having to be re-organized numerous times. It should be noted that no-shows agreed to participate after the patron interviews and again when they were called over their mobile phones. Invitees did not refuse to participate; they normally indicated their interest and promised to participate when called over the phone, but then did not show up. Usual explanations for not showing up (when called on the phone) were that “something else came up in the meantime,” “too busy,” and “not in town at the moment,” amongst others. As a result, most of the FGDs were conducted with fewer than the target number of participants. In the case of Omaheke, there was no post-secondary FGD due to low number of students who use the library.

With regard to the general population target, round 1 data collection revealed that this group was mostly comprised of tertiary students, not more general community members (pensioners, homemakers, etc.).

Observations: Target observations were achieved. In most cases, a single observation included both a morning and afternoon session, allowing for the evaluation team to observe the use of the regional libraries at different times in the day.

4.5 Timeframe

Component 1 data collection was undertaken March-April 2015, with the final report published April 2016. Component 2 involved two rounds of data collection. Round 1 data collection was undertaken July-August 2017, with the interim report finalized March 2019.⁶

Round 2 data collection was undertaken July-August 2018. The final report is expected to be published in late 2019.

4.5.1 Rationale

Based on a review of the literature and the experiences of the evaluation team, the evaluators decided to divide the evaluation into two components so as to quickly capture data around the implementation of the regional libraries within the timeframe of the MCC Namibia Compact (Component 1). This allowed the evaluation team to then develop a comprehensive evaluation plan, featuring multiple methods that would address the full range of evaluation questions.

The multi-year evaluation plan stems from the evaluation team's experience that significant investments in public libraries often take a number of years before the results (positive and negative) can be more fully assessed. It is not uncommon for libraries to draw uncharacteristically high numbers of visitors when they are new, yet several years may need to elapse before long-term user and usage patterns and outcomes become evident. Additionally, staff and leadership will need time to gain experience with new technologies and service philosophies and also to implement changes that respond to evolving user needs.

In the end, data collection occurred over three years. Component 1 was conducted in 2015, and Component 2 in 2017 and 2018. This represents sufficient time to generate findings to aid Namibia's ongoing efforts to improve the regional libraries, derive lessons for future regional library rollouts, and provide MCC with lessons for future library investment opportunities.

4.6 Previous evaluation results

4.6.1 Component 1

At a high-level, regional Library construction finished before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays; and MCA-N and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training, the scope of which grew in response to the increasingly apparent needs of the MoEAC. To this extent, it can be said that the RSRC Activity met its high-level implementation goals.

At the task- and subtask-levels, by the end of the Compact there were several items that had not been completed or still needed to be resolved.

⁶ All reports are available at: <https://data.mcc.gov/evaluations/index.php/catalog/120/>

Status of RSRC Activity implementation by the end of the Compact (September 2014).

Overview

Overall, based on the key informant ratings, interview responses, and the evaluators' observations in the field, four implementation tasks were deemed to have been completed, while five tasks were deemed to have been incomplete by the end of the Compact. To a large extent, ***the late completion and opening of the Omaheke Regional Library affected all ratings.***

Completed Tasks

- All IT and office equipment had been procured and installed, even if not fully operational
- Operational plans and policies had been prepared, and the consultative process for design and construction of facilities had occurred
- Mobile library units had been purchased and operational plans were ready
- The regional library venue was set up to ensure that all three service priorities (students, business, other) were being addressed

Uncompleted Tasks

- Training and pilot community information needs assessment had been conducted in Oshana and Ohangwena only
- The staffing plan had been developed but positions were not fully filled (63% at Ohangwena, 48% at Oshana, and 15% at Omaheke). Three chief librarians had been selected, but only one had begun working. Senior librarian and IT positions were generally the slowest to be filled
- The Oshana, Ohangwena, and Omaheke buildings were designed, constructed, and furnished before the Compact closed. Maintenance plans were not in place, however
- Some books and media had been procured. It is unclear what level of stocking was expected to be complete by the end of the Compact
- Some relationship-building had occurred, but regional library staff were mostly unequipped for this task. It is also unclear what the precise expectations were for MCA-N and NLAS versus library staff

Source: Namibia RSRC Activity Performance Evaluation: Component 1 Report (2015), section 5, p27.

This assessment should be interpreted in the context of the complexity of the RSRC Activity. Every single task and subtask came up against one or more inhibiting factors, even as most also benefited from some facilitating factors. The inhibiting factors ran the gamut from basic construction and hiring delays to delicate political relationships. Certain critical tasks, specifically staffing and collections, seemed to have been particularly hard hit by inhibitors that were out of their control, such as a systemic talent shortage. Others, such as relationship-building, may

have suffered from some vagueness of definition as well as general low capacity and skill of staff.

Task completion was most facilitated by a continuity of relationships between the RSRC Activity implementing partners (e.g. MoEAC/NLAS) and MCA-N, the persistent lobbying to gain various concessions needed to keep the project moving (e.g. improved salary structure for library staff), the allocation of additional tasks to the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX, contracted to provide technical assistance), and the general public and official goodwill toward the regional library concept.

The issues that most greatly inhibited task completion were changes in the program timeline and changes in staffing plans and recruitment. These two issues were interrelated, with timeline changes (mostly construction-related) holding up the staffing process and delays in the staffing process contributing to lags in the timeline.

4.6.2 Component 2: Interim report

Data for component 2 was collected two times, 2017 and 2018. The following is a summary of the conclusions from the 2017 data collection period published as an interim report.

4.6.2.1 Summary of findings

The interim evaluation report focused on two of the evaluation questions – (EQ2) What types of resources and programming are the regional libraries providing, and (EQ3) Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do?

Who uses the regional libraries?

- Overall, findings show that the regional libraries serve targeted population groups – learners and students, and business section patrons, which was a goal stated in the Compact – without attracting as many other community members (e.g., pensioners, homemakers)
- The regional libraries are used by many individuals who lack comparable resources at home, such as home internet access and electricity

How and why do people use the regional libraries

- Patrons use the regional libraries for a variety of purposes, including studying, schoolwork, searching and applying for jobs, entertainment, and relaxation.
- Many who visit the regional libraries for education-related and work-related purposes also engage in personal/social or entertainment use
- Strong usage patterns suggest the regional libraries are meeting the needs of patrons (i.e., high frequency of use, increased use over time, and voluntary use)

- Overall, the regional libraries appear to serve an important role in the community by providing services that patrons cannot find elsewhere

How satisfied are patrons with the regional libraries?

- Most patrons are satisfied with the regional libraries, and particularly with the resources offered: the availability of computers, books, Wi-Fi, and the space itself
- Patrons are less satisfied with policies that limit their usage of those resources: current operating hours, computer time limits, noise levels, and the unavailability of water and food

Are the regional libraries adequately developing the resources necessary to ensure efficient operations and high-quality service?

Operations

- The regional libraries have far exceeded Compact expectations on the number of monthly visitors
- Looming budget cuts are likely to hamper the quantity and quality of public library services in the near future
- Library usage could be increased by extending regional Library operating hours in line with the expectations stated in the Compact

Staffing

- The regional libraries continue to be understaffed, with fewer than three-quarters of positions filled. The hardest position to fill and retain has been mid-level librarians

Facilities

- Patrons are mostly satisfied with the condition of the facilities but would benefit from having easier access to food, water, and quieter space in the afternoon
- Several issues that surfaced during the rushed end of the Compact period have persisted, particularly those involving water and power systems, as well as not having a dedicated maintenance staff who understand how those systems operated

ICTs and equipment

- ICT services are highly valued by users and one of the most important services the regional libraries offer. Copy and printing services are also well-used
- Yet there remains significant potential to improve and maintain services by addressing challenges around internet reliability/speed, internet usage policies, and equipment maintenance and replacement

Collections

- Library books and resources were valued by patrons, yet many would like to see the collections improved

Service delivery

- The regional libraries have provided a range of services targeted to learners and business section patrons.

Outreach

- The mobile library units have been underutilized for several reasons, including the high costs of maintaining and operating them, particularly given the vehicles' design problems.
- Yet library staff and key informants recognize the importance of outreach activities and are strategizing how to keep meeting communities where they are despite a new round of budget cuts.

Source: Namibia RSRC Activity Performance Evaluation: Component 2 Interim Report (2019).

4.6.2.2 Conclusions

The regional libraries are serving a valuable function in the communities they serve. This interim report has illuminated numerous ways in which the regional libraries are supporting learning and community development. Youth learners, adult learners, and students are taking advantage of the range of resources and services offered by the libraries. Business section patrons, consisting of job-seekers as well as wage earners and self-employed patrons, are taking classes, using the computers, and receiving support for their activities. The facilities are unmatched in this regard; community members do not have access to comparable resources elsewhere.

During the first round of data collection in 2017, the regional libraries were operating under severe budgetary limitations. This was due to a nation-wide budget situation that impacted all of the government. In this context, the achievements of the libraries are commendable. The library staff did the best they could under the circumstances, making do with less, and striving to continue offering popular services.

The interim evaluation also surfaced numerous areas for improvement. Some of these have budgetary implications that will require prioritization. Others may require a change in policy or practice or some other creative solution. Indeed, the April 2018 stakeholder workshop proved to be a valuable opportunity for regional library leaders and NLAS to both raise and discuss some of the more systemic challenges, and exchange practical ideas that they could begin to implement immediately.

Ultimately, sustainability is an area of concern. While the regional libraries have been able to navigate the budgetary situation as well as could be expected, at some point the cracks will widen and there will be more serious consequences. The libraries are understaffed, computers are beginning to show their age, and the mobile library units are in disrepair, among others. In

short, the regional libraries won't be able to sustain achievements to date unless these underlying issues are addressed.

4.7 Limitations

As in any evaluation, there are several limitations that should be noted when reading the report. Some of these limitations were part of the evaluation design (e.g. implications of stratification), while others surfaced during the data collection activities (e.g. limited number of focus group participants). The primary limitations were:

Patron breakdown

The patron survey was stratified to achieve equal numbers of learners, students, and business section patrons, as well as to achieve male/female balance. In the evaluation design stage, it was deemed important to be able to conduct analyses by patron category and by gender. As such, it was not possible to report the actual percent breakdown of users by patron category or gender, nor was it possible to make generalizable statements about the entire user population.

Administrative data

The evaluation team did not verify the accuracy of administrative data supplied by NLAS. The regional libraries are not consistent in how they collect some types of administrative data (e.g. visitation, library loans). And, some data was difficult to interpret (especially budget figures). These issues are noted in the relevant sections of the report that include administrative data.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

The data collection team faced considerable challenges getting participants to show up for FGDs. Many strategies were attempted to address this situation, such as increasing compensation and holding the FGDs at schools. While we were able to meet the minimum number of groups, the number of participants in each group was smaller than anticipated, such that we were unable to meet our target participant numbers. The overall low number of FGD participants presented analytical challenges with regard to identifying and having confidence in response patterns.

Self-reported data

Individual outcomes such as changes in educational attainment or employment status are captured using self-reported data. Verifying respondent truthfulness on indicators such as school grades, attendance, work income, or new job obtainment was beyond the scope of this evaluation as this would have entailed significant expense. To account for this, the evaluators employed multiple methods to assess outcomes – patron survey, longitudinal panel study, and FGDs – and triangulated the data to arrive at the evaluation's findings. The evaluators are confident in their overall assessments.

5. Results on regional library use, outcomes, and influence

How are communities in the Ohangwena, Omaheke, and Oshana Regions using and benefiting from access to the regional libraries? The following sections (5.1 - 5.5) present results of the following evaluation questions:

- EQ2: What types of resources and programming are regional libraries providing?
- EQ3: Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do?
- EQ4: Do students, job-seekers and businesspeople report outcomes such as improved test scores, job seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by the regional libraries?
- EQ7: What is the influence of the regional libraries beyond their walls?

The evaluation starts by reviewing the results of performance targets established at the outset of the RSRC Activity (Section 5.1) and then takes a closer look at library user groups (Section 5.2) and the services provided by the library (Section 5.3). Section 5.4 looks specifically at education- and employment-related outcomes among panel study participants. Finally, Section 5.5 reviews evidence around larger-scale community changes, looking beyond what has been reported by library users.

5.1 Monitoring data

5.1.1 Overview

An analysis of MCA-N's targets provides an incomplete picture of library performance. The RSRC Activity succeeded in constructing and equipping three new public libraries that are impressive facilities in the communities they serve. Significantly, the libraries have continuously attracted large numbers of visitors -- nearly 250,000 in 2017, or 2.5 times the amount anticipated in the Compact. Visitation is arguably the strongest indicator of success: if the libraries were not providing valuable services people would not come. On the other hand, staffing -- a critical indicator for successful library operations -- falls short of achieving its target of 100% staffed. Two of the libraries gradually improved staffing over time, increasing to upward of 80% staffed, whereas the third library's staffing situation has declined over time to just more than 50% staffed. Additionally, the figures on book lending are far below targets. In part this is a reflection of the rising popularity of internet resources. Figures on book lending are further complicated by the inoperability of the mobile library units, which were expected to loan library items to outlying areas.

Table 5: Monitoring targets: actuals vs targets

Monitoring Target	Target ⁷	Actual
Number of regional libraries completed and opened to visitors (2014)	3	3
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Total number of library loans at the three libraries' mobile library units (2015)	1,980	N/A

Note: Dates in parentheses refer to the actuals

5.1.2 Introduction

The evaluators of the performance of MCC's regional libraries activity begin with a review of monitoring data as referenced in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan released by the Millennium Challenge Account Namibia (MCA-N) and last updated in July 2014.⁸ The plan established six output and outcome indicators for the RSRC Activity with associated performance targets (as listed below). The evaluators measure progress toward those performance targets using monitoring data collected by NLAS from January 1, 2015 to October 31, 2018. This period corresponds with nearly the entire time the regional libraries were in operation through the end of data collection for this evaluation. (The libraries opened in September and November of 2014.) The evaluators then contextualize the monitoring data using primary data collected as part of this evaluation. After reviewing progress towards the targets associated with these indicators, the evaluators provide a brief discussion on the strengths and limitations of these indicators in assessing library performance.

Performance indicators include the following:

- Number of regional libraries completed
- Number of regional libraries opened to visitors
- Percent of library positions staffed
- Number of visits to the regional libraries

⁷ Target figures were originally expected to be attained by 2014 (end of Compact), on the assumption that the libraries would have been operational by then. The targets from the original M&E plan correspond to the first, second, or third year of operation. We selected actual data corresponding to these years of operation.

⁸ MCA-N. *Millennium Challenge Account Namibia Monitoring and Evaluation Plan* (M&E Plan), July 2014. See Annex 1 pp 9-10 for indicators and Annex 2 pp 2 for targets.

- Number of library loans at the libraries
- Number of library loans at the libraries' mobile library units

5.1.3 Regional libraries completed and opened to visitors

The evaluators examined progress on two output indicators at the same time because they are closely related.

Data limitations

Data was verified by multiple sources, including interviews and observations. No data limitations are reported.

Progress on targets

The targets established by MCA-N were fully met.

Table 6: Number of regional libraries

Indicator	Target	Actual
Number of regional libraries completed (by 2014)	3	3

As detailed in the Component 1 evaluation report (Sey & Fellows, 2016:41), the regional libraries' facilities were designed, constructed, and furnished before the end of the Compact. The Oshana and Ohangwena libraries officially opened to the public on the final days of the Compact -- September 17 and 18, 2014 -- and the third, in Omaheke, opened a few weeks after the Compact closed, on November 25, 2014.

The three regional libraries were also fully equipped with electrical and technical systems by the end of the Compact, with one notable exception: installation of the backup power generator was completed at only one of the three locations, the Oshana Regional Library. In Ohangwena, the generator was received but never hooked up, and in Omaheke, the generator never arrived (Coward, et. al., 2019:94). Subsequent investigation of this issue revealed that the Ohangwena generator was finally installed, while Omaheke remained without a generator.

Considerations

Although this target was met, all of the buildings were completed one year behind schedule due to construction delays. These delays compressed the timeline for other implementation activities that were scheduled to begin after the buildings were constructed, including staffing, staff

training, community needs assessment, equipment-testing, and the development of a maintenance plan, none of which were concluded by September 2014 as they were intended to be (Sey & Fellows, 2016:62). (The implications of the late start for these activities is discussed later in Section 6.1 and 6.2 of this report.)

5.1.4 Regional library positions staffed

Data limitations

No data limitations are reported. NLAS provided staffing reports that the evaluators believe to be complete and accurate.

Progress on targets

The target established by MCA-N was not met.

Table 7: Percent of library positions staffed

Indicator	Target	Actual (March 2015)	Actual (2018)
Percent of library positions staffed	100%	72%	76%

Hiring and retaining staff consistently proved to be one of the top challenges faced by the regional libraries, as noted in previous reports (Sey & Fellows, 2016:34; Coward, et. al., 2019:78). The 100% target has not been reached at any of the regional libraries four years after the end of the Compact. Comparing data from six months after the end of the Compact (March 2015) to the end of 2018, the overall staffing level increased slightly from 72% to 76%. However, this average masks improvements in two libraries and a decline in the third. The staffing level at Oshana increased from 69% to 88%, and Ohangwena from 72% to 84%, while it declined at Omaheke from 74% to 56%. A fuller discussion of staffing is presented in section 6.2.4.

**Table 8: Number of staff positions filled
and vacant at the regional libraries as of October 2018**

	Number of Positions Filled	Number of Positions Vacant
Oshana	28	6
Ohangwena	27	8
Omaheke	18	14

Considerations

The target on library staffing was not met, largely due to factors outside of the control of NLAS. These included a limited number of qualified librarians in the country and less competitive pay than other institutions, including the University of Namibia. The problem was exacerbated by hiring freezes that began in 2017 as a result of Namibia's economic downturn. The moratorium, which is still in place, only allows for the filling of positions deemed critical. Waiver applications need to be approved by the Secretary to Cabinet, and NLAS has successfully filled some positions this way, but entry level positions in particular have not been approved. As stated by a staff interview respondent:

"The library, as an institution or as a body, we don't have that power to hire, to advertise, to do all those things."

(See Section 6.2.4 for more information about staffing levels.)

5.1.5 Visits to the regional libraries

Data limitations

Some administrative data may undercount the number of actual library visits, while other data may lead to an overcount.

Data gaps. For this indicator, 10% of monthly data points were missing (that is, eight of 82 instances, with six of these eight instances from Omaheke).

Sign-in sheets. The Ohangwena and Omaheke regional libraries collect visitor data using sign-in sheets, where each person entering the library is asked to record his or her name. With this method, each library visit corresponds with one library patron on a particular day. However, the evaluators suspect this method can lead to undercounting the actual number of visitors, such as when a visitor does not sign in for any reason (e.g., when the security gate is unlocked and/or unstaffed or after school when many people arrive at the same time).

Gate counter. The Oshana Regional Library calculation of visits should be considered somewhat inflated due to the method used for counting. Oshana relies on a counter at the library's security gate that automatically captures the number of people exiting the library. They have chosen this method for counting because the library can get busy, and patrons were having to wait several minutes to sign in and enter the library at its peak hours according to interviews with staff and as observed by the evaluators in 2015. Using a gate counter is a

perfectly acceptable method in many library contexts -- including in the United States.⁹ Although there is general agreement that Oshana is the busiest library in terms of the number of visitors, the evaluators consider its gate counter figures are overcounting the number of visits due to the physical layout of the library and the rules for visitors, in which patrons are required to exit the library to use the restrooms or retrieve a personal item from a bookbag stored in a locker. The Oshana Library adjusts the number of visits each day by subtracting the number of staff at the library that day but does not apply a formula to adjust for the multiple entries/exits each visitor may make.

Compact target. The Compact established targets of 60,000, 80,000, and 100,000 annual visitors in the first three years of operation, which was originally 2012, 2013, and 2014. When it became evident that the libraries would open later than planned, the M&E Plan was updated to shift the entire three years' worth of target annual visitors to the final year of the Compact. In other words, the M&E Plan established the 2014 target as 240,000 (sum of 60,000, 80,000, and 100,000). The libraries did not open until the end of 2014, and obviously this target was not met.

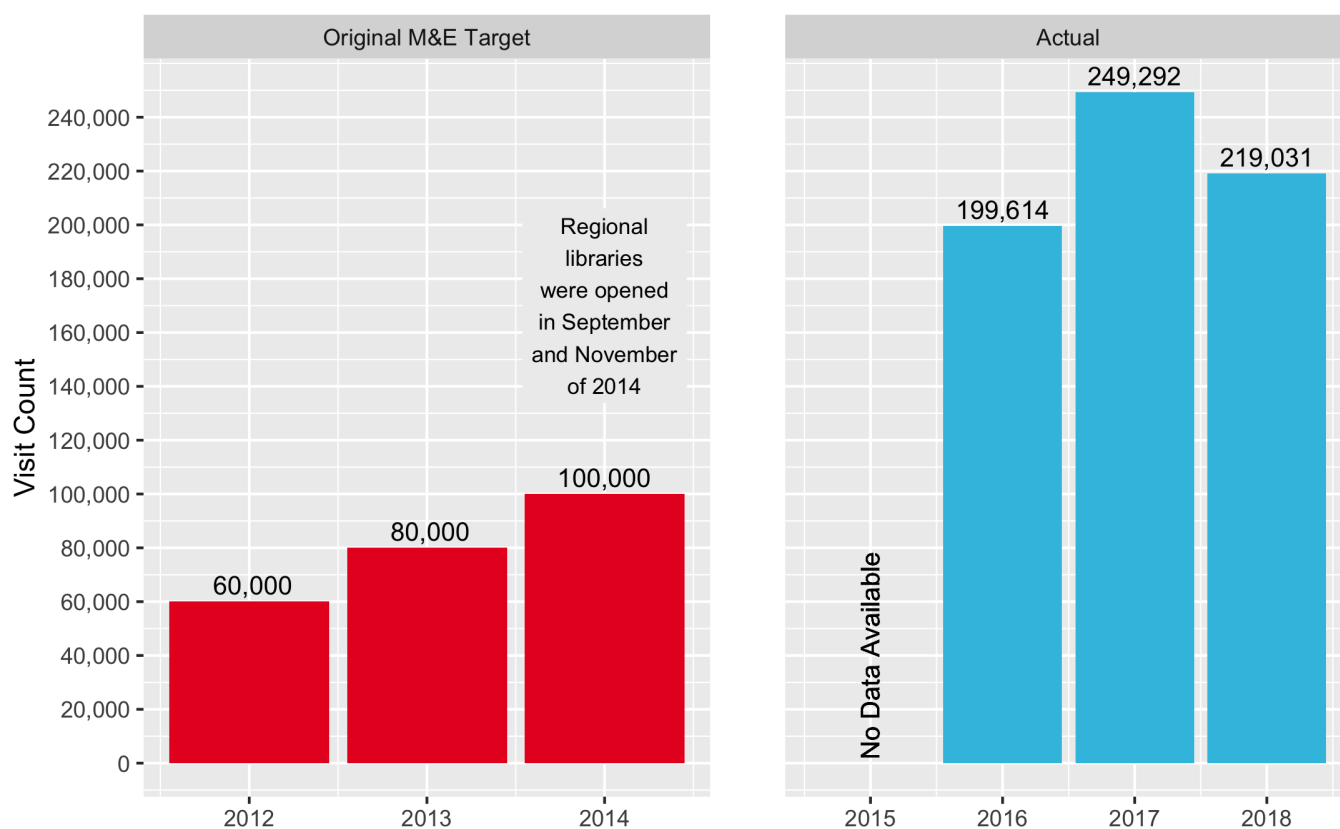
For the purposes of the following analysis, we have chosen to transpose the three-year target figures to the actual years the libraries were in operation: that is, 2015, 2016, and 2017. Unfortunately, no data exists for 2015 so the third-year target (100,000) corresponds to 2017 (249,292). This offers a more comparable approach to judging the performance of the libraries over the first three years of operations. Additionally, we show 2018 data since it was available.

Progress on targets

Despite these data limitations, our best estimate is that the regional libraries far exceeded the target -- by 250% in each of the two years for which comparable data exists.

⁹ "Gate counts are a common tool for the assessment of libraries, correlating patron visits with the use of library facilities (Hernon, Dugan, Matthews, & Thornton, 2014)" and "Libraries offer numerous services outside of book collections, and gate counts are capable of showing the in-person usage of a library in its entirety (Dotson & Garriss, 2008)." Source: Determining Gate Count Reliability in a Library Setting, Jeffrey Phillips.
<https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/ebliip/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/27884/20745>

Figure 3: Annual number of visits: Target vs actual



Since the inception of the libraries, the project implementers anticipated a higher number of visits for the Oshana location because the library is located in a more populated area than the other two libraries. However, differences in data collection approaches also contributed to this difference, as noted earlier.

Table 9: Visits to the library

	2016	2017	2018
Ohangwena	28,519	41,622	45,506
Omaheke	33,057	40,900	25,147
Oshana	138,038	166,770	18,378
TOTAL	199,614	249,292	219,031

Looking at changes over time, the total number of library visits peaked in Year 3 (2017), with 249,292 annual visits for all three libraries combined, declining to 219,031 in 2018.

Each of the regional libraries had different trajectories in the number of visitors they drew each year. Ohangwena saw an increase, as they drew more visitors to the library over each of the three years. Oshana experienced a modest decline in 2018 from a peak in 2017. And Omaheke experienced a sharp decline, falling below its 2016 figure.

Considerations

A number of factors appear to contribute to the decreased number of visits, most prominently internet access and copying/printing services. As discussed further in Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.5, these two very popular services draw lots of patrons when they are functioning and deter patrons when they are not. The Omaheke library has experienced the most significant challenges in these areas, in part accounting for the decline in visitors.

5.1.6 Library loans

Data limitations

The evaluators believe administrative data on library loans undercounts the number of actual items borrowed for the following reasons:

Data gaps. For this indicator, 10% of monthly data points were missing (15 of 144 instances, with at least four instances from each library).

Data accuracy. The accuracy of library loans reports was called into question by one respondent who reported that the Symphony Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) produced lower circulation numbers than handwritten tallies of loaned items kept at the circulation desk. For instance, the Symphony system allegedly showed only nine books were borrowed one month, whereas his tally showed more than 100 items borrowed. It was not clear to the evaluators if the Symphony system was indeed inaccurate. Additionally, it was not clear if the reported library loan figures relied on data from Symphony, the handwritten tallies, or a mix of both over the data collection period. The figures below suggest a data quality issue.

Compact target. The M&E plan shows library loan targets of 20,000 for 2013 and 32,000 for 2014. When it became evident that the libraries would open later than planned, the 2013 target was eliminated, such that the library loan target for the first year of operation became 32,000. For the purposes of the following analysis, we have chosen to restore the target for 2013 and transpose the target figures to the actual years the libraries were in operation: that is, 2015 and 2016. This offers a more comparable approach to judging the performance of the libraries over the first two years of operations.

Progress on targets

Despite the data limitations described above, our best estimate is that the libraries did not meet the target due to the magnitude of the difference between the target and actual number of items borrowed.

Table 10: Total number of library loans at the three regional libraries

	2015	2016
Target	20,000	32,000
Actual	11,328	5,322

Administrative data shows the number of items borrowed from the regional libraries did not meet Compact goals in either year. Over the entire four-year period for which administrative data on the number of items borrowed was available, (2015- 2018), only 30,755 items were borrowed.

Table 11: Library loans by year

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Ohangwena	3,098	1,518	2,003	2,953
Omaheke	3,234	3,104	705	430
Oshana	5,006	700	3,993	3,992
TOTAL	11,338	5,322	6,701	7,394

Administrative data also shows a greater than 50% decrease in the annual number of items borrowed from 2015 to 2016, though the trend has been upward for the last two years. By location, Omaheke has experienced the most significant declines.

Considerations

To some extent, evaluation data helped to explain the low figures for book circulation. Multiple staff interview participants described book borrowing as the least popular service offered by the libraries, mostly because patrons were less interested in reading than in using the internet. However, the views of patrons on the topic differed, with several focus group participants describing their dissatisfaction with the size or quality of the collection, stating that the books available were insufficient for meeting their needs. These patrons sometimes spoke of turning to other types of library resources, including online content, when the books they sought weren't available.

On the other hand, after consulting evaluation data from the patron surveys and FGDs, it is clear that book circulation numbers don't capture the popularity of use of the library's printed resources. Most notably, learners identified books as the most important resource available at the library, even ahead of the internet (as described in sections Section 5.2.3.1). Among the library's resources, physical booklets used for exam preparation were found to be very popular among secondary learners, but these were not counted toward circulation numbers because these materials could only be used within the library.

Finally, this indicator and its associated targets have some issues. For many public libraries around the world, book lending has become less and less of a core library service, which is reflected in a global decline of book circulation over the past decade. This is particularly the case for more modern, community-centered libraries focused on meeting the shifting demands of communities -- which has been increasingly for digital materials and ICT access as well as other areas like community programming. The director of NLAS has also stated publicly that the country's libraries are similarly "shifting away from the traditional book lending services, to offering different kinds of services, which focuses on community needs."¹⁰ For this reason, many libraries have shifted away from using this indicator as a proxy measure for library usage.

This shift was also the case in Namibia prior to the regional libraries being constructed, as explained in MCA-N's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:

Average circulation per [community] library for 2011 was 4,932, with the highest circulation being 5,000 at the Greenwell Matongo library in Windhoek. Generally circulation numbers have been declining by on average 20%, but it is hoped that with the expanded services being provided at the RSRCs and the increased capacity and the larger catchment areas in which they are located the decline should be able to be countered and circulation increased by 25% between 2013 and 2014 in line with the proposed increase in library usage already in the ITT. (MCA-N, 2014: A3-79)

When examining the service performance of the regional libraries, the evaluators suggest the book lending indicator is complemented by other service statistics, particularly indicators related to the use of computers, the internet, and digital resources, as well as participation in community programs and activities.

¹⁰ See "Namibia: Public Libraries Target 100 Percent Access to ICT By 2022"
<https://allafrica.com/stories/201809240569.html>

5.1.7 Mobile library unit loans

Data limitations

The regional libraries did not collect data on the number of items loaned from the mobile library units.

Progress on targets

Despite the lack of data available, the evaluators can confidently say this target was not met.

Table 12: Total number of library loans at the three libraries' mobile library units

	2015
Target	1,980
Actual	NA

Even if the regional libraries had kept a record of the number of items loaned by the mobile library units, the evaluators believe the number would have been too low to meet this target due to the limited operation of the mobile library units.

Considerations

As documented in earlier evaluation reports, the mobile library units were generally too expensive for the regional libraries to operate and maintain (Coward, et. al., 2019, p124). Some staff respondents also felt the vehicles were not road-worthy (whether due to poor design, the contractor not road-testing the vehicles, or the rush to furnish them) and had too high staffing requirements (i.e., when library staff conducted outreach, there were not enough people left to work inside the regional library).

When they did operate, book lending was not a major service of the mobile library units. Specifically, the high costs of running the vehicles meant the libraries could not maintain a regular schedule of rotating site visits, which, as one staff respondent explained, meant the mobile library unit couldn't loan books to community members outside because it was too difficult for those borrowers to return their books. Instead, the public valued the vehicles mostly for providing access to the internet, computers, printing, copying, and videos played on the television screen so people standing outside of the unit could watch films or educational videos.

Despite these setbacks, the libraries committed efforts to reaching rural areas such as by using other government vehicles to deliver books. This included outreach to local schools, senior centers, prisons, and other destinations. Some staff respondents described how they continued to visit communities beyond the library using regular government cars. In some instances, these

staff talked about bringing targeted materials to different community institutions where they were able to loan books because they had a liaison, like a teacher, to distribute and collect the books.

5.2 Patrons and usage

5.2.1 Overview

The regional libraries were designed to serve a broad range of people in the community, providing them with a variety of services to support learning, skill development, and their information needs. The evaluators found the libraries were popular among all three of the evaluation's target groups -- learners, students, and business section patrons -- as well as children. We did not detect significant usage outside of these groups, though the evaluation did not devote much effort to capturing broader usage.

Secondary learners (the equivalent of high school students in the US) comprise the largest group of regional library users. Many of them can be considered "non-traditional" learners: 42% of respondents attend the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), and one-third are in their twenties. Secondary learners do a variety of activities at the library. However, they appear to spend most of their library time on education-related tasks, with two-thirds of this group spending at least 50% of their time on school-related activities. Secondary learners also use the library for leisure, most frequently for watching videos, playing games, and meeting up with friends. Only one-in-four secondary learners has access to a computer at home -- underlying the importance of the regional libraries' computers for these groups. However, this group reported books were the most important resource the libraries provided. They visit because it is the only place in the area to get what they need, and it also has a quiet ambiance.

Post-secondary students comprise a large group of library users, particularly in the Oshana Region. The highest proportion of students attend distance education institutions, including the Institute for Open Learning (20%) and NAMCOL (15%). Most frequently, students use the library for education-related activities, entertainment, and catching up on the news. Yet students are academically-minded, with 75% of them spending at least 50% of their time on school-related activities. For this group, internet access is by far the most important resource. They visit the library mostly for its convenient location and because it is the only place in the area to get what they need.

Job-seekers are younger and more economically vulnerable than other types of business section patrons. The majority of job-seekers visit the library to do and learn things related to their job search or career path. However, while at the library, they most frequently do other activities like reading the news, playing games, watching videos, or socializing. They use the library because it is convenient, affordable, and the only place to get what they need.

Self-employed patrons tended to be older than other library patrons. Nearly one-quarter have graduated from a vocational school or technical institute -- much more than other groups. Although a relatively small proportion of library patrons were self-employed overall, this group uses the library intensively, visiting twice per week on average. Sixty percent visit the library primarily to improve their business or income or learn job skills. Frequent activities include reading the news and doing tasks that supported their business and life goals. Self-employed patrons use the library because it is the only place in the area with the resources they need, and the location is convenient.

Wage earners appear to be more financially secure than other patron groups, and nearly one-third had graduated from a university. Wage earners frequently engage in a wide range of activities. Most frequently they read the news, but after that they were as likely to play games and watch videos as look for education-related information. Like other business section patrons, wage earners visit the library because it is convenient to access and provides resources that can't be found anywhere else.

In general, **females** visit the library somewhat less frequently than males—possibly due to obligations at home and safety concerns about walking alone to the library. However, a larger proportion of females use the library for education- or work/employment-related reasons, and females seem to participate in programs, workshops, and trainings at a higher rate.

5.2.2 Introduction

The regional libraries were designed to deliver services to a broad range of user types, including all types of learners and students, job-seekers, self-employed patrons, young children, and essentially anyone in the community with some kind of information need. As such, many of the individuals most invested in the success of the program (project implementers and stakeholders as described in the Component 1 evaluation report) believed the success of the regional libraries should be determined not merely by *how much* the libraries are used, but also by *who* uses them (Sey & Fellows, 2016:74). Many public libraries around the world primarily serve learners and students by supplying needed educational materials, yet it can be challenging to successfully serve additional populations as doing so requires time and resources, including diversity in library resources, a greater range of staff expertise, and targeted outreach efforts.

This section focuses on evaluation question #3: *Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do?* The two main target groups for this evaluation are learners/students and business section patrons. As discussed in Section 1.4, these groups were chosen because they are of primary interest to evaluation stakeholders. In analyzing these groups, the evaluators also explored gender differences. Additionally, the evaluators devoted modest efforts to exploring child users.

This section is structured as follows: (1) learners and students, (2) business section patrons, (3) children, and (4) males and females. (See methodology section 4.3 for more information on

definition of these groups.) Each group includes findings related to patron demographics, motivations and use, and perceptions of the regional library.

Data sources: This analysis draws heavily on data from the 2018 patron survey, which provided information on patron demographics, motivations, and library usage patterns for all groups but children. FGDs provided information on patrons' experiences using the library and their perspectives on library use. Staff interviews, observations, and administrative data also informed this analysis, largely for purposes of triangulation. No children below the age of 15 participated in this evaluation. As such, information on the children user group (5.2.3) comes from the perceptions of staff, administrative data, and observation. Specifically, staff interviews provided information on how children visit and use the library, while monthly reports from the Ohangwena and Omaheke regional libraries (but not Oshana) provided monthly statistics on use by children (i.e., visits, computer use).

5.2.3 Learners and students

Learners and students are distinct groups in this evaluation, but because they are similar in their potential to use the library to achieve educational goals, our analysis frequently focuses on both groups concurrently. In the context of Namibia, learners (also referred to as “secondary learners”) attend secondary school or an equivalent educational program up to grade 12. In the US, they would be considered the equivalent of high school students or young people working toward a high school equivalency certificate. Post-secondary students (or simply, “students”) are enrolled at a university, college, vocational school, or technical school.

The regional libraries were designed to support learners and students by providing them space and resources to support their studies. In particular, secondary learners were a priority target group for the RSRC Activity because local secondary schools were known to lack the types of educational resources learners needed to succeed, whereas post-secondary students enrolled in higher education were assumed to have better access to educational resources like computers and textbooks. Among secondary learners, some stakeholders of the RSRC Activity expected secondary learners enrolled in distance education programs, such as those at the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), would have the strongest need for library services, as they lacked many of the resources available to youth enrolled at more traditional secondary schools.

5.2.3.1 Learners

Demographics

Among secondary learners, one-third were in their twenties. 68% of learners were below the age of 20, while 32% were age 20 or up, indicating the regional libraries serve a large number of non-traditional learners.

Many learners attended distance education programs rather than traditional secondary schools. Overall, 58% attended traditional schools and 42% attended the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). NAMCOL learners do not attend secondary schools in the traditional sense and so are believed to have fewer educational resources available to them.

Many learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Most secondary learners reside in homes with basic household amenities but not computers and internet access. For instance, most learner households were electrified (74%), had a mobile phone (96%), and a radio (85%), but few had a computer (28%) or a fixed internet connection (13%). Around one-third of learners were at or below the upper poverty line (US\$38 per month). For reference, 18% of Namibia's population was at or below the upper poverty line in the year 2015-2016.¹¹

Motivation and use

On average, secondary learners visit the regional libraries more than once per week. Learners visited 5.5 times in a four-week period prior to the patron survey (a median of 3 visits).

Learners primarily use the regional libraries for education tasks, but also show significant use for pleasure. When asked to rank the top three reasons for coming to the regional library on the day of the survey, the most commonly ranked choices by learners were to do homework, class assignments, or study (76%) and play games, watch videos, or other entertainment activities (32%). The other most commonly ranked reason was to relax or socialize (14%).

The majority of learners spend a significant amount of time at the regional library on school-related activities. Patron survey data revealed around 65% of learners spent more than 50% of their time at the library on school-related activities (during the four weeks prior to the survey).

While at the library, learners used a variety of resources to support their educational goals. These included quiet spaces conducive for studying, public computers, the internet, library books (e.g., exam booklets, textbooks, books on school subjects, and dictionaries), photocopying machines, and spaces where learners could discuss school assignments with their classmates, as revealed in FGDs. A few learners also mentioned that librarians helped them with studying. In the words of one learner:

[The librarians] help with schoolwork, and the way they are doing it is so interesting and fun. They teach you how to study and what should you read.

Learners also used plenty of resources that were less directly connected to educational goals. These activities included reading books for pleasure, using Wi-Fi to watch sports games

¹¹ Poverty line data is based on World Bank definitions

or access social media websites, and participating in events or programs organized by the library (e.g. debate competition, yoga, and chess), as mentioned by focus group discussants.

In contrast to post-secondary students, secondary learners also engaged in activities related to preparing for the job market or job search, as well as applying for admission to higher education institutions. One staff interview participant, for example, explained that the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia had, in 2018, accepted online applications for the first time, and that library staff and computers were busy helping learners with the process.

Learners appear to use the regional library slightly more for education-related activities than for online entertainment or socializing. On average, the most frequent activities learners reported doing at the regional library over the prior four weeks were education-related, which totaled 5.4 times per week. These included doing homework (average of 2 times), studying for tests/quizzes (2 times), and reading texts required for class (average of 1.4 times). Entertainment activities of watching videos and playing games (average of 3.9 times) and social activities of meeting up with friends (3 times) were also frequently done. There were some differences across regional libraries. Notably, learners at Oshana used the library more frequently to watch videos and play games (6 times) than in Ohangwena and Omaheke (1.9 times and 3.8 times, respectively).

Learners reported books were the most important resource provided by the regional library, even more so than the internet and computers. (Among patron survey respondents, 41% of learners believed books were the most important resource, followed by 36% for the internet, and 25% for computers.) Learners were the only patron subgroup that reported books were more important than the internet on average. However, views of the importance of books were strikingly different across locations: at the Ohangwena Regional Library 77% responded books were most important, as opposed to only 13% at the Omaheke Regional Library. Instead, Omaheke learners viewed the internet as the library's most important resource (58% of learners).

It appears that the specific books learners found “most important” at the library were booklets used to prepare for examinations, as learners in FGDs repeatedly emphasized they were critical resources at the library. Staff interview respondents acknowledged the exam booklets were in high demand. A few educators also said they referred learners to the library specifically for this purpose. In the words of one educator:

We don't have enough booklets at our school, so normally I refer them here. Since we are very close to this library just 5 kilometers from here, our learners make use of this library and borrow the booklets.

Learners mostly visit the library on their own free will, not because it is required by their school. Furthermore, according to the patron survey, learners spent more time at the library

when they used it voluntarily, showing the vast majority of learners see the value of library resources for themselves.

Furthermore, the regional libraries provide learners with resources they can't get in their own school libraries. Multiple learners in focus groups in Omaheke and Ohangwena described why they preferred the regional library to their school library:

Our school has a library, but I don't use that library at all. It is very boring... The books are too old. You hardly find textbooks there and it is also very small. There are no computers no Wi-Fi just books and you feel like you are trap in prison with books.

The library at school only has space for books to be stored in it but not for us learners to study in it.

There is a huge difference because the library at school is so small and it's always full and there are not enough books for studying.

There is a library at school, and I don't go there. I prefer coming here due to that the fact that the library at school is very small, has no computers, the Wi-Fi there is only used by the teachers.

A few staff at the regional libraries explained that most school libraries are inadequate at meeting the needs of learners. This included the official “school librarian” at each regional library who was tasked with helping school libraries to stock and organize their collections. (Note: This does not apply to libraries at MCC-funded schools, which were said to be well-resourced and staffed.) From regional library staff:

The learners don't have a problem. They love the library... They want to use the library. That's why even in most cases you see them coming here, because there at school the library is not opened. Even if they have books, the library is not opened.

The thing [our schools] need most, we need books, we need computers, we need librarian staff to schools, library buildings, those things.

A few educators also mentioned that their school libraries lack resources. For instance:

[S]ome of the students used to come to me asking me for story books and I tell them to come here [to the regional library] because I don't have them.

Perceptions of the regional library

Learners are very satisfied with the regional library. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied with the library, 84% indicated a 4 or 5. Learners

appeared especially satisfied at Oshana and Ohangwena, where 76% and 69% indicated a rating of 5, respectively.

Nearly three-quarters of secondary learners at the regional library depend on it to support their educational needs. In the patron survey, learners were asked the top three reasons they visit the regional library for their educational needs instead of going elsewhere: 72% selected the option “this is the only place in the area with the resources you need.” This was especially true in the Omaheke Region, where 80% of secondary learners responded as such. Other reasons learners visit the library include its quiet ambiance (54%), convenient location (51%), and that it’s safer than other places (21%).

Yet educators remind us that numerous learners may not see any value in visiting a library, and so they emphasize the importance of promoting library use to youth:

The only thing we make sure of is to tell our kids to go to the regional library to do research. The other thing is that our kids really don’t know the importance of a library [other discussants agreeing] or the importance of using the library. The ones that are going school, we just need to put emphasis on the important purposes of the library. Maybe once the librarians are clear to the learners, maybe the kids might change their mindset. [Others agree]

5.2.3.2 Students

Demographics¹²

Most post-secondary students are in their 20s: 71% were between the ages of 20 and 29. Another 15% were age 30 or older.

The highest proportion of students sampled in the patron survey came from distance education institutions — the Institute for Open Learning (20%, or 9 respondents) or NAMCOL (15%, or 7 respondents). Others attended Community Skills Development Center (COSDECs) (15%, or 6 respondents) vocational centers which, like the regional libraries, were funded by MCC as part of the Education Project of the Namibia Compact. Overall, the 44 students in the sample attended 19 different post-secondary institutions.

On average, post-secondary students are more likely than secondary learners to have access to computers at home. 44% of student households own a computer, versus 28% of learner households. However, when it comes to basic household amenities, like electricity or a

¹² A note about students: For the patron survey, we aimed to sample an equal number of students at each library, such that each location comprised one-third of the total student sample. However, we were not able to sample enough students in Omaheke, where it appears fewer students use the library. In response, we oversampled at Oshana, which draws more students. As a result, our sample for the patron survey is largely comprised of post-secondary students from Oshana (48% of student respondents) and Ohangwena (33%), in contrast to Omaheke (19% of student respondents).

radio, the groups are very similar. Also, like learners, the vast majority of post-secondary student households own a mobile phone (96%).

Many post-secondary students are low-income. A quarter of this group is at or below the upper poverty line (US\$38 per month). For reference, 18% of Namibia's population was at or below the upper poverty line in year 2015-2016.

Motivations and use

Compared to secondary learners, fewer post-secondary students use the regional library.

It was relatively easy for our data collection team to locate learners to take the patron survey, yet finding post-secondary students was a more challenging task, presumably because students used the library in lower numbers. This was particularly true at Omaheke, where the sample could not be filled. (Oshana was oversampled to make up for the shortage at Omaheke.) Library staff at Omaheke confirmed post-secondary students were not a major group of users:

There are not so many [students]. We would expect that the tertiary, they would be the ones who are many but here, no. They're not many. Or maybe they're at their own libraries where they are at their institutions.... We would expect them to come here because these are the people who request for assistance, especially to use online facilities for their assignments, but you don't see them. We don't see them.

Students visit the regional library in Oshana much more frequently than in the other two locations. On average, student survey respondents visited 4.9 times in a four-week period prior to the survey (a median of 2 visits). However, when looking at usage by location, we see variation, with frequency weighted towards Oshana. Looking at the median number of visits in the previous four weeks, students tend to visit once per week in Oshana, once every two weeks in Ohangwena, and once every four weeks in Omaheke. Furthermore, in Oshana, post-secondary students visit the library twice as often as secondary learners. This is notable when the inverse is true in Ohangwena and Omaheke, with learners visiting roughly twice as often as students.

Learners and students appear similar in regard to the amount of time they spend at their regional library.

Students visit the regional libraries primarily for pleasure, with education needs following. When asked to rank the top three reasons for coming to the library on the day of the survey, the most commonly ranked choices by students were to play games, watch videos, or other entertainment activities (39%), and do homework, class assignments, or study (23%). The other most commonly ranked reasons were to relax or socialize (21%).

Although students most often visit the regional library for entertainment-related reasons, **the majority nevertheless spend a significant amount of time on school-related activities.** On the patron survey data, 75% of students reported spending more than 50% of time at the library

on school-related activities (during the four weeks prior to the survey). Note that this is likely not inconsistent from the previous finding that pleasure activities drive visitation. That finding focused on the primary reason for coming to the library, while this analysis indicates students expend the most amount of time on school-related activities.

Most frequently, students use the library for education-related activities, entertainment, and catching up on the news. Most frequently, students use the library for educational activities, averaging a total of 4.6 times over the previous month. This included doing homework (average of 1.9 times), studying for tests/quizzes (1.3 times), and reading texts required for class (average of 1.3 times). The most frequent other activities students reported doing at the regional libraries over the prior four weeks included watching videos and playing games (average of 3.5 times) and reading the news (2.8). Students tended to use the library in ways similar to learners, except that students read the news more often and met up with friends less often. Also, like learners, students at the Oshana Regional Library watched videos or played games more often than at the other libraries (5.7 times at Oshana, 2.5 at Omaheke, and 1.5 at Ohangwena).

Internet access is the most important resource provided at the library for a majority of post-secondary students. This was true at all locations, and for 63% of all students versus 23% of students who identified books as the most important resource, 15% who said computers, and 5% who said, “other resource.”

Post-secondary students, similarly to learners, use the regional library for study-related purposes. Focus group participants described using the computers, internet, and books (including digital books loaded onto the computer using USB) for this purpose. They also used library study spaces to study independently or to do collaborative work with others. They also used the library’s Wi-Fi to connect with friends and share notes via email.

Other types of library use pertained to searching for jobs, writing emails, applying for university or other education programs, applying for a loan (with staff assistance), reading magazines, searching for information (e.g. on schools), interacting with other students, reading books for pleasure, and participating in events or programs organized by the library. And like most library patrons, sometimes secondary students used the library for Facebook or watching movies.

Perceptions of the regional library

Post-secondary students are very satisfied with the regional library, albeit at somewhat lower rates than secondary learners. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied with the library, 75% indicated a 4 or 5 (versus 85% of learners). At all three libraries, roughly half of students indicated they were very satisfied (a rating of 5).

Convenience is the most reported reason for visiting the library among post-secondary students. Students were asked the top three reasons they visit the regional library for their educational needs instead of going elsewhere, and 69% reported they do so because the library

is relatively easy to get to. This was especially true at Oshana (79%), where more institutions of higher education are based, suggesting that students' homes are located closer to the regional library than to university campuses. At Omaheke, compared to other locations, more students reported visiting because the library's technology was better than alternatives (31%, versus 0% at Ohangwena and 10% at Oshana). Ohangwena was much more likely to identify cost as a driving factor for use (38% selected "cost of service is affordable," compared to 15% at Ohangwena and 3% at Oshana).

The library is a critical resource for nearly two-thirds of all students, with 62% selecting the option "this is the only place in the area with the resources you need."

5.2.4 Business section patrons

The business section patron group consists of library patrons who are job-seekers, self-employed, or wage-earners. They are grouped together due to their *potential* to use the library in ways that could conceivably advance their income or employment status, such as using the types of professional services provided by the regional libraries' business sections. Specifically:

Job-seekers: Job-seekers were identified as a target population for library services since the inception of the RSRC Activity (Sey and Fellows, 2016, p26) because unemployment has been, and continues to be, a critical challenge for the country. In 2017, Namibia had an unemployment rate of 37% and a youth unemployment rate of 43% (ages 15-34).¹³

Self-employed: The regional libraries were also conceived to serve individuals who worked for themselves, particularly those developing small- or medium-sized businesses, to support economic development and job creation.

Wage earners: Individuals who hold a job and have a regular income were not a target group for the RSRC Activity. However, this subgroup was investigated by the evaluators because wage earners could conceivably use the library to support their current jobs or enhance their skills and also because some early project stakeholders hoped to see the library serve this group.

For the patron survey, the evaluators sampled an equal number of business section patrons at each venue, yet the composition of each group differed by location. The table below shows that at the Omaheke Regional Library, for instance, the largest proportion of business section patrons were job-seekers at all three libraries.

¹³NPC report March 2018. https://www.npc.gov.na/?wpfb_dl=315

Table 13: Composition of business section patrons at each library (Patron survey)

	Ohangwena	Omaheke	Oshana
Wage earners	37%	23%	34%
Job-seekers	41%	66%	49%
Self-employed	22%	11%	17%

Below, the evaluators report on the characteristics of these two groups separately, including group demographics, motivations and usage patterns, and perceptions of the regional library.

5.2.4.1 Job-seekers

Demographics

Job-seekers were younger than other types of business section patrons. Survey results show 70% of job-seekers were below the age of 30, compared to 50% of wage earners and 39% of self-employed patrons.

Job-seekers possess a wide range of educational backgrounds. In the patron survey, 26% of job-seekers reported their highest level of education completed was university or vocational school, 45% reported secondary school, and 29% indicated they had not completed secondary school. Compared to other business section user groups, job-seekers were twice as likely to have not finished secondary school.

Job-seekers appear to be the most economically vulnerable group, more so than other business section patrons, learners, or students. Among job-seekers, 35%-40% live at or below the upper poverty line. Only 44% lived in a home with a flush toilet (as opposed to 74% of self-employed patrons, 75% of wage earners, 64% of learners, and 66% of students). Additionally, many job-seekers lack electricity at home, and most do not have home access to ICTs. Among job seeker households, 43% did not have electricity at home, 70% did not live in a household with a computer, and 97% did not have a fixed internet connection. However, 96% of job seeker households owned a mobile phone.

Motivations and use

Job-seekers are likely the largest group of business section patrons served at the regional libraries. This was true at each library location. At the Omaheke library, two-thirds of business section patrons were searching for work.

Most job-seekers said they visited 2-3 times per month and stayed for 3-5 hours at a time, on average.

The majority of job-seekers visit the library to do and learn things related to their job search or career path. Focus group participants described viewing job vacancy notice boards, typing CVs, accessing job application forms, and scanning application documents. In the patron survey, 61% of job-seekers who had used a computer in the previous four weeks reported they did so primarily for employment-related reasons, such as applying for a job. An additional 16% reported using the computers for education-related activities. Job-seekers also reported benefiting from staff assistance. For example, a job seeker in Ohangwena mentioned how they received staff assistance during job application process:

When there are variety of vacancies on the internet, they usually print them out and place it on their notice board. You will just see an advertisement and when you ask them, they will give you all the information. If you don't know where to start applying for it then the staff will help you out.

However, the activities job-seekers reported doing most frequently were not directly related to obtaining employment. Over the four weeks before the survey, frequent activities included reading the news (4.7), playing games and watching videos (4.2), and socializing (3.3). FGDs with job-seekers also revealed that another popular leisure activity was searching online for information of one's interests.

After these activities, however, the most frequent uses focused on employment or education. Conducting a job search (2.5), looking for education-related information (2), and applying for a job (1.7) were commonly listed. Job-seekers did other employment-related activities about once over the prior four weeks such as taking a training course provided by the library, writing a CV, and learning about career opportunities. A library staff member at Omaheke confirmed these services were being used by job-seekers:

For the unemployed, with the CV typing and training, that is the most popular one. And, I think, the photocopying and printing... Yes, we had a lot of people coming for that.

Although it may appear contradictory that most job-seekers visit the library to pursue employment-related activities, but then most frequently report doing things unrelated to the job search, it is not. In fact, this type of multifaceted use is consistent with the library literature that shows people use the library for a variety of purposes, from purely instrumental (e.g. job search) to general interest and leisure (reading the news, email).¹⁴

Perceptions of the regional library

Job-seekers may be the most satisfied group of patrons at the library (even more so than learners). On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied with the library, 88% indicated a 4 or 5. Job-seekers appeared most satisfied at Oshana, with 78% rating a 5, compared to 68% at Ohangwena and 65% at Omaheke.

¹⁴ Global Impact Study

Job-seekers visit the library because it is more convenient and affordable than other places. Job-seekers may depend on the library somewhat less than other groups, with only 59% responding “this is the only place in the area with the resources you need.” More so, job-seekers seem to value the regional library’s location (69%). Other reasons are that the regional library provides affordable services (57%) and better technology (31%). For example, a few job-seekers in Ohangwena mentioned how they value the affordable services in FGDs:

When job hunting it helps me sometimes because there are times I don’t have money to buy a newspaper. Here they print it out and cut out vacancies and paste them on their notice boards whereby everyone can see.

Maybe you [find] a job on the internet and would like to apply, then you can scan your documents for free. Elsewhere scanning is very expensive. It’s a very nice and actually a big advantage since it is very helpful, so you scan your documents and apply for your job online.

5.2.4.2 Self-employed patrons

Demographics

Self-employed patrons tend to be older than other library patrons. The majority of self-employed individuals were over the age of 30 (61%). An additional 35% were aged 24 to 29. This differentiates them from other groups, most noticeably learners and students (15% over age 30) and job-seekers (29% over age 30), whereas in age, self-employed patrons most resemble wage earners (52% over the age of 30).

Like other business section patrons, most self-employed patrons have completed secondary school (83%), yet this group was much more likely to have graduated from a vocational school or technical institute than other groups (22% of self-employed, versus 4% of job-seekers and 5% of wage earners).

Although more economically secure than job-seekers, approximately one-quarter of self-employed patrons live at or below the upper poverty line. Additionally, among self-employed patrons, 35% did not have electricity at home, 65% did not live in a home with a computer, and 91% did not have a fixed internet connection. However, 100% of self-employed households owned a mobile phone.

Motivations and use

A small number of self-employed patrons use the libraries. The group made up only 16% of our sample of business section patrons in 2018, with no more than 10 self-employed individuals at any of the library locations.

Yet self-employed patrons appear to be heavy users of the library. We see this through the length and frequency of their visits, as well as their reasons for visiting. On average, self-employed patrons visit nearly twice per week (eight times in the previous four weeks), more than twice as often as other business section patrons. The self-employed also spend much more time at the library on an average visit. No one in this group reported visiting for under an hour.

Self-employed patrons frequently engage in activities that support their career goals. In FGDs, self-employed patrons described using the library for searching or applying for a job, checking work-related emails, holding business meetings, searching for information related to work, making photocopies of work-related documents, and completing business documents.

Over the four weeks before the patron survey, the most frequent activity reported by self-employed individuals was reading the news (3.8 visits). After that, the most common activities presumably supported their business and life goals. These included: finding education-related information (3.6 visits), looking for information on government services (2.8 visits), learning about career opportunities (2.4 visits), conducting a job search (2.1 visits), and looking for health information (2 visits). Further, self-employed patrons appeared to watch videos and play games less than the average library patron (2.3 visits for self-employed individuals, versus 3.7 visits for all patrons surveyed).

Furthermore, self-employed patrons appear to be very work-driven. Self-employed individuals visit the library primarily to improve their business or income (40%), learn job skills (20%), or for entertainment (7%). When asked about the last book or resource used, 35% of self-employed patrons said they'd used a book for starting a business or improving their current business. According to a staff interview participant:

I could tell that these are businesspeople. You see when they come here, they just have a different approach from other people that are seeking for jobs in the library. When they come here, they come with their briefcase, they take out their papers, you can see they're making copies. And some of those papers when they need assistance for scanning, you can see it's like a tender proposal and you can see that this is a businessman.

Perceptions of the regional library

Self-employed patrons are very satisfied with the regional library. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied with the library, 83% indicated a 4 or 5. There appeared to be somewhat more self-employed patrons who indicated they were "very satisfied" at Ohangwena and Omaheke (60% provided a rating of 5 at both locations) than Oshana (50%).

Three-quarters of self-employed patrons depend on library services. When asked the top three reasons they visit the regional library for their business needs, self-employed patrons were the most likely to say the library "is the only place in the area with the resources you need" (75%), which is more than any other group. Self-employed patrons also preferred the library to

alternatives because the location was more convenient to get to (65%), provided more affordable services (35%), and was quieter (20%).

5.2.4.3 Wage earners

Demographics

Half of wage earners are over the age of 30, that is, 51%. This is considerably older than the proportion of all survey respondents in this age range: 18%. That said, nearly two-thirds of wage earners fall into the narrower age range of 25-34 (59%).

Wage earners are better educated than other groups, with 89% having finished at least secondary school. Nearly one-third (32%) have graduated from a university.

Compared to other library users, wage earners appear to be more financially secure. The survey respondents who reported the highest incomes were likely to be wage earners. Yet some wage earners still struggle: 13-18% live at or below the upper poverty line, 21% do not have electricity at home, 48% do not live in a household with a computer, and 84% do not have a fixed internet connection. Nevertheless, 98% of wage earner's households owned a mobile phone.

Motivations and use

Wage earners frequently engaged in a wide range of activities. Over the four weeks before the survey, wage earners engaged in a number of both recreational (or non-instrumental) and instrumental activities. On the recreational side, this included: reading the news (4.6 times), playing games and watching videos (3.8 times), and meeting up with friends (2.7 times). On the instrumental side, this included: looking for education-related information (3.8 times), looking for government information (2.7 times), learning about career opportunities (1.9 times), and looking for health information (1.5 times).

For example, one focus group participant described how he or she learned leadership skills through finding and reading a book on the topic in the library.

I was actually just appointed as acting supervisor at my work, so I didn't have leadership skills. I came to the library to do research about books on the topic and I found a very interesting book that I am currently using now on how to do my work, it is a very nice book and it's helpful...I can see myself when I started reading that book, my working skills have been improved and the way how I have been working with my colleagues is great.

Perceptions of the regional library

Wage earners are perhaps the least satisfied group of users at the regional library. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 5 being very satisfied with the library, 71% indicated a 4 or 5, which is just slightly lower than other groups. However, at all locations,

roughly one-quarter of respondents selected “3.” Dissatisfaction among wage earners appeared to be highest at Oshana, where 38% of wage earners indicated a 3 in satisfaction. One reason could be operating hours (9-5), which overlaps with working hours.

Like other business section patrons, wage earners visit the library because it is convenient to access and provides resources that can’t be found anywhere else. When asked the top three reasons they visit the regional library for their business needs, wage earners responded “this is the only place in the area with the resources you need” (61%) and “it’s closer or more convenient to get to than other places” (61%). Wage earners also preferred the regional library for its quiet environment (39%) and more affordable services (35%).

5.2.5 Children

Children were not a target group for this evaluation. Yet the evaluators include findings about children in this report because, in the time since the regional libraries opened, evaluation participants frequently spoke about the importance of young children as library users, and the evaluators sometimes observed large numbers of children in the libraries.

Most young children at the library stay within the library’s children’s section, which generally serves children up to 12 years old, or through grade 7. One source reported that the majority of children using the section were in grades three to grade five (approximately ages 8 to 11). Parents or older siblings bring them to the library.

Children comprised roughly 10% to 20% of total library visitors in the first half of 2018 at Ohangwena and Omaheke (data not available for Oshana). However, librarians reported large fluctuations in the number of visits from month to month based on school calendars or unknown factors:

This month, you’ll find them, they are coming. Really, we do not know what happened. They just come. Maybe they tell each other that maybe there is something good happening or whatever and then they come. And then, next month, you will find them, they are coming in small numbers and so on.

According to library staff at Omaheke and Ohangwena, the number of children visiting the libraries had declined since their openings in 2014. To some extent, at the time of data collection, the decrease was attributed to budgetary and technological factors: librarians could no longer afford to provide incentives (e.g., prizes or sweets) that attract young people to children’s section activities, and, at the Omaheke regional library, none of the computers in the children’s section were working. Of the 14 children’s computers at Omaheke, 10 were out of order due to broken ports, and four others because the library had not been able to replace their broken keyboards. (See Section 5.3.3 for more information on the condition of library computers.)

In Omaheke:

So, like in the beginning when the library first opened, we had more users [of the children's section] compared to now, so most of our users have either dropped out along the way. We've lost them somehow and I'm not so sure if we would be able to get them back.

Nevertheless, staff informed the evaluators that generally the libraries still receive many young visitors after the school day ends, which keeps staff very busy. The evaluators' observations confirmed this as well.

One library staff person noted:

Mostly between Monday and Thursday we are overwhelmed with the number of children that are coming to get their homework done here... Maybe around 3:00, that's when the majority are starting to come, because some of them have to go home first and then they need to walk back to the library so maybe around 3:00.... Everybody needs your assistance, and then at least by 4:00 they should start winding up.

The staff working in the children's section, oh, they have a lot of activities for kids. Every day after school they are full and busy. Some do storytelling here, reading competitions, they have a lot of activities for the learners. They're working so hard.

Children most often visit to use computers and complete homework. Around grades three to five, some children also visit to see their friends or to read, having developed an appreciation for books, while older children (grades six and seven) have a greater need to use the library for school projects, as one children's librarian explained. Children seem especially motivated to use computers at the library:

They will just tell you, "We want computer." Nothing else. "I want computer. I want computer." That's the only thing that they want [laughter]. Nothing else.

Unlike adult library patrons, children are not free to use the computers whenever they like. Instead, their after-school time is structured around various activities, including reading books and playing games. For example, during an observation in Oshana, there was at one point around 30-35 children in the children's section, but only two girls were using computers while most others were reading books.

Working with the children, librarians noticed they needed to make reading a priority. Many children have low reading skills, and especially English reading skills, as they are taught in the vernacular until grade three or four.

We noticed that from the many kids that were coming, most of them had difficulties reading and actually doing their own work.... We have kids who are maybe like grade six, grade seven and they can't read. They just can't.... [We noticed] because they'd come with their work and then

they just hand over the paper to you, so then you have to read and explain to them what they need to do.

The other thing is, the thing that is also affecting us is the school curriculum.... Because kids, more especially children from grade one or pre-primary, they are being taught in the vernacular until grade three, I think, or grade four. And then, for them it's a bit difficult. It's a challenge when they come here. Here, books are in English. At school, they are being taught in Oshiwambo.

5.2.6 Women and girls

In the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2018—which assesses gender disparities in countries by four areas including economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment—Namibia ranked 10th place (Iceland ranked #1) (Whiting, 2018). This was a remarkable improvement for the country, which ranked 38th in 2006 in the first Gender Gap index published by the same organization (Whiting, 2018). In particular, it was seen that the country's health and survival gender gap has been closed since 2013¹⁵, and there has been a significant rise in the number of women in parliament. On educational attainment, it was found that females' enrollment was actually higher than that of males—female to male ratio of enrollment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education were marked at 1.03, 1.26, and 1.75 respectively (World Economic Forum, 2018: 199). However, the figures might not depict a comprehensive picture of gender equality in Namibia. For example, a study examined gender roles in urban and rural families in Ongwediva (a town in Oshana region) and it was found that there was a greater gender inequality in the division of labor in rural households—i.e. women having a heavy burden on household tasks compared to men—compared to urban households (Tshivoro 2018). Such division of labor in households may influence the library usage patterns of males and females.

Demographics

For both males and females, the largest number of learner/student patrons come from age 18-24. In the case of business section patrons, it is age 20-29 for both genders. For those who participated in the patron survey, in the case of learners/students, around two-thirds of males (67.7%) and females (67.4%) were from the age group 18-24. For business section patrons, around half of males (53.6%) and nearly 60% of females came from age 20-29.

In general, **there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of their educational backgrounds**. For all patrons, 74.5% of males and 73.1% of females responded as “secondary” or “some secondary” as the highest level of education one completed.

¹⁵ Health and survival gender gap measures (1) the difference between males and females' sex ratio at birth and (2) “an estimate of the number of years that women and men can expect to live in good health by taking into account the years lost to violence, disease, malnutrition and other relevant factors.” (World Economic Forum, 2018: 4)

Male and female respondents do not show stark differences in terms of standards of living. This applies to both learners/students and business section patrons. To illustrate, for all patrons, both gender groups came from households with electricity (M: 75%, F: 68.0%), a mobile phone (M: 96.1%; F: 96.4%), and a radio (M: 81.9%; F: 82.2%). However, both gender groups' households less often had a computer (M: 37.3%; F: 32.4%) or a fixed internet connection (M: 9.8%; F: 9.1%).

Motivation and use

In general, **females visit the library less frequently compared to males—although there were some contrasting views from focus group discussants.** In terms of use, in all patrons, the mean number of visits to the library was lower for females compared to males—4.4 times and 6.6 times respectively during the four weeks before the survey.

In parallel, staff across the three locations viewed more males visiting the library than females:

[W]hen we are looking at who uses the library more, men are always—men are more than females...Maybe I can give 60 percent to males and 40 to females.

To some extent this was corroborated by observation findings, where it was seen that relatively more males compared to females visited the library during the morning hours and in the afternoon, it became more gender balanced. More presence of males was noticed by staff in the children's and business sections. For the children's section, this was confirmed by librarians at all locations and by administrative data for Omaheke and Ohangwena. Generally, the gap is not large, around 45% of patrons were young girls and 55% young boys at Ohangwena and Omaheke. According to staff interviews, the difference is more pronounced on Saturdays (Ohangwena) and holidays (Omaheke), with even fewer girls visiting. In Omaheke, the girls also tend to arrive at the library later—closer to 3pm—compared to the boys, who start coming as soon as school lets out at 1pm. According to observations, it was found that in general, there were more male children visiting and using the children's section compared to females.

Staff surmised that girls are more occupied with responsibilities at home (same as with women) and that their safety concerns in walking alone to the library could have been possible reasons why fewer girls were seen. This was confirmed to some extent during learner and post-secondary student focus groups. A post-secondary discussant from Ohangwena added:

I see that in the north like for instance at home in the villages, not all the girls are free to go out of the house. Some don't know the importance of the library or know what a library is. They will just be the way they grew up. It's only the boys that can go out but as for the girls they just stay in the house. The young parents that are educated might know about the library and they can send their kids to the library.

On the other hand, other focus group discussants viewed that more females visit and use the library compared to males. Possible reasons mentioned included no suitable activities for males

(explained below), males' lack of awareness about the library, and more boys being enrolled in vocational school and less interested in library use ("they are too much in[to] practice but not into theory"). One discussant suggested there should be a meeting for males to encourage their use of the library.

More females seem to be participating or be involved in programs, workshops, trainings, and outreach services compared to males. This was viewed by staff across the three locations. A few staff suggested different reasons why this might be so:

I don't know if it's right but I think women are more of business-minded and they're always wanting to learn new things and to try new things on how they can sustain themselves, so I think that's why we have more women than men who want to come for the [business] training. (Interviewer: So it's more that the training is more relevant or interesting to women.) Yes.

I think the women are mostly using the [outreach] services than men....Through my statistics because I go with a paper where they fill in their name and then their gender, mostly it's females who are attending to our services...It's not very surprising because when you look also at the rural living, life there, men are more into work.

One learner suggested that the type of activities offered might not be suitable for males:

I also think maybe they should increase the activities for guys or something because like last time they had cultural dance and they had yoga, obviously guys won't go do yoga. They should think of other activities that also fit guys because mostly what is here is more for ladies. The only time you see a lot of guys is at computer lessons during holiday time. A lot of guys come but other thing that attract people to the library like activities and many guys are not excluded but they don't feel comfortable with such activities.

In the case of learners/students, a smaller proportion of females visit the library out of their own free will compared to males. Around three-fourths of males and 60% of females mentioned they visited the library out of their own free will at least once during the four weeks prior to the time of the survey. During the same time period, a slightly higher percent of female respondents (4.7%) visited the library with one of their classes compared to the males (2.3%). However, similar percent levels of males (12.0%) and females (11.3%) mentioned that they at least once visited the library because it was required by their school (not with the class) during the four weeks.

Females might feel intimidated by the presence of men and separate themselves in the library's physical space. According to a staff person in Oshana:

[S]ometimes you will find that a woman walks there and she finds all the seats are occupied by men she would feel offended to sit there, she would come and sit on the shelves here and wait until she finds another girl or someone going there and then she can go. They feel intimidated by the presence of men. That is what I have observed. The same thing with the reading

rooms—if you find the women you would find they are seated together but if they are few, if they are many then they can scatter everywhere, but if they are few they are intimidated they sit on one corner themselves...It's cultural, the woman cannot sit where the men are, it is cultural and they are being trained like that from a tender age.

A higher proportion of females demonstrate education- or work/employment-oriented use of the library compared to males. 31.3% of males and 45.3% of females spent around three-quarters to their entire time at the library on school or business/employment related activities. Moreover, for learners/students, a higher percent of females (51%) answered that the main purpose for accessing their last resource from the library was “school assignment or additional research for school learning” compared to males (40%). For business section patrons, the highest proportion of males (25%) picked “entertainment or pleasure” as the main purpose for accessing the last resource from the library, compared to females, who picked “obtain information or perform task related to education needs” and “look for a job” (21% for both) as the main purpose.

Similarly, in all three locations, focus group discussants illustrated how males (boys) do more entertainment types of activities, compared to females (girls):

[M]ost girls they just came here for the purpose of studying and searching for information related to their schoolwork while most of the boys when coming here, like these days are addicted to European soccer. When they come here is just to watch soccer but most of the ladies they come to study and do their assignments.

Boys are just here for entertainment. They will search for games and those Kwaito stuff [South African music genre] and girls you will see in the study rooms, studying and some on the computers doing Facebook or searching for information.

One business section patron in Ohangwena suspected that the reason is because girls need to do house chores when they are at home, so they focus on studying when they are at the library. Staff comments across the three locations also illustrate that females are more likely to read or study compared to males:

I can't really say how accurate this is, but most of the time whenever I'm sitting there borrowing [lending] out books, it's usually females that borrow out books.

[M]ost of the girls are more interested in the books, and they tend to participate more in the reading and the spelling as compared to the boys.

Girls do use ICT but they also like reading the books themselves and other things... [Boys] do read but not as much as they like ICT. Even if they are reading their books but it's set in the computer, they will read. But girls will do both. They will use ICT, they'll also borrow. You will find when they [are] in the library they are doing something on the computer, but when they are going home, they want to take a book to go read. The boys want to come every day and just do

everything on the computer, they don't have time when they go home, but girls want to read here in the library doing their computer and everything, but they also take a book home.

There were also a few patrons who viewed that there is no significant gender difference in the library use:

I think there is no difference. Because they all come here for the internet and the books...To get information.

For learners/students, females use computers less frequently compared to males. For learners/students, males more often used a computer at the library than females during the four weeks prior to the time of the survey (M: 3.1 times; F: 2.3 times), but the trend was not mirrored in business section patrons (M: 4.1 times; F: 4.2 times).

A staff person's comparison of boys' and girls' use of the library confirms the survey finding:

Most of the time they are males. But those males normally make use of the internet, computer-related things. Girls, mostly you'll find them in the study area...So mostly guys just come, go up, use computers to play games and all these things. Girls normally go to the study area and study. Or guys will sit there and use the computer accessing the internet. Mostly guys internet, Wi-Fi, computers, that's their stuff.

Males' relatively more active use of computers was also supported by observations where it was found that across the three locations, public computers in the IT section (on the second floor) were mostly used by males throughout the day.

On the other hand, there were efforts made by the library for gender-balanced participation in training and use of computers. This was illustrated in staff interviews:

[W]e are encouraging more women to partake different programs deliberately like the ICT [training] it is deliberately that more women are trained than men to give them an opportunity...Now if we find that a certain program more men have written we suspend, we will wait for women to come and register and fill in those positions that are open.

Most of the boys that come are mostly interested in video games and computers, and then they don't always give the girls a chance when it comes to that so then at that time we had to come up with a strategy. So this side was for the girls only and the other side was for the boys only. Then it was easier for us to also monitor who spent how much time on a particular computer, or something like that.

Among business section patrons, female users are more likely than male users to use the library to get information or help for someone else -- the opposite of learners/student patrons. For business section patrons, a higher percent of females (40.1%) mentioned that they have used the library to get information or help for someone else compared to males (33.3%)

during the four weeks before the survey. However, among learners/students, a higher percentage of males (25.5%) compared to females (17.3%) answered that they have used the library to get information or help for someone else such as a friend or family member during the four weeks prior to the survey.

For learners/students, among the respondents who answered that they have used the library to get information or help for someone else, the top main purpose was to “obtain information or perform a task related to education needs” for both males and females (81% of males, 88% of females). In comparison, for all business section patrons, the top main purpose was to “obtain information or perform task related to education needs” for males (53%) and to “obtain information or perform task related to economic or employment needs” for females (57%).

Perceptions of the regional library

For both learners/students and business section patrons, around 80% of male and female respondents were satisfied (gave a score of 4 or 5 out of 5) with the library. Of learners/students, around 80% of males and females gave a score of 4 or 5 on the satisfaction scale. For business section patrons, around 77.5% of males and 85.5% of females gave a score of 4 or 5 on the satisfaction scale.

For both males and females, the library plays an important role in providing resources they cannot access elsewhere in a convenient location. For all patrons, major reasons why they chose to come to the library instead of going to a different place for their educational or business/employment needs included that the library was the only place in the area with the resources they need (M: 68.1%; F: 64.7%), and that it’s closer or more convenient to get to than other places (M: 58.9%; F: 61.3%).

Among the learners/students who answered that the library is the only place in the area with the resources they need, both males and females mentioned the internet (M: 44.1%; F: 42.2%) followed by books (M: 29.4%; F: 39.1%) as the most important resource in the library. In comparison, both genders of business section patrons noted the internet (M: 71.1%; F: 60%) and then computers (M: 21.1%; F: 33.3%).

5.3 Library services

5.3.1 Overview

The regional libraries provide a range of programs and services far beyond just providing a collection of books to the communities they serve. Of the library services offered, this report focuses on the nine the evaluators found to be significant to patrons: Computers and internet/Wi-Fi, computer training, printing and copying, collections of books and other resources, study spaces, business section services, children’s reading programs, school library services, and outreach services. The evaluators found that:

- **Computers and internet access** were in high demand at all three regional libraries, and patrons' decisions to visit the library largely depended on the availability of these resources. Yet the libraries have varied in their capacity to fix and maintain equipment, and none of the libraries had a plan to replace the computers when they exceed their lifespan over the next few years.
- **Free basic computer training** was extended to more than 3,000 community members over a three-year period. It appeared the regional libraries could extend training to more people in the community by offering courses at different times (e.g., after 5pm on weekdays, on weekends) or providing new courses to cover different topics and more advanced skills.
- **Printing and photocopying services** have been very affordable and valued by patrons, yet the regional libraries have struggled to purchase ink, paper, and service the machines, resulting in service disruptions that have frustrated patrons and library staff.
- **Books and other materials** play an important role in supporting education and recreation according to patrons and educators. NLAS purchased books for the libraries until the budget cuts of FY 2017-2018, and the libraries have had some success in expanding their collections through donations.
- **Study spaces** benefited secondary learners and students by providing them with a place to study and concentrate on their work.
- The most popular **business section services** were ones that helped patrons find and apply for jobs. Patrons wanted the library to offer more workshops and trainings related to business development and vocational skills, as the libraries had started to do during their first couple years of operation. Patrons also saw opportunities for the libraries to support their career and educational advancement by working more closely with government agencies and post-secondary institutions.
- The children's section of the library led several types of **reading programs for children** with the aim to support basic literacy and encourage reading among young children, effectively growing the local reading culture.
- **School library services** support schools throughout the region by working closely with them to set up and operate school libraries. Budget constraints have limited the ability of these librarians to travel to schools and train teachers to run their libraries.
- **Outreach services** were scaled back due to budget cuts and grounded mobile library units. None of the vehicles were operating due to lack of funds for maintenance, petrol, and sustenance for the staff conducting outreach. Staff and key informants recognized the importance of outreach services to remote communities and have sought ways to provide the service, if only at a reduced capacity, with mixed success.

5.3.2. Introduction

This section examines services offered by the regional libraries—specifically the provision of, use of, importance of, and satisfaction with each service—while considering the factors that shape service quality and demand. The evaluators' purpose is to answer evaluation question #2: *What types of resources and programming are the regional libraries providing?* Furthermore,

by describing how patrons use these services, the evaluators revisit evaluation question #3: *Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do?* Also, the section touches upon the sustainability of provision of services, addressing evaluation question #5: *How sustainable are the regional libraries?* (Please refer to Section 6.2 for discussions for further discussions on sustainability.)

The results presented below focus on nine services the evaluators understand to be the most significant offerings at the library as demonstrated by service popularity or importance, both actual and potential. These are also services the library was designed and equipped to provide from the outset, as evidenced in multiple planning documents (see Sey & Fellows, 2016:67-68). Services are presented in no particular order.

- Computers and internet/Wi-Fi
- Computer training
- Printing and copying
- Library collections (books)
- Study spaces
- Business section services
- Children's reading programs
- School library services
- Outreach services

The library provides other types of services not discussed here, including social spaces (where people can talk or play games with others), community meeting spaces (a well-used gathering hall and meeting rooms), programs for youth and community programming (such as debate club and yoga), and events to celebrate national holidays (such as Independence Day).

Data sources: This section in general draws heavily from qualitative data, including FGDs with regional library users (use, importance, satisfaction), interviews with staff (provision, importance), and interviews with key informants (provision). It is also informed by quantitative data from the patron survey (use, satisfaction). However, certain sub-sections are mostly based on staff interviews, including: 5.3.8 Business section services, 5.3.9 Children's reading programs, 5.3.10 School libraries, and 5.3.11 Outreach services. In particular, regarding 5.3.9 Children's reading programs, information on the children user group comes from the perceptions of staff because no children below the age of 15 participated in this evaluation.

5.3.3 Computers and internet/Wi-Fi

Key Findings

- **Internet/computer services are in high demand.** These services are well-used by all groups and are described by many patrons as a needed/essential service. Also, given comments from library patrons, demand for computers may be exceeding supply.

- o Consider that many patrons visit the regional libraries to use the internet and computers (Section 5.2), and the majority of user groups analyzed don't appear to have an alternative to the regional libraries (Section 5.2).
- **There is ample room for improvement**, as evidenced by high rates of dissatisfaction (along with satisfaction) in surveys and comments from FGDs. People are invested in this service and many seem dependent on it.
- **Internet speed and quality have a direct impact on the number of visitors to the library.** This was heard from staff, and it is reflected in administrative data.
- **Computers appear to work fine with consistent maintenance and repair. However, without dedicated attention, computers tend to have problems.** (e.g. Omaheke's computers experienced increasing challenges without a lead IT person.)

Provision

The regional libraries are equipped with public access computers to provide opportunities for patrons to become more familiar with computers, search useful information, and create basic documents or files (IREX, 2013). There are also computers in business and children's sections, but this part of the report mostly addresses findings on public access computers. internet/Wi-Fi can be used free of charge via library computers or personal devices (e.g. smartphones, personal laptops). Wi-Fi, when it is operational, is accessible both inside and outside the library building.

Purchasing and installation of IT equipment had been completed by the end of the Compact period. The implementation partners and MCA-N succeeded in equipping the three regional libraries with computers, fiber internet connections, and other related equipment before the libraries opened to the public (Sey & Fellows, 2016: 33).

Four years after the Compact closed, nearly all of the computers in Ohangwena and Oshana were in good condition, yet many of the public computers in Omaheke no longer functioned. As of October 2018, all but one or two desktops were functioning at the Ohangwena and Oshana libraries. Interview participants generally viewed IT staff as effective at computer maintenance and repair. However, the Omaheke library had several broken computers, which were attributed to previous lapses in computer maintenance, computer repair, and anti-virus protection. According to various staff members, four of six computers in the business section no longer worked due to viruses, 10 of 14 children's computers were out of order due to broken ports, and the remaining four children's computers were not available for patrons due to broken keyboards the library has not been able to replace (keyboards breaking had also been a problem at Oshana, but the library had been able to replace them). And although most of the desktops in the IT section were still working, several were not functional due to a lapse in computer maintenance when some computers had accumulated too much dust. Meanwhile, Omaheke also had only one of its 10 laptops functioning—allegedly others had been distributed to staff and were either lost or broken.

Problems with computer maintenance in Omaheke might be traced back to staffing challenges. Administrative data suggests the senior system administrator position was vacant for the library's first two years. With no one to lead the IT section, one staff person felt the section had been "neglected" and "didn't have direction" until the position was filled in December 2016.

The regional libraries needed software upgrades. Staff respondents in the IT section described having machines that were running Windows 7 (released in 2009) and Microsoft Office 2010. In 2017, staff at the Ohangwena and Omaheke libraries had been denied funds to purchase anti-virus software, being encouraged to use free versions instead. Staff had no knowledge of any plan to purchase new software or upgrades. In response, in 2018, at one location, an IT staff person described paying for software licenses out-of-pocket.

The library doesn't have any license for any software. So what I did last year, I used to pay for the licenses myself from my salary because they're not too much anyway if you look at them. It's something like a thousand bucks, two thousand, so I used to pay for the license myself. But then this year I told myself that I'm not paying for any license because these people have become too reluctant because they know I'll do something out of my own initiative. So this year I didn't pay for any license for the library except for the anti-virus. That's the only thing I paid for.

There was no plan in place to replace public computers, peripherals, or other IT equipment. Staff at the three regional libraries acknowledge the computers will need to be replaced, and a few expressed strong concerns that there was no dedicated budget or plan in place to do so. It appeared that concern about computer replacement had not reached the higher administrative level because few key informants in the MoEAC broached the topic, and the one who did speak about the need to eventually replace the library's computers perceived the issue as "not too serious."

A key informant mentioned how the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology can potentially support the regional libraries in keeping their IT equipment up to date:

Ministry of Information [Ministry of Information and Communication Technology] can support the regional libraries, they can support them in many ways. They can even say...okay I will provide within my budget I will make sure that your IT equipment's always up-to-date they are at par a global level and so on that is the area where the Ministry of IT can come in very strong.

The regional libraries' internet contract with Telecom was successfully renegotiated in late 2017. As noted in the interim report, the regional MoEAC offices struggled to cover monthly internet expenses in the libraries' first three years of operations, and staff and key informants voiced their concerns about the sustainability of internet provision in the light of budget cuts (Coward et al., 2019: 105). Fortunately, a new contract negotiated between the MoEAC and Telecom in late 2017 offered dramatically better conditions for the libraries: the cost of internet provision was brought down to approximately one-third of the previous price (negotiated by MCA-N in 2014) and provided 50% more bandwidth.

Internet connection speed varied greatly across the three regional libraries. In Ohangwena, the new contract—along with fixing their previous issue with the network’s firewall—has resulted in a “very fast” internet connection. In Oshana, the internet speed had improved somewhat from the prior contract but was considerably slower than it should have been because the high-speed fiber was not being used; rather, all patrons and staff got online only through ADSL. At Omaheke, internet connectivity continued to be poor in the eyes of staff and patrons. At the time of interviews, the speed appeared to be at least as slow as under the prior contract. Staff at Oshana and Omaheke suspected Telecom had slowed their connection due to unpaid bills. According to one staff person at Omaheke:

So it’s something they [patrons] complain about daily to say, “Your internet is very slow”...Now it’s back but it’s very, very slow. Actually, not slow but extremely slow. It’s only fast after hours and in the morning before users start coming in. But in the afternoon, even emails you’ll take a lot of minutes to load.

Two of the three libraries left their Wi-Fi on at night, allowing locals to access the internet from outside the library. During the 2018 staff interviews, the evaluators learned Ohangwena had begun offering Wi-Fi after hours and Oshana continued to do so. The exception was Omaheke, which turns off the Wi-Fi at closing time, frustrating patrons who need Wi-Fi after hours, according to FGDs: *“Sometimes I want to use the internet and I knock off late and then I find the library closed and they switch off the Wi-Fi when they close at four o’clock.”*

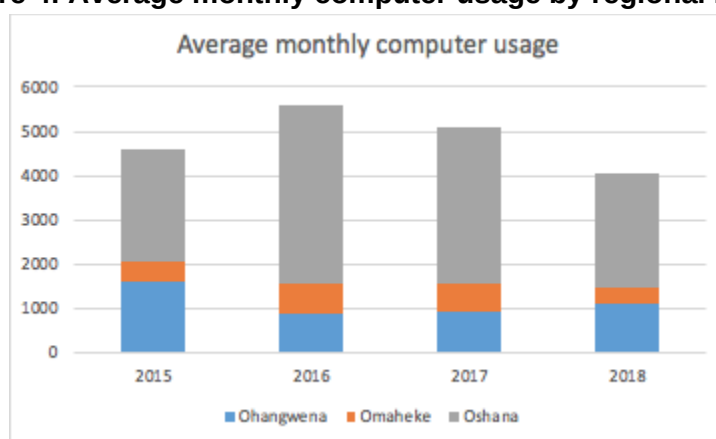
Usage

MCA-N did not establish a target for the number of computer uses, so the evaluators cannot determine if results on computer use fall above or below the expectations of the implementation partners.

Library patrons used the computers approximately 192 times per day in 2018 on average, according to administrative data.^{16,17,18} However, it is important to note that figure was less than in 2017 (244 times per day) and 2016 (265 times per day). The data suggests the number of computer uses per day dropped by 27% between 2016 and 2018.

Computer usage has declined at the Oshana and Omaheke libraries and increased at the Ohangwena library. Looking at the average number of computer sessions between 2016 and 2018, the number of average uses by month decreased by 49% in Omaheke and 35% in Oshana over this two-year period, while rising 25% in Ohangwena. The evaluators believe the falling numbers in Omaheke and Oshana may be attributed to their slow internet speeds, and, in the case of Omaheke, lack of functional computers in the children's and business sections of the library.

Figure 4: Average monthly computer usage by regional library



¹⁶ Total number of computer uses across the three libraries were: 50492 in 2015, 60046 in 2016, 59164 in 2017, and 47898 in 2018.

¹⁷ The daily number of users takes data gaps into account. Specifically, the number is calculated by dividing the total number of uses in one year by the average number of months for which data was submitted by the libraries (e.g., the 2016 total is divided by 10.3 months because two libraries submitted 11 months of data, and one library submitted 9 months of data that year) divided by an average of 22 weekdays per month. We did not account for holidays (doing so would have slightly increased the average number of computer uses per day, but this would not have affected year to year comparisons) or Saturdays (doing so would be expected to further decrease the average number of computer uses per day for some libraries in some months in 2017 and 2018). We chose to exclude months for which no data was submitted in these averages because to do otherwise would amount to undercounting actual usage. However, we do not know how many computer uses would have been reported in those months, and it is possible that if those data existed, they would lower the average daily number of computer uses because over half of the missing data would have been from the library with the lowest usage figures.

¹⁸ "Computer uses" data is calculated by counting the names listed on computer sign-in sheets in the IT, business, and children's sections of the library. Because patrons who use the computer for consecutive sessions only need to sign in once, this figure can roughly be translated into the number of people who used a computer on a given day, but only roughly because people who engage in non-consecutive computer sessions in a single day may need to sign in multiple times.

Internet connectivity has a profound influence over the number of visitors to the library.

In 2017 and 2018, staff respondents stated fewer people visited the library in moments when it was offline. For example, *“I feel like the computers and the internet...that’s the core of this library, to be honest, because you should come one day when there’s no internet here. You’ll find this library empty.”* The evaluators saw this play out most clearly at the Omaheke Regional Library, which lost its internet connection for a few months in late 2017 and early 2018. Consequently, the number of patrons visiting dropped significantly and had not recovered at the time of the 2018 interviews. A staff person at the venue described the situation:

Our internet was completely cut off due to non-payment, so we had to tell our users not to come to the library. But it’s only a few maybe who were...relying on books, but the rest of them, especially the young generation who rely on the internet, they just wouldn’t come. [And in the time since the internet got back on], the [visitation] figures are not pleasant. The figures have actually dropped drastically.

Computer and personal internet usage were high among learners/students and business section patrons.

As expected, nearly all respondents were aware that those services are available at the library— and of those, the vast majority used the services. For library computers, 100% of learners/students and business section patrons in the patron survey were aware and of those who were aware, 85% of learners/students and 91% of business section patrons had used it. For Wi-Fi, 99% of learners/students and 100% of business section patrons were aware of the service and of those who were aware, 91% of learners/students and 95% of business section patrons had used it.

Computer use policies have room for flexibility for school, research, or job-related uses.

Generally, the policy at the three regional libraries was that adults could use the computer for a one-hour session before they will be automatically logged off the computer. However, staff made exceptions for patrons using the computer for school, research, or job-related purposes, (allowing 90 minutes or more) or when no other patrons are waiting for a computer (patrons can ask staff for an additional session without being logged off after 60 minutes).

Importance

The provision of the internet is very important, according to patrons. This was true throughout library user groups. For example, focus group participants mentioned the following:

[Learner FGD] *The most important thing for me is the internet because it helps me with my schoolwork. I can always find information on the internet if I have trouble with my schoolwork.*

[Business section FGD] *I would say internet. You can get a lot of things from the internet and that includes whatever information you are looking for; you can get it from the internet and be updated.*

[Educator FGD] *[The library] is very important indeed especial[ly] to school that does not have internet. It is very much crucial for teachers to come here and at least get the necessary information from this library and update themselves to the current information.*

Computers/Wi-Fi were also voiced by many business panel respondents as the most important resource the regional library provides, with several expanding on how this supports their job-related tasks:

What I value the most is the library resources, specifically the computers, because without them and the internet I would not have access to the vacancy sites that I search on.

Even if the library is closed you can still come and access the internet and do your stuff especially when you have something very important like applying for work which is due.

Staff also consistently saw the importance of providing access to ICTs:

Some people or most, they do not even have technology at home and the library is the only place where they can get free computer for them to sit, free internet, free everything at the library.

In the patron survey, when asked “why do you choose to come to the regional library instead of going to a different place for your educational needs?” around two-thirds of all patron respondents answered that the regional library is the only place in the area with the resources they need. Among those who answered this way, half of survey respondents indicated the internet was the most important service provided by the library (52%) when given the options of internet, books, computers, or other resource (followed by books (25%) and computers (24%)).

Satisfaction

A significant percent of patrons responded they are satisfied with the free and/or reliable Wi-Fi/internet. For the patron survey question asking the three most satisfactory library features, 23% of learners/students and 34% of business section patrons mentioned free and/or reliable Wi-Fi/internet. In comparison, 6% of learners/students and 5% of business section patrons mentioned Wi-Fi/internet speed and availability as one of the three most dissatisfactory features in the library.

Relatively fewer but a notable percentage of respondents mentioned availability of computers as one of the three most satisfactory features in the library (15% of learners/students, 16% of business section patrons).

Patrons and staff described multiple sources of dissatisfaction with library computers and internet. Around 5% of learners/students and 10% of business section patrons who responded to patron survey mentioned there needs to be improvement in library computers (in

terms of more computers needed, more time allocated for use, memory sticks should be allowed to use for all computers, etc.)

Patrons in FGDs described being dissatisfied with the internet speed and not being able to use the computers as much as they would like to:

- **Internet/Wi-Fi speed.** A slow internet/Wi-Fi connection was a common complaint heard in FGDs and the patron survey at all libraries.
- **Computer availability.** Some patrons said they were having to wait too long to use a computer. A post-secondary student illustrates this: *“There are times where you find computers upstairs occupied. Maybe you come here morning time, but you might find five people already in the queue... You will be waiting and waiting.”* Among survey respondents who don’t use the public computers, 7% responded they do not use public computers because they’re always in use. At all three venues, there were focus group discussants who mentioned that more computers are needed.
- **Length of computer sessions.** Multiple focus group participants wanted more time on the computers, as they had found it difficult to finish tasks within the allocated time.
- A small number of patrons had more specific complaints about library policies:
- **Computer policies should be clear and consistent.** A few focus group participants expressed confusion over which computers they could use (upstairs or downstairs). Others were frustrated that some patrons were not fully aware they could use the computers for extra time to finish their work if they had requested more time from IT staff. Still, a few other patrons at Oshana were unhappy that staff would let only some people have additional time on a computer or move ahead in the queue for a computer.
- **Computers should accept patrons’ USB flash drives.** According to patrons, the drives are prohibited in Oshana and there are a lot of computers which do not accommodate USBs in Ohangwena.

5.3.4 Computer training

Key Findings

- Over a three-year period, more than 3,000 community members participated in free basic computer training at the regional libraries.
- A decline in the number of computer training participants toward the end of the evaluation period, along with feedback from patrons and staff, suggest the library should provide more advanced computer training opportunities for communities.
- There is evidence that more community members could benefit from basic computer training if it was offered outside of the regular operating hours of Monday through Friday.

Provision

The three regional libraries have provided computer training to patrons on a mostly consistent basis since 2015. Courses were offered Monday through Friday and lasted up to three weeks. Courses were taught by library staff in a computer training room equipped with 12 or more computers and projection equipment. We learned that two of the locations had begun to have problems with the projectors in the training rooms, believing they would need to be replaced soon.

Usage

In both 2017 and 2018, more than 1,000 patrons participated in a basic computer training class. According to a staff member: *“Last year we trained teachers, we trained learners, we trained the community members, we trained the students. We also trained—okay, I remember we trained one headman...of the village... And the community members they were a lot. I cannot recall the figure now but they were a lot.”*

Table 14: Number of participants in basic computer training annually (all patrons)

	2016	2017	2018	Totals
Ohangwena	262	465	428	1,155
Omaheke	25	228	211	464
Oshana	250	903	614	1,767
Totals	537	1,596	1,253	3,386

The total number of computer training participants peaked in 2017, a pattern consistent across the three regional libraries.

Staff interviews at the Omaheke and Oshana libraries confirmed a decrease in computer training participants from 2017 to 2018 but could not pinpoint a clear reason for the decrease. Staff suggested the library may have been successful at meeting demand, and that most community members who wanted to take a class—who lived nearby and could attend during the library's operating hours—already had done so. To some extent, this was supported by panel interview data collected as of early 2017—20% of learners and around 38% of business section participants had already received ICT/computer training.

This trend led staff in Omaheke and Ohangwena to talk about the need for the library to adapt the class so they could reach more community members, and these staff were developing ways

to do so, by: (1) offering an advanced class so patrons could continue building their skills, (2) offering computer training classes outside of regular operating hours so working people could participate, or (3) delivering computer training outside of the library's walls using the mobile library unit or other vehicle. e.g., "The problem is transport... They want to learn but it's very far."

However, saturation of demand was not the full story. A small proportion of library patrons indicated they did not know how to use a computer or did not know the classes were offered. Among survey respondents that had not used a computer, 7% indicated the reason was because they did not know how to use a computer. At Oshana, 14% of people who had not used a computer at the library said it was because they didn't know how. Also, a few focus group discussants at the libraries mentioned they did not know computer training was available, that certificates were awarded for completion, or that the class was for free. During panel interviews, at least six learners and four business section patrons mentioned they did not know the library offered any type of training programs.

Importance

Computer training continued to benefit library patrons. In 2017, computer training was described by some staff as one of the library's most successful services (Coward et al., 2019: 113-115). FGDs in 2018 revealed patrons continued to see training as beneficial:

My life is different because I attended the computer classes and now I know how to use the computer, plus also know how to use the different application[s] on the computer.

[The library] helped me because the first time I did not know how to use the computer...But now I know because I attended computer training here...Even if somebody ask me to teach her or him how to use the computer, I will be able to teach them because now I know how to use it...And I can even get a job with the certificate I got...a job where I am required to use a computer.

Staff emphasized the importance of teaching young people how to use computers and the internet, especially in preparation for university:

So when I went to university, in my first semester I was really struggling to use the computer. I didn't know how to switch on the computer, how to use the computer. So now we don't want our learners here to be the same, to be in the same situation where I was. That's why most of the time we call them to come here and then we train them on how to use the computer, how to use the internet, how to use the internet to apply to the universities, how to create emails. So we want them to know. By the time they're in university they know everything when it comes to the basics, they know basic techniques. They know how to use the computer, they know how to use the internet, so not like us in those days.

Satisfaction

Several participants of focus groups and staff interviews in 2017 and 2018 were concerned that the regional libraries' computer training only scratched the surface.

Although the evaluators heard anecdotes about patrons who had claimed the training helped them obtain a job, a staff person indicated these introductory courses would not necessarily get participants to a place where they could reliably use a computer on the job. Some patrons echoed the need for more advanced training.

5.3.5 Printing and copying

Key Findings

- Printing, photocopying, and scanning services benefit patrons, including by supporting business and job-search activities.
- However, due to budget constraints and planning issues, it became difficult for libraries to buy ink and paper or fix the machines in a timely manner, causing disruptions in printing services that frustrated patrons and library staff.

Provision

Each library was equipped with photocopying machines and computer printers so community members could copy pages from books, print business materials, print resumes or other documents, and library staff could print library cards and other documents. The libraries charged a small fee for printing, so the service also generated some revenue.

Providing printing and photocopying services has been challenging, especially under budget constraints. The difficulties pertained to repairing the machines and purchasing ink cartridges. In Ohangwena, out of five printers and two photocopying machines they had, none of the printers worked. In fact, Ohangwena had suspended printing services to the public—color printing stopped in March 2017 and black-and-white printing ceased in July 2018. In Oshana, only two of eleven printers/photocopiers were in use. In Omaheke, only one printer/photocopier was working.

There are also delays in procurement caused by not planning ahead. A key informant mentioned:

You know, we have a new Procurement Act...And that Procurement Act now is also making the process of procuring things very slow...So what the librarian do because they don't want to go through this process, and they also don't plan in advance, they just see themselves sometimes like, "Ooh, I don't have a toner today, Library Council [Namibia Library and Information Council (NLIC)]." And Library Council will say "No", but you're supposed to plan in advance that, "I have

a budget, this much. I should buy how many toners. And these toners will take me until when?" Without proper planning, then it becomes a problem. Because they don't want this fund to be used like every day. So, planning is not there. That's why they will really get so frustrated...

Usage

Nearly all patrons are aware of printing services, with high rates of usage among target groups. The majority of student/learner survey respondents were aware of printing/photocopying/scanning services (95%), and 76% of those who were aware of the services indicated they had used it. In comparison, for business section patrons, 97% of respondents were aware of the service, and 92% of those who were aware had used it.

Importance

Free or affordable printing, photocopying and scanning services are important for work- and study-related use by patrons. FGDs illustrate that the service supported educator meetings, business activities, and job searches:

The teachers from different schools from that circuit cluster all meet to set up the question papers for that cluster. Than we sit in one of those rooms down there we set up the questions. We make use of the printing for free.

We do not spend a huge amount of money to make copies here and it doesn't matter whether you want to make a bundle of 200 pages copies, it's still just for 50 cent each page. (Interviewer: So you are making copies for your business?) Yeah, for the company documents in terms of tender applications and everything.

[M]aybe you got a job on the internet and would like to apply, then you can scan your documents for free, elsewhere scanning is very expensive. It's a very nice and actually a big advantage since it is very helpful, so you scan your documents and apply for your job online.

A staff person explained how printing/photocopying services—when available—can benefit learners and students in preparing for exams, since there is a limited number of books available in the library:

This month because learners are preparing for exams, the numbers of learners continues to be high. But also the books that are there may not be enough for everyone. So if we had photocopy services, they can make copies for themselves then they can use them.

The poor condition of printers/photocopiers adversely affects library operations in generating revenue and assisting staff. In terms of influence on revenue, two staff mentioned:

These are the ones that are helping us to generate the small income...we are depositing to the national library. Now, if the two goes we are sunk, we are in trouble.

The business section also is one section whereby in the past we used to generate a lot of money from photocopying and printing. This year now we're not making money because there's no paper, there's no cartridge. Once we make money from the printing and photocopying... maybe we have some activities that the library wants to carry out, that money actually assists us.

Satisfaction

Printing/photocopying was an area mentioned as high in dissatisfaction during the FGDs, namely that the services were not available:

Sometimes we come to the library just to make photocopies for applications. Like the jobs that was advertised here for Ministry of Education. We came to the point where we were disappointed because the library was out of ink for a very long time [Other discussants also mumbling between themselves say it has been a very long time that the library has been without ink].

[T]he things I am doing online, I cannot print or make copies of, I have to save it on a USB or email to my inbox. The library is good, apart from that we can't make copies or print because there is no ink.

Sometimes you want to print out something, and you just want to apply [for a job] urgently, and then you find out there is no paper or ink and the due date is like today.

The services for me are not the same as they were in the beginning. I gave homework to the children the other day and they told me that there is no ink at the library.

In the patron survey, around 2% of learners/students and 7% of business section patrons mentioned availability of printing/copying services as one of the three most dissatisfactory features in the library.

5.3.6 Library collections (books)

Key Findings

- Patrons have benefited from using books and other materials at the regional libraries, and they believe it is important the library provides them.
- Educators believed the library plays an important role in allowing learners to access books, supporting educators with teaching resources, and promoting reading culture.

- The libraries have increased the size of their collections through book purchases and donations. However, patrons pointed to ongoing gaps in the collection, suggesting that general book donations cannot replace the value of book purchases oriented toward intentional collection development.
- Although awareness of book lending service is high, actual use of the service is relatively less. This might be related to the mismatch between the books available and books demanded.

Provision

The size of the libraries' collections had grown by the end of the evaluation period, due to a combination of purchasing books and receiving donations. At the time of the Component 1 report, there were some concerns around the sufficiency of the number of books in the library—in particular, a large order of 12,000 volumes was canceled because they were not delivered before the Compact's deadline of September 16, 2014 (Sey & Fellows, 2016: 46). From staff interviews, it was found that the sizes of collections have been growing, especially in Oshana. It appeared that NLAS regularly provided the libraries with books in 2016 and 2017, before the country's economic downturn started. In Oshana, a staff person mentioned that they wrote a proposal to an external organization and received more than 40,000 books (most of them being English novels), many of which were given to school libraries. Omaheke has received books from USAID through the head office around three times each year in 2017 and 2018, and a donation from the U.S. Embassy (the donated books were mostly textbooks and fiction). Ohangwena also received books from USAID in early 2018.

During key informant interviews, at least three interviewees described how there were challenges in securing a budget for book purchase—one mentioned there was no book purchase by NLAS in the 2017 and 2018 financial years. In this situation, book donations from external organizations (e.g. USAID) seem to have played a significant role.

There seems to be a high demand for books in local languages, yet the library has been having a hard time acquiring these books for several reasons. A staff person said there is a high demand from the people, but mentioned it is difficult to get the books because of a limited number of publications, a lack of budget to purchase them, and difficulties in selecting the books as librarians themselves do not speak the language:

[B]ooks in indigenous language—they are not there...Reason number one they are not there because they are hardly being published. Publishing in vernacular, people find it you are limiting yourself [because] the sales would only be around here. If you publish it in English they would sell [in] the whole country. So, when they look at that they get scared to publish in vernacular. Number two is the budget to buy those books, the few that are available in vernacular. Third reason I might be a stumbling block as well because I don't speak that language and therefore when it comes to selecting the best book it becomes very difficult for me. I rely on my colleagues to tell me maybe, "This one is very good, this one is good." I have very little knowledge on that one. You know I'm not from this area.

Digital resources are accessible for patrons, but DVDs need to be updated and the use of academic digital resources needs to be promoted. One key informant mentioned there was a recent subscription to eBooks. A staff person suggested the latest educational DVDs should be in place, e.g. on subjects such as science and English for grades 10 and 12. Regarding electronic academic resources, two key informants mentioned how there has been a low usage of EBSCOhost, although it is very expensive to provide the service:

[O]n electronic resources also, there is EBSCOhost database, it's costing a lot to renew that database... The challenge is about us the librarians who are not making use of the resources that are available, or we are not telling our users that, you come here looking for this book and we don't have it, but here we have a database where you can find information. If you look at the statistics is not only for the three regional libraries, [but also] countrywide, the usage is very minimum but we are paying a lot of money and people are not making use of the service.

Subsequent key informant interviews indicated that some libraries may be discontinuing their EBSCOhost subscriptions for cost reasons. While understandable from a budgetary standpoint, this step will further exacerbate the lack of resources.

Usage

In general, although many patrons are aware of the library's book lending service, a relatively lower proportion of them has borrowed a book. As assessed in the patron survey, 93% of learners/students indicated they were aware books could be borrowed, and of those who were aware, 61% had done so. Similarly, although most business section patrons were aware, they could borrow books (88%), this service was not used as much (only 43% of those who are aware).

One key informant's comment implied the possible reason behind low figures for book borrowing is due to the lack of new books: "*[A]fter they have read all the books, they are no longer interested in taking [books] unless you bring in new things.*"

Among the three locations, book borrowing is the highest in Ohangwena. This was evident across the patron type. For learners/students, among those who were aware of book lending service, respondents in Ohangwena (71%) were more likely to borrow books compared to Omaheke (62%) and Oshana (47%). The trend was also similar for business section patrons—50% in Ohangwena compared to 43% in Omaheke and 30% in Oshana.

However, as mentioned in Section 5.1.6, **low figures for book borrowing may not necessarily indicate that a library's printed resources are not popular.** For example, booklets for exam preparation were found to be very popular among learners (as FGDs inform us), but these materials could only be used within the library.

Importance

Patrons are benefiting from reading books at the library. During the FGDs, many learners/students described how reading library books helped them in completing their schoolwork:

I had a problem with the accounting but when I came here, I found books with questions and answers that gave me a clue on the whole subject and the different topics that I was struggling with. That is how I improve.

I think the books are very useful. They have the textbooks same one as the one the teachers are using. They also have the type of booklets that the teachers use and which is very helpful.

The books are helping. We were given a task to write the effect of air pollution. I came here and got the book about air pollution and I found some information that I used to write my essay.

A business section patron mentioned how reading a library book helped build work-related skills:

I was actually just appointed as acting supervisor at my work, so I didn't have leadership skills. I came to the library to do research about books on the topic and I found a very interesting book that I am currently using now on how to do my work, it is a very nice book and it's helpful.

Educators recognize the importance of collections in the library. During the FGDs, educators mentioned that the library plays an important role in allowing learners to access books, supporting educators with teaching resources, and promoting reading culture:

Whenever the government can't provide enough books for learners, especially for book review, learners can come to the library and borrow books, and they can make use of it—by that it [is] really helping the learners.

Teachers can make use of the books and the internet to search for additional information to aid with their teaching.

The library is very important for learners coming from low income households, as they may not have easy access to study resources. A key informant mentioned:

...the disadvantaged kid who doesn't have, or the parent can't afford all these resources and sitting in a class without a textbook, so that's why we make available for them to come in the afternoon to the library and have access to it and do extra.

Satisfaction

Patrons in general are neither particularly satisfied nor dissatisfied with the availability of books of interest or range of books in the libraries. For the patron survey question asking the three aspects of library features that patrons are most satisfied with, 6% and 8% of all patrons mentioned range of books and the availability of books of interest, respectively. As the three most dissatisfactory library features, 5% and 3% of all patrons mentioned range of books and the availability of books of interest, respectively.

As was found in the interim report, the libraries continue to lack certain types of books. For example, one panel respondent mentioned: *"The only negative thing that impacted me is that during the exams, there is a shortage of booklets because more learners are in need of them."* The FGD participants cited the following types of books as what the libraries currently lack in terms of numbers and/or variety (the list may not be comprehensive):

- Ohangwena: Educational books (on psychology, economics, mathematics such as calculus books, and textbooks), novels, grades 10 and 12 booklets for exam preparation.
- Omaheke: Educational books (on science, leadership, and management), grade 12 books, novels (e.g. to be used for plays for primary school level), books on anger management, books on religion.
- Oshana: Project management books, and grades 10 and 12 booklets for preparing exams.

It is notable that around 17% of learners/students and 15% of business section patrons who responded to the patron survey mentioned that library collections need improvement (more number of books needed, specific types of books needed, needs assessment for books should be in place, more up-to-date newspapers needed, computer system for book searching is needed, and book borrowing information system needs upgrade).

Educators view the library books as not in alignment with the current curriculum and suggest that the Ministry of Education (or the libraries) should consult with educators on book selections. This is a significant issue considering that—as noted above—the libraries provide access to educational books for learners that might not be available elsewhere (e.g. in schools).

The books are also not aligned with our curriculum...I think that the Ministry should purchase some books for the library that can address or speak to the curriculum.

They are here but they are out of date, because currently after the revised curriculum we have, it's like two or three books that we can use...[Y]ou end up coming here and some books are English in context which you used years back.

Some patrons view books at the libraries as outdated. At least four FGD participants across the three libraries mentioned this:

They need to get new textbooks because currently they have old textbooks and also [they need to have] new storybooks.

Most of the books that are here, is [are] the books that I have seen since 2015. There are a few new books here and there but very old books.

I didn't see any booklets [for exam preparation] for 2017 here and all the ones I have seen here are old, for 2016 only.

Sometime[s] you come across that what you found is what you are looking for. Apart from that there are times where by a lecturer might give you certain book that you need to look for or you are given an assignment and he will tell you that with this assignment I want you to reference started from [published between] a certain year to a certain year. That use to be a problem mostly here. I came across that several time whereby they tell you that you should reference from 2000. But most books are published in the '90s and that became a problem as most of the books here are published those years.

An educator's comment showed how they supplement the library's book collection by accessing online links shared by a regional school librarian:

The regional school librarian provided us with educational website links we can search and download activities related to the school subjects we are teaching. Some of the books in the library are relevant but outdated, so I get a variety of information from those links.

5.3.7 Study spaces

Key Findings

- Patrons, particularly learners/students, are benefiting from the study space as it provides a place for them to concentrate on their work away from their home.
- Despite the importance and benefits perceived, there exist sources of dissatisfaction and limitations regarding use rules, the size of the space, and noise level.

Provision

Each of the three regional libraries have study halls, study rooms (smaller than the size of study halls), and carrels as study spaces. From observations, study halls seemed to be used mainly by learners/students to quietly study on their own. During observations, it was found that at least one location used the study hall to hold exams (at the time of observation, the study hall was being temporarily locked to organize for exams in one venue).

Usage

Study spaces are one of the most popular resources at the regional libraries. The survey showed that the vast majority (97%) of students/learners were aware of study spaces, and of those who were aware, 94% had used it. Observations repeatedly confirmed that the study rooms upstairs were well used. Specific use of study spaces included studying using books or booklets and using laptops.

Importance

Patrons highly value the study spaces of the regional libraries, not only as a place where they can concentrate on their work, but also as a place that can help elevate people's economic status in the long-term. Some learners/students' responses reflected the significance of quiet study space provided by the regional libraries—away from home and people who might cause distraction—in helping them concentrate on their schoolwork:

The library helps me a lot because there is a study room that I use because there is not enough time at home to study so I come and study here. There is no stress and screaming at the library.

Because when I study from home I don't really catch things/concentrate but when I'm here it is better for me to study.

It's very nice here since it's quiet and you can read peacefully and catch up with your studies than being at home whereby whenever you seem to be busy reading then a friend might come by and call you out of the house for some other activities.

A learner perceived possible long-term impact of the study space and its use:

Let's look at people who are living in poverty for example. These learners that are studying in that environment where there is noise pollution due to the bars, so during examination times it's difficult for learners to study. The library is there for the learners to make use of the study rooms and I feel that the library can also reduce poverty because of that.

Satisfaction

In the patron survey, around 9% of learners/students mentioned study space as one of the top three satisfactory features of the library. In comparison, 4% of business section patrons mentioned study space. The difference between the patron groups might be due to a greater number of learners/students using the study space compared to business section patrons.

Despite the perceived benefits and importance of study space, there were also aspects of dissatisfaction and limitations. This included not being able to freely talk in the study rooms

(e.g. to discuss homework), study space being too small or not having enough chairs and tables, and the absence of staff control over noise level and behavior of learners:

It's just that sometimes when you go inside and you are studying with a friend and it happens that there is something that one of you do not to understand; the bad part is that you can't help each other because you are not allowed to talk to one another in the study rooms. If you are studying, then you must just study on your own and no discussions.

[Oshana] *I am not comfortable with the study room. It is very too small it does not cater everyone*

[Ohangwena] *This is the only library in this area of Ohangwena and it caters most of the villages here,...but when it comes to the exam time I have observed it used to be full. The area is small and in future they must expand it and make it bigger.*

[Omaheke] *The study rooms do not have enough chairs and tables.*

When the staff member who is responsible to ensure order in the study rooms, when he did not to show up at work on that day, some learners take advantage of that and they start making noise and misbehaving.

5.3.8 Business section services

Key Findings

- The libraries offered some services to assist patrons with job search-related activities and business development.
- Budget cuts led to a sharp decrease in the number of business and job-related workshops and trainings provided, while patrons desired more of them.
- The most highly used services in the library's business and research section relate to searching and applying for jobs.
- Patrons saw an opportunity for the regional libraries to play an active role in job placement by working closely with government agencies and private employers.
- Patrons saw an opportunity for the library to provide career-related programs targeting youth that could be carried out in collaboration with post-secondary institutions.

Provision

The business section was designed to provide resources, services, and programs including: business information and materials, ministerial information resources, designated computers and printers, SME development resources, job search- or job preparation-related services and programs (e.g. CV workshop, job application and interview prep), programs targeting farmers, business training, etc. (IREX, 2013)

The three regional libraries provided a variety of services and trainings targeted at job-seekers, entrepreneurs, and small business owners since opening in late 2014, although the nature and frequency of these services varied by location and over time. Generally, job and career related services included one-on-one assistance with job-seekers, particularly while using computers, helping them with searching and applying for jobs online, preparing CVs, and setting up email accounts. The regional libraries also offered occasional training sessions for job-seekers on these topics, including ones for targeted populations like learners and out-of-school youth. Staff also searched for job vacancy announcements in local papers to post on a noticeboard.

General services for entrepreneurs and small business owners included basic computer help for patrons working on research or business-research projects as well as periodic information sessions on topics like completing a business plan and best practices in agriculture. Library staff also reached out to other government agencies with questions on behalf of patrons and referred them to individuals at the agencies.

Job search or career guidance services/programs are offered in all three locations.

Specific types of the services/programs were explained during staff interviews. In Ohangwena, it was found that services related to job search or career guidance included: skills training, interview prep, CV/resume/cover letter prep, and learning how to write a scholarship application letter. In Omaheke, the main target population for job-search or career guidance programs/services was found to be youth who are in or out of school (“The people who are in school or about to leave school, like, for example, the grade 4s, and we also target the grade 10s because some of them actually drop out from school in grade 10 and then they start looking for a job”). The library assisted them in preparing their CV/resume/cover letter. However, adults could also use drop-in services to receive assistance with CV prep. In Oshana, at least one employer had used the library’s resources (computers) and space to provide job training on retail for the community, with the library promoting training on the radio.

A staff person had ideas for programs targeting unemployed youth, which can help them have work experience and earn money:

We’d love to have maybe something like clubs for the unemployed youth or the users who come to the library like in the afternoon. There was a time when we thought we could have like maybe some clubs just to keep them busy, sort of a car wash just for fundraising purposes also for the library, where we just teach them how to do this service and people paying them and they just save that money to help run the facility, and also maybe give them a certain portion just to encourage them.

During staff interviews, self-employment-related service goals of the libraries’ business section were mentioned as: to provide information for self-employed patrons on how to start or manage businesses and to share insightful business information with potential self-employed patrons. A staff person mentioned:

[T]hen for the business mostly it's those people who are just starting or who have not started yet a business and they just have this idea that they want to start a business so we just try to provide guidance to them as to how they can start up their business. Or they would need help with maybe planning a business or how to write a business plan then we'll give them some guidance there.

Women and farmers are regarded as target populations in business-related outreach or training services. Two staff in Omaheke mentioned:

Especially when we go out, we target the farmers... They need more books about livestock, how to take care of their stocks.

Like for the business, mostly our target would be the women. Mostly it's the women who are just sitting at home not doing anything. (Interviewer: So these ones wanting to start a business it's mostly women that you're trying to serve?) Yes, because even the group that I mentioned to you which we're supposed to start the [business] training, it's a group of women who showed the interest to say they would want to have the training.

Staff have worked to build partnerships with governmental organizations in providing business-related services or programs. For example, at least two staff mentioned how they are seeking to involve governmental organizations in providing business information sessions or trainings:

Of course I have pushed myself to get membership in the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry and we are now getting their support in terms of expertise. They will come here and talk to our community members but that happens very rarely.

[W]e plan to also involve the Ministry of Trade just to highlight to the groups that we'll be training how to register businesses and why it's important for them to register their business.

Moreover, at least two staff mentioned how they provide referral services to ministries. For example, they involved Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Trade, and Ministry of Immigration:

We also provide, we do referrals. For instance, if a farmer comes here and wants more information on agriculture, we have always a link within Ministry of Agriculture extension office nearby us here. We just call and say, "There's a farmer here. He needs to find about certain information on certain products. How he can start, for instance, a garden?" So we always do referrals.

[W]e also assist them with guiding, referring them to the Ministry of Trade, and any development. So when they approach us we always guide them, "This is what you need if you want to apply for... You must have these documents ready before going to them."

As I said if I have information, also for the Ministry of Immigration. We used to do a referral to the right institution, to the right ministry. If we don't have enough answer [so] we refer them.

However, a staff person mentioned how staff in the business section lack specialized knowledge in business-related services and programs:

The challenge there is because one, there is shortage of staff and two, both the librarian and the assistant librarian...they are not very well versed with the community programs, they don't know much...they are still not very well versed with the work of the business section because even in their reports, not many activities are undertaken. I usually tell the business librarian that you should go out get those community members here, get an inventory start a corner where you register them with the contacts.

Also, budget constraints affect the operations of the business-related services and programs—however, the library staff are seeking ways to continue offering them. A staff person's comment illustrates how budget constraints significantly affected the operation of business workshops or trainings:

Of late we haven't been meeting the targets because of the budget constraints. Like we have a number of, maybe we would say five workshops in a quarter, then at the end of the day maybe we'll only be able to do one or even nothing at all depending on the budget...If you want people to come, you have to provide lunch or something, maybe even just tea. And also the stationery that is going there like the flipchart paper, the training materials, maybe we need to print out handouts but we don't have money to do that.

Yet, another staff person mentioned how they are trying to continuously provide business training, even at a reduced capacity:

So workshop-wise we were affected but we haven't stopped. We have just tried to see how we can do them in a different way compared to the usual way that we were using to conduct our workshops...For instance, normally in our workshop we are, for instance, this SME workshop, it was a five-day workshop, so we're trying to cut it down to a day.

Other difficulties in running the business section stemmed from the library's operating hours (the library should be open after 5pm or on weekends for adults to attend business trainings) and the loss of support from the SME bank (which used to provide workshops at the library) as they recently went out of business.

Usage

Patrons use library resources for their business activities. According to a staff person in Oshana, patrons in small printing businesses use the library's printers:

[M]atters of publishing, greetings, certificates, business cards, and calendars, people are actually more interested in that one because we have a lot of people in this community who have no jobs and so now they're actually doing their small businesses printing business cards for the community members, but they still come to the library to print those business cards because it's actually cheaper to use the library for their printing.

Frequency of library use for job or career search-related purposes was quite high for business section patrons. Business section patron survey respondents answered that they have used the regional library on average 2 and 1.5 times to conduct a job search and learn about career opportunities (or seek career guidance) respectively, during the four weeks before the survey.

Among job search or career guidance-related services offered by the library, job vacancy announcements are relatively well known and used compared to others. 68% of business section patron respondents were aware of access to job vacancy announcements, whereas 37% and 43% were aware of career guidance and job application preparation support services respectively. Also, job vacancy information was well used (86% of those aware used it) compared to others—38% and 49% of those who were aware of career guidance and job application assistance respectively had used the services. This indicates room for improvement for the libraries in promoting job search and career guidance-related services to patrons, both in terms of their awareness and use.

Patrons use various resources and services for job searching and applying purposes. FGDs illustrated that patrons search or apply for jobs using the internet, access application forms, view job vacancy notice boards, scan documents for job applications, type CVs, and receive staff assistance for job application processes and CV prep in the library. A staff person in Omaheke mentioned that job search services (e.g. prepare CV, informing how to apply for a job) are the most popular library services.

Learners/students also took advantage of job search and career guidance services. In the patron survey, 58% of learners and 53% of post-secondary students were aware of access to job vacancy announcements, and of those who were aware, 30% of learners and 67% of post-secondary students had used the service. For career guidance services, 47% of learners and 38% of post-secondary students were aware of the service, and, of those who were aware, 33% of learners and 35% of post-secondary students have used the service.

Importance

The library provides resources and services that help people search and apply for jobs more easily and with less cost. During FGDs, patrons described how access to the ICTs, books, newspapers, and application forms significantly helps people looking for jobs. A few discussants illustrated how the resources and services were used in the process:

When job hunting it helps me sometimes because there are times I don't have money to buy a newspaper. Here they print it out and cut out vacancies and paste them on their notice boards whereby everyone can see. Even if the government has vacancies they will provide you with the job application forms. Or if you have it on your phone they will print it out for you even if you don't have 50 cents to pay.

[M]aybe you got a job on the internet and would like to apply, then you can scan your documents for free. Elsewhere scanning is very expensive. It's a very nice and actually a big advantage since it is very helpful, so you scan your documents and apply for your job online.

Staff's engagement with patrons can contribute to advancement in their businesses.

During a staff interview, an anecdote illustrated how a staff person built a relationship with a farmer and how they witnessed improvement in the farmer's business.

For instance, since even last year, I think it was July, we talked about that whereby when we opened, I brought in a goat farmer. He had become a regular user so whenever he wants anything that relates to goats he comes, "I want medicines for this, this, and this. Please research them for me and then give me feedback or send them to my email." When he gets time, "I want to apply for a loan. My business is growing." That person today is, I was once at his farm in his village and you can see there's an improvement. He's improving it.

Satisfaction

Lack of ink in photocopiers hinders patrons from using library resources to apply for jobs. A business section patron in Omaheke mentioned:

Sometimes we come to the library just to make photocopies for applications. Like the jobs that was advertised here for Ministry of Education. We came to the point where we were disappointed because the library was out of ink for a very long time.

Patrons would like more programs and services. Panel interview respondents suggested specific types of job search services they would like the library to offer. One included having the library actively connect employers with job-seekers. For example, job-seekers would submit their CV to the libraries, and employers could review the CVs to hire people; or the libraries would work with government or private employers to advertise vacant positions.

Patrons from Ohangwena suggested career-related programs for learners and business trainings to be provided in partnership with post-secondary institutions:

We need to have a platform for our educational program here which will transform little kids and interested kids and learners who are more interested in education. They can become familiar with their careers. At the young age they need to be more educated about the career options also. [A different respondent:] I think the library must collaborate with VTC [vocational training

center]. VTC should bring information to the library which the learners can pick up and also with their branches elsewhere and one of them is here but is in Eenhana.

[The library should] increase their programs for the community members and not just computer training. They can link up with different training institutions like NUST [Namibia University of Science and Technology], UNAM [University of Namibia] and IUM [International University of Management] to offer short courses for free to the community (business management, hospitality, and etc.)

Patrons suggested other types of services the library could provide to support businesspeople, and most of those suggestions aligned with the types of services the business section was designed to offer -- and that business staff said they wanted to offer more of. These included trainings on starting or running a business and managing finances, vocational training (e.g. on tailoring, cooking), kiosks rented to local businesspeople, and advertisements for local businesses to attract more customers. At least one respondent also suggested bringing in a book binding machine for those in bookmaking/binding business.

5.3.9 Children's reading programs

Key Findings

- The primary focus of the children's section is to encourage reading and support basic literacy. Accordingly, the regional libraries offered several programs to increase children's skills and interest in reading. The programs were a concerted effort to address the lack of reading culture in nearby communities, particularly in the rural areas.
- Staff in the section invested time and effort into developing children's programs and activities. They also collaborated with local schoolteachers.
- There seems to be room for improvement in the children's section in terms of staffing, space, and resources—all of which require more budget.

Provision

The children's section offers a variety of resources, services, and programs targeting young people aged up to about 12 years old. As well as providing access to books and ICTs such as computers (e.g. for completing homework, playing games), the section provides services and programs including educational programs (e.g. reading and spelling programs, exam preparation, basic computer training, guidance on internet use) and entertainment activities (e.g. video games with computers or X-Box, art programs such as knitting, handworks, and beadworks).

The focus of the children's section is on promoting and teaching children how to read. Staff interviews highlighted the priority:

The main goal for the children's section is to cultivate this culture or the reading culture since we have seen that most of the children are not into reading.

When it comes to reading, we don't have any other choice. For us, we have to keep reading. Reading comes first.

The staff in the libraries incentivize children to read with computer or internet use.

According to librarians, learning to read is a challenging task for young children, not something that they most want to do in their free time. Encouraging children helps and incentivizing them can attract the more reluctant children. In Ohangwena, a staff person said that before they used to give prizes or awards to motivate children, but due to the budget they can only afford to give children the chance to use computers as a reward. In Omaheke, a librarian described how they used to incentivize children with computer use when there were a lot of computers working in the section:

[P]reviously when our computers were working fine, you would get all the kids to have at least one book each and then they read maybe like a paragraph or two, then you allow them to take turns at the computers. Then from there we also came up with different days when we would have maybe like spelling quizzes for different ages, play such games just to make it a bit more interesting.

According to the staff, when computers/internet are not available/working, and in the absence of other incentives (like candy), fewer children seem to come to the library (Omaheke and Ohangwena observed this.)

Programs or resources related to teaching and promoting literacy have been in place in the libraries. This included English spelling quizzes in groups, word search games, reading circles, and story times. The activities were usually organized by school grade.

In Oshana, when a child returned a borrowed book, a staff person asked details about the book or what they learned from reading it, to check if they actually read it. They also asked children what types of books they wanted to read. There was also the Reading Passport program which kept a record of the number of books a child read, and summaries of the books were shared in groups. The program attracted children to borrow and read books:

When they [children] were listening to others [in their Reading Passport group], we're reading on their passport but this one they read 10 books, this one they read 20 books and this is the summary which they read. They got interested. They learn in the section they want also to see those books. Now they start borrowing books because of those other activities and those examples which they saw.

It was also found that the three libraries take part in or host reading competitions. A staff person in Oshana described how there has been an annual reading competition organized with two other libraries in the region and how they tried to motivate children through an awards session:

Every year we have a regional award where we also take part. We award the best reader in the community library. There are two other libraries that we compete with so now it's three...last year the best reader was from my section and I bought a trophy for that boy. When he got the trophy I invited him, "Come to the library. Let me reserve a session for you. You'll tell them, I'll tell them what happened, how you got this trophy." From there we saw a big improvement.

In Omaheke, hosting a reading competition was faced with challenges because printers were not functioning in the children's section, which made it difficult for them to print out the questions for children to answer.

In terms of resources, a gadget called "Talking Pen" was very popular among children in Ohangwena (so popular the library planned to buy more):

The Talking Pen is where you have a pen—a pen like that. But that one is a bit bigger with an end which is smaller like this. And then, you take a book—not just any book, there are those specific books for them. They are manufactured only for those pens. And then if you take a book. Let's say if you want the child to read this word or whatever. And then you take that pen, you point it here—on that word. And then, the pen will read it out to the child. If you want it to read just the sentence, and then you can move it from your left to your right and then it will read out the whole sentence.

The libraries also collaborate with schools in implementing literacy-related programs. In Ohangwena, the library worked with (MCA-supported) local schools in implementing reading programs for lower grade children. In Oshana, a staff person mentioned how they consulted children's level of reading skills with their schoolteachers in carrying out the library's Reading Buddy program:

We have the Reading Buddy. This is a program. Normally in the beginning of the year when children are in the library, we gather them together, we test them on their reading and see their reading skill, and we categorize them that these ones are struggling with reading, these ones are reading well. We consult their schoolteachers [and ask them], "How do you see this learner's reading?" [The teachers might say] "No, this learner is struggling with their reading." [Then] we group them together, they read.

Staff in each of the three libraries described different areas that could be improved for services and programs in the children's section. In Omaheke, it would be easier to help children learn to read if they had more staff. In Oshana, more space and furniture are needed to accommodate a larger number of children. In Ohangwena, they would like resources to offer refreshments, treats, participation prizes, and cultural games.

[Omaheke] I think if we had more staff, it would be helpful as well in that those that ones that we notice are a bit slow and have got a bit of a problem, maybe they can be separated from the group. Because right now it's a bit difficult for us to separate them...I think they tend to find that

a bit more embarrassing for them because they're not so confident, but if we ask them to come another day then they'll not come at all...So maybe if those ones can be separated and have their own time with somebody else elsewhere away from the group, maybe that would help, but at the moment we can't really pay much attention to them as we should because of the numbers.

[Oshana] [W]hen it comes to furniture, we have very few, just four small round tables and maybe one bigger table. They're very small. And chairs are limited, they're less than 20, we have very few chairs and children come in very large numbers whereby we find ourselves we have to make them sit outside. Yes, space is a big limitation to us...During examination time, especially grade four to seven, their writing exam, we don't have space where we can keep them and say, "Okay, this is a quiet place you can study." It's forcing us upstairs where there's a bigger hall. [In the study hall] They're grade[s] 10 and 12. You cannot mix them [with children].

[Ohangwena] The problem is people that [they] are coming from afar—many people are coming from afar, they have to come here. For them to come here, they need to eat. They need to drink. They need to have fun when they come here. So, for us to do that, we need to give them that...Like, we used also to give them prizes. If you do something good, we give themselves just to motivate them. But it was now a bit difficult for us to do that because we do not have any awards to give them. We do not have anything. They just do it.

Usage

The popularity of the children's section differs across the three locations. In Oshana, the children's section was described by staff as "full" both during school terms and holidays. However, in Ohangwena and Omaheke, staff viewed that the use of the section has decreased—partly related to the lack of resources or services caused by budget constraints. In Ohangwena, a staff person attributed the decrease to not being able to provide the treats and goodies they used to, which they cannot do because of the budget. In Omaheke, a staff person attributed the decline to service quality, specifically in printers and internet. Based on staff interviews, it can also be due to the lack of available computers in Omaheke's children's section.

Importance

The library's role in promoting basic literacy is crucial in the socio-cultural context where children lack the opportunity to learn how to read or write within their family. A staff member mentioned that children tend to live with family members who are not literate or are not interested in encouraging their children to read. This was particularly the case for children in rural areas:

It's very few that you find children that read...The children that come from town, they are the ones who read. But the ones that are coming from villages, they don't read. Because when you

ask them, they will tell you that, “No, I’m living with my grandmother” and the grandmother does not know how to read—or [they’ll say] “I’m living with my parents.” But when you look at the parents, the parents also, they do not know. They do not know how to read. Or some parents, they know how to read but they don’t encourage their child because they themselves, they are not interested in reading. That’s the problem...And sometimes also, the problem also come in to say—the parents, they do not know English. That’s where also the problem comes in. If you go into villages, you find people, they only talk—it’s either you find them talking, more especially from this side, you find them talking Portuguese.

Moreover, there have been signs of accomplishment in encouraging children to read.

This was particularly the case in Oshana, where a staff person highlighted the impact the children’s section is bringing (*“Children who didn’t know how to read are reading now as I say...even head office there in Windhoek they see that this library is doing something.”*) The staff person mentioned a case of a male child who participated in the Reading Buddy program:

And we have a testimony of one boy...This boy came here not knowing how to read. When we were in the Reading Buddy, he felt that he was offended and he cannot sit together with others. The others can read and he can’t read so he started distancing himself. We would start the group and then he would distance himself. We approach[ed] him then we say, “Okay, now you read with me.” Everyday he’d come, we’d go outside and we would read. He started learning, learning, learning, and then that child he was awarded a certificate from their school as the best reader. I reported to my boss and I reported to the head office. Now that one is the one who heads the Reading Buddy group...

Key informants expressed they would invest more in the children’s section and its programs if more budget was available:

The children’s section because the learner’s outcome is very low. The children cannot read. They cannot write. They cannot do proper numeracy. If you can just find—if you can highlight those so that people can start saying, “If you go to the regional library, there are people who will make sure that your child learns how to read and write and do numeracy.” The foundation is already laid. By the time that child goes to school, you won’t be struggling with the child finishing matriculation and the child cannot read and write. And then, already, you have paved a way for a better youth in the future.

5.3.10 School libraries

Key Findings

- Regional library school librarians have worked closely with schools in the region to support the set up and operation of school libraries. School librarians’ work has also been geared toward promoting the importance of libraries in schools and ensuring they are in function.

- Budget constraints have limited the reach of these librarians' work by making it more difficult to visit schools throughout the region and train teachers to run the library.
- Budget constraints have also affected the school libraries, resulting in few schools with the resources needed to equip and staff their libraries.

Provision

The regional libraries provide various services to school libraries, including helping school libraries set up and supporting their operation. According to the staff interviews, services to school libraries included: setting up school libraries (e.g., by cataloguing and labeling books), training and working with appointed teacher librarians (a school teacher who is assigned to help run the school library), and advocating for school libraries (i.e. promoting their value and encouraging establishment of school libraries).

My work is basically just to work around the schools...[S]ome schools are eager to have a library but they don't know where to start. They try to write a letter to the region, to me, so that I can go there. When I go there, we receive a lot of books from abroad now. I'll go there and select, check, "is this [suitable for] primary or secondary school?" so as to do the selection...then I process it and then I go there. I'll set up the library with them [library teachers], I inform every school to appoint library teachers, to appoint this is a teacher but he or she also assists learners when in the libraries.

Regional library staff adopt a flexible approach to supporting school libraries, reflecting the differing situations of each school:

What we do, with the schools, I don't know. It's just very difficult to understand maybe for some, but what we do, like we're saying, you'll find a school with a building and resources but that room is locked. So what we do, first we go to school, we have to see their library, and you will find—resources are sent in boxes. You'll find they're there but they are still in the boxes. So that's why you can't say when I go to a school I do A, B and C. Each school is different. One school you'll find the resources are in the shelves so you just tell the teacher what to do, you plan, but for another you set it up. (Interviewer: So some you have to start from the very beginning.) Yes. So first you set up. If you go that day and you find the library is not set up then you try to set it up, you still need to go back and sit again and say, "Now, who will run the library?" Or that day after setting up, you tell the principal, "At least pick who will run the library," because you cannot pick for them. So they know what to do, what and what, the responsibilities they have and they have to pick. So there's no uniform to say I really just go to school and do what...We don't strictly say we are going to do just this because you will find different scenarios in different schools.

Also, the regional libraries play a role in processing and distributing books for school libraries. The Education Library Service (ELS), a subdivision of NLAS, purchases books for schools and

processes them, then sends them to the regional libraries to distribute. The regional libraries also direct a proportion of the books they receive to the school libraries.

Budget constraints seem to have affected the services offered to school libraries. A staff person described how it became difficult to provide training to school libraries in the same way before the budget cuts:

Because of the financial situation, everything is cut; transport so going to schools, and you know how our region's schools are, the distance. So going to school most often, even training, I used to train people in groups, like I call them in one place. Let me say those were the three schools that have libraries, I'll call them in one group and train them at [the] same time, "So we need to do this and this," and after that you need to follow up to see if they are doing that but none of them can be done. Yes you can go to some schools but not as many as it's needed. (Interviewer: Do you still do the trainings with those? You can still do the group training?) No. I can't...Because if I have got those 42 schools, it's not to say they're in the same district or a circuit, they are from different. So they come either here or in [name of town] at one meeting place. (Interviewer: And you need to pay support?) Mm-hmm, offer them lunch and you know. But now it can't happen. What I do now, I'll go to a school and just train individuals, the group training.

Importance

The school librarians strive to keep school libraries accessible to learners. According to a staff person, sometimes school library spaces are not used as intended and school librarians try to make sure that the school libraries are in operation:

Our main goal here is to ensure that schools have functional libraries because we have plenty of schools but we have around 43 to 44 library buildings in schools ["the ones that the government had built in schools, including the ones that were renovated by MCA or they were built by MCA"] but not all those are used as school libraries, so not all of them are functional. So you'll find some will be used maybe at this time of the school, maybe at the beginning and they stop. Some you'll find the enrollment of the school is so high. They use it as a classroom so it's no longer a library. So our aim is to ensure that schools have operational libraries.

Another staff person mentioned how their effort in promoting the value of school libraries contributed to the establishment of libraries in more schools:

We are supporting the school libraries because my interest here is to support the communities and by so doing I feel that the library is now being recognized. When you go to schools there you find most of the schools had no libraries. So we worked up with deputy director we went from school to school and we were talking about the essence of libraries. We told them that everywhere in the world in universities, in secondary schools, in higher learning institutions if you open up a webpage in the computer the first thing you see is the library because the library is the heart that runs the schools. So without a library you cannot call yourself a school, it is just

a tuition centre something like that and it went into their minds. Some of them turned classrooms into libraries. There was only five schools that had libraries, now we have 40 school libraries. Most of the schools have turned classrooms into libraries and have furnished them with books and shelves and we support them.

5.3.11 Outreach services

Key Findings

- Outreach services have been scaled back due to budget constraints, which negatively impact the libraries' capacity to reach pre-primary children, farmers, NAMCOL learners and other target groups.
- Staff and key informants recognized the importance of outreach services to remote communities and have sought ways to provide the service, if only at a reduced capacity, with mixed success.
- The mobile library units never reached their potential, largely sidelined due to poor road worthiness, maintenance issues, and lack of funds for petrol and sustenance for staff.

Provision

Various types of outreach services have been provided by the libraries, particularly those related to business and schools. According to staff interviews, business-related outreach services included: delivering career enhancement videos, bringing books on farming and sewing, and providing ICT facilities for those applying for jobs. Moreover, there had been outreach services targeted at pre-primary children—which involved bringing toys, laptops, books, and puzzles to schools, and teaching children how to tell stories from pictures, etc.

The target patrons of outreach services differ across regions. For example, staff mentioned that Ohangwena mostly targets schools and learners, whereas Omaheke aimed to attract farmers and NAMCOL learners.

However, the outreach services have been significantly affected by budget constraints. For example, outreach services targeted at pre-primary children have been affected by budget constraints. Oshana and Omaheke had continued providing outreach, but Ohangwena had to stop visiting nearby pre-primary schools because they could not use the cars anymore (a staff person recalled that the last time they went to pre-primary schools was late 2016).

Also, there have been IT training and support to schools. For example, IT staff from Ohangwena visited schools to train learners to use the internet (in 2017), and Oshana have provided IT support for the computers given to the schools and IT training for teachers:

What we did, like last year,...we went to all the surrounding schools then we trained them on how to use the internet...to get what you need. Colleges, maybe you want to learn mathematics, how to learn, how to use YouTube to learn mathematics,...accounting,...English,...finance or business studies or development.

Our IT here are moving around from school to school giving them support on dealing with small issues and we train the teachers...so that they can take care of those computers themselves there in the schools.

However, conducting IT outreach to schools is also difficult under the budget challenges. For example, a staff person in Ohangwena mentioned:

[T]he problem is now the finances because for me to go to them, because our training normally takes two weeks, for me to go to them for two weeks, I need transport, I need food, I need accommodation. For now there's no money, we cannot really do that. But we're planning to do that. Once we get money we can do the outreach. We can go to them.

Staffing is an issue in providing outreach services. A staff interview informed that staffing was a challenging factor to outreach, and that if there was a conflict between serving patrons in the library vs. carrying out outreach services, they had to choose the former:

[S]ome of our outreach services were cut because we had too many kids that were coming in that we couldn't handle at that moment, so we decided let's cut out on some of these external outreach services and focus on the kids that are coming to the library so that we can try and develop those ones first.

There have been several challenges involved in operating mobile libraries. Key informants and library staff explained that it was costly to maintain the vehicles; there was a lack of budget to be spent on staff payment and fuel; and that there were issues with licensing. Library staff -- particularly those in the Omaheke Region -- emphasized the trucks were not suited for local road and weather conditions. Some of the issues included: brakes wearing out quickly, batteries draining quickly, side panels falling off, and tires wearing out. The mobile units were constructed and outfitted in South Africa and had not properly tested in real life conditions as they were delivered to the regional libraries after the end of the Compact (Sey & Fellows, 2016: 54). When this issue was discussed at the October 2019 workshop, we further learned that the mobile libraries were the subject of significant debate during the Compact. One perspective advocated the simpler approach of purchasing trucks to deliver books and other materials, fearing the types of challenges that eventually arose. In the end, it is possible that the lure of fancy vehicles outweighed these concerns.

Given the difficulties in operating mobile libraries, there have been efforts to try to come up with alternative ways to provide outreach services. Two key informants' interviews illustrate this:

We were even thinking that maybe what we have to do also if we can maybe use like, this double cab four by four, maybe we can send them to certain communities because ...we still have to get there, even if we are not going to give them full services as the mobile bus [mobile library], but at least it's something. That is what we are planning to do.

I have always encouraged them that, "Now that we are not able to reach out to far areas, we can still use the mobile library services to go to nearby places to create an excitement about library services and also to promote the library services."

If the budget and other situations allow, staff have ideas about how outreach services can be done. For example, a staff person in Omaheke spoke about a desire to do more and better outreach targeted at farmers—reaching out to them and bringing them the materials they need. In Ohangwena, a staff person wanted to conduct outreach to schools and children in hospitals, as they had done in the past:

We also have the farmers, but so far we have not been providing that service here...We'd also like to go into that area where we can just go out for them at the farms and just take information on like, for example, if we had books on animals, vaccinating, how to keep animals healthy and the different kinds of diseases, for example.

I want to continue with outreach—going out to schools. Because there was a time we also tried, this one was just a try. We tried to go to hospital...We went to children—because the hospital is having their section for children, either being sick, however or whatever, this is the kids they're serving. So for us, our aim is just to go there so that we can, just to be with them. We tried that and it was a success. It was good...I think it was 2016...So we're also planning to go to another hospital again which is also in the surrounding area. Another hospital which is somewhere here. And then, we want [to] also to go to another one—another hospital which is on the either side. And then, the other one. We're also having plans of that. We wanted to include it in our programs but first we wanted to finish the schools first.

Usage

In general, a low percentage of patrons is aware of or have used the mobile library—which is likely explained by the recent stagnation in mobile library operations, due to the factors discussed above. Among all students/learners, 30% of patron survey respondents were aware of it and of those who were aware, 26% had used it. Among all business section patrons, 30% were aware of the service and of those who were aware, 24% had used it.

Importance

Mobile library operation is important for learners who attend schools located far away from the regional library. One educator mentioned in FGD:

Our school is very far and taxi fares is a challenge to many learners. For us it's best if the mobile library can be up and running again, so they can visit our school regularly like in the past.

Key informants' comments also illustrate how the importance of the mobile library is recognized by the users and stakeholders:

...I have heard, not from the library stuff, but from the community out there. "When is your lorry coming? When is your lorry coming here? It has been here for maybe six months ago. Do you not want to come?" It's so exciting. Really, the community outreach has been affected very much. But I think that is one area that I will prioritize.

To us the outreach program is very important because we don't have many libraries in our communities, and even the mobile library goes to the community, that one really will help us a lot, because the ones that will not be able to reach here, at least they will be able to access the services where they are. That will encourage them also, you don't need transport, you don't need anything, you just need to walk to that point.

It can also be important for people in remote communities in applying for jobs. For example, a staff person in Omaheke described how NAMCOL learners and those who dropped out of school in rural areas lack access to information and miss opportunities to apply for jobs. The staff explained how the mobile library operation helped address that:

What we used to do, we're using Wi-Fi also, so you go on the net and then you check some available vacancies and then those who really want to, they will even tell us, "No, I will type my CV here. I'll give it to you. Just go drop it for me there." And then that's what we used to do and it was really—you enjoyed it. They do really, they need that mobile library.

Satisfaction

There has been a demand for mobile library operation from the communities. A staff person described that:

[The communities] are really crying especially the school learners because most of our outreach points are in schools and the community members would now come to that school to get the books. Now, they are really crying that we are not getting the books...when we go there they can also make use of the internet services.

Educators demand outreach programs or visits that inform the importance of library use. During FGDs, educators suggested the libraries should target principals, teachers, and learners to help them understand why it is important for them to use the libraries:

The library should have a programme for school principals and teachers telling them the importan[ce] of the library.

[O]ur kids really don't know the importance of a library. [Other discussants agreeing] or the importance of using the library. The ones [learners] that are going [attending] school, we just need to put emphasis on the important purposes of the library. Maybe once the librarians are clear to the learners, maybe the kids might change their mindset.

5.4 Outcomes

5.4.1. Overview

Learners and business section patrons associate positive outcomes with regional library use. Both groups overwhelmingly indicate the regional libraries were important in meeting their respective education and jobs-related needs. Learners report increased skills, understanding of things they learn in school, completion of school assignments, and better grades. Business patrons saw increases in job skills and understanding of things they were doing at work, support in completing work tasks, and increases in income and job prospects. Although many outcomes continued to grow over time, learner and business patron skill increases appear to plateau, perhaps due to limited regional library training offerings or because these outcomes require more conditions than can be met by the library alone. Mixed results were also seen when comparing outcomes across genders. While female learners in the patron survey reported more perceived outcomes than males in education-related activities, male business patrons reported more perceived outcomes than females in business- and income-related activities.

In addition to the priority outcome areas associated with each user group, the evaluators see a variety of positive outcomes in other domains, which include communications and leisure, reading culture, and health. These point to the potential to reach the needs of patrons in ways not currently emphasized at the regional libraries.

5.4.2 Introduction

This section addresses *EQ4: Do students, job-seekers, and businesspeople report outcomes such as improved test scores, job-seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by the regional libraries?*

Outcome analyses were structured around secondary learners and business patrons, and not students, due to the longitudinal nature of this component of the evaluation. The “student” category was added at the interim analysis phase. Analyses were conducted through the patron survey and a longitudinal study of the two groups, the latter including both quantitative measures and qualitative supporting data. Additional insight into outcomes was investigated through the FGDs to better understand the complex relationships between regional library use, outcomes, and contextual factors. As noted in MCA-N’s M&E Plan, the RSRC Activity was not a good candidate for a traditional impact evaluation and, as such, the evaluators did not employ a counterfactual or randomized control trial. See Annex 9.3 for additional detail on the outcomes analysis methodology.

To provide nuance within our discussion of outcomes, the evaluators differentiate between first- and second-order outcomes. Namely:

- First-order outcomes are those that derive directly from having access to the regional library resources and provide the potential to increase education performance or income. These include increased use of information (the expected outcome as a result of regional library investment¹⁹) and skills development.
- Second-order outcomes are those that stem from first order changes and result in improved performance in measured areas. These include better grades or obtaining a job.

It is important to note that directly attributing second-order outcomes to regional library use requires significant in-depth research (such as with a counterfactual) that this study did not undertake. For example, second-order outcomes such as getting into college or getting a job are fundamentally tied to social and economic structures outside the scope of this study.

5.4.3 Secondary learners

Key Findings

- Half of all learners in the patron survey reported gaining new skills as a result of using the regional library.
- More than 60% of patron survey respondents indicated use of the regional library helped them to better understand things learned in school.
- By the end of the panel study, the proportion of school assignments completed using the regional library had increased from 68% to 100%; 100% of respondents felt the library was helpful for completing assignments; and more than 90% of panel survey participants noted regional library use had had a significant impact on their grades.
- 47% of patron survey learners indicated they read more than if they did not have access to the library, and 49% of respondents indicated that they were able to meet new people through using the library.
- Females in the patron survey reported more perceived outcomes than males in education-related activities, while the majority of outcomes in non-educational domains were similarly reported by males and females.

5.4.3.1 Program logic

The evaluators mapped metrics to the program logic in order to assess outcomes beyond changes in usage (which are discussed in section 5.2) and investigate EQ4 more systematically. It posits that, first, patrons make use of the library's educational resources (e.g.

¹⁹ Millennium Challenge Compact Between the United States of America Acting Through the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Republic of Namibia. Annex 3, page 6.

computers, books), which leads to such first-order outcomes as increased skills and improved participation in school activities. Second-order outcomes, such as better grades, would optimally follow, though such downstream impacts are the result of many factors beyond the influence of the libraries.

Table 15: Secondary learner outcome metrics

Outputs	First-order outcomes		Second-order outcomes	
	Outcome	High-level result*	Outcome	High-level result*
Access to educational resources, including books, the internet, staff, trainings, study spaces	Increased skills	51% of patron survey respondents indicated that using the library helped them to improve or develop new skills or develop/improve computer skills.	Increased completion of school assignments	60% of patron survey respondents indicated that using the library's resources helped them to complete school assignments. The percent of exams for which panel respondents indicated they used the library increased from 50% to 75%.
	Improved participation in school activities	64% of patron survey respondents indicated using the regional library helped them to better understand things learned about in school. 42% of patron survey respondents reported finding information that helped contribute to class discussions.	Better grades	55% of patron survey respondents indicated using the library's resources led to getting better grades on assignments, and 42% reported getting better grades on tests/quizzes. Over 90% of initial and final panel survey respondents indicated that the regional library had a somewhat or highly significant impact on their grades.

*Note that only top findings around each outcome area are provided in this table, with additional quantitative and qualitative data provided in the following sections.

The following investigates in detail these types of outcomes that stem from regional library use. It begins with an analysis of first-order, then second-order educational outcomes. The section then moves on to a discussion of outcomes in non-education domains and concludes with a comparison of outcomes between males and females.

5.4.3.2 First-order educational outcomes

As noted above, first-order outcomes are those that derive directly from having access to the regional library resources. In the case of secondary learners, these include increased skills, improved participation in school activities, and changes in library usage.

As hypothesized in the program logic, study participants appear to strongly associate improved performance in school with regional library use and, it indeed appears that access to information and resources at the library is leading to first-order outcomes among secondary learners. Learners tend to see the library resources as unique and essential for their educational needs. However, while some outcomes appear to continue to grow and adapt as learners progress, others, like computer skill development, seem to plateau due to limitations in regional library resources.

Increased skills

Half of all learners reported gaining new skills as a result of using the regional library, with 51% of patron survey respondents indicating that using the library helped them to improve or develop new skills or improve/develop computer skills. However, a decrease over time did appear in the perceived impact of the library when panel respondents were asked about “skills necessary to succeed in life (e.g. technical skills, communication skills)”. The percent of respondents that indicated “highly significant impact” or “somewhat significant impact” in these skills decreased from approximately 89% to 32% over the course of the panel study. It should be noted, however, that there were no respondents in the final panel study who indicated, “no impact”, suggesting that although the level of benefit decreased, the regional libraries continued to provide positive outcomes in learners’ skills. As will also be shown below with business patrons, although reported positive outcomes in skills decrease over time, the initial high outcomes should not be discounted. These decreases may not necessarily be considered “shortcomings” of the regional libraries so much as limited options for the libraries to continue providing resources that adapt to increased skill sets.

The variety of courses offered at the regional libraries are limited, and respondents likely have already taken the entirety of what was available. As such, the evaluators would expect perceived impact to decrease over time as the availability of new skill-generating courses reduces. Interviews support this idea. For example, when one learner was asked the reason why they did not participate in any training at the library, they responded,

“I already know how to use a computer. Most of the trainings they give here are about computers on how to use them.”

It is possible that respondents associate skill development with specific library trainings and do not consciously consider unintended/indirect outcomes. Some learners did acknowledge that certain skills had improved as an indirect result of using the library. For example, one panel respondent noted:

The use of the library improved my English because I started networking with other users, because I have always been a very shy person but since I started using the library my shyness also disappeared and I started talking to people freely.

Improved participation in school activities

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of patron survey respondents indicated use of the regional library helped them to better understand things learned about in school. Other school activities also appear to improve as a result of regional library use. Patron survey respondents noted benefits to several school participation-related areas: finding information that helped contribute to class discussions (42%), getting information about classroom assignments (38%), and being better prepared for future education needs (39%).

When asked about the impact the library had on different school outcomes, panel respondents over the initial and final surveys overwhelmingly noted highly significant impact over time in several areas related to school participation, including ability to complete class assignments (74% to 67% over the course of the study) and feeling prepared at school (67% to 76% over the course of the study). The evaluators do see a drop in the percent of respondents that indicated the library helped with classroom discussions, from 44% to 24%. It is not clear from qualitative data why this could be the case, pointing to a potential area of interest for further investigation.

When asked how important the information accessed in library resources over the previous four weeks was to achieving their school needs, the percent of respondents that indicated it was “absolutely essential” increased from 63% to 80% over the course of the study. This resonates with the findings of the patron survey (as reported in Section 5.2.3.1), with 72% of respondents indicating “this is the only place in the area with the resources you need” when asked why they chose to come to the regional library instead of going to a different place for their educational needs.

Panel participants consistently responded that the last book or resource used prior to the panel survey was for schoolwork (62% in the initial survey and 64% in the final survey), pointing to a feeling of better preparation for school activities. One panel participant illustrated their improved school participation with the following:

The library has impacted me in a good way. By reading more books related to my subjects and searching for information related to my school's subjects on the internet, I can now take part in class discussions and answer questions that the teacher asks in class.

Table 16: Results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.

First-order outcomes. % of Patron survey secondary learner respondents.

Outcome	%
Improved or developed new skills or develop/improve computer skills	51
Understood things you are learning about in school	64
Found information that helped you contribute in class discussions	42
Better prepared for future education needs	39
Got information about classroom assignments	38

5.4.3.3 Second-order educational outcomes

Moving beyond first-order outcomes, the evaluators investigated second-order outcomes - those that involve changes in performance. The focus here is on completion of school assignments and grades.

Generally speaking, the evaluators see improvements in school assignment completion as a result of regional library use. Better grades were also strongly linked to use of the regional library. Resources described in the previous sections were noted as important for this, including textbooks, help from librarians, and study space.

Completion of school assignments

The regional library resources appear to **support the completion of educational tasks**. The evaluators see learners using the library more to prepare for exams and maintaining that the library is helpful for exam preparation. Over the course of the panel, the percent of exams for which respondents indicated they used the library increased from 50% to 75%. This, in addition to the aforementioned decrease in library use required by school, points to a potential recognized benefit and corresponding increase in library usage.

The evaluators also see more assignments done using the library during the longitudinal study (68% to 100%) and a continued feeling of the library being helpful in completing those assignments (100% throughout the study). Indeed, respondents are attributing these types of educational outcomes to library use. Patron surveys support this as well, with the majority of respondents indicating that using the library's resources has helped them to complete school assignments (60%). Learners and students' comments during FGDs also mirror this, as illustrated by the following:

It helps me a lot especially when it comes to my assignments and I am not able to complete that assignment without coming here.

I always update my school work around here before going home every day and when I get home I feel very relieved since I have done most of my work in the library with the right information that I needed.

However, there were learners and students who mentioned that they sometimes get distracted when they are in the library or do activities not related to their schoolwork. This was particularly notable at Omaheke, where FGD responses included the following:

I will tell my mother I am going to study but when I get to the library I would be doing Facebook or playing games. The entertainment also let me do bad in schoolwork.

[F]or me I knew I was performing poorly in Physics I would still come and read novels at the library while I know I have a challenge.

When I am with my friends I don't achieve what I came for, only when I am alone I feel I achieve what I came for. We do other things which are not important such as being on social media, etc.

Some educator FGD respondents at Omaheke mirrored this:

[B]ut the problem of the learners is, it was also reported to our school that the learners although we send them here [regional library] they are just coming here for, is it movies? (Other respondents agreeing)...Wi-Fi movies instead of doing their projects so they switch over to other things. It was even reported to the schools and we tried to talk to the learners but learners are just learners. That's why you see the projects are there the learners was at the library but nothing was done.

[The learners] only come here for games. It's a free Wi-Fi and these kids know the advantages of technology (others agreeing) they know how to get to these game sites. Sometimes they come here to watch videos, music videos. (Laughing) Some kids know music that was released yesterday just by watching from YouTube which is a site on the computer. Since most of our learners are from the informal settlement and obviously don't have access to electricity, most of the times they come here just to do those type of things. Not for learning purposes.

Improved school performance

In addition to supporting completion of school assignments, it appears that **regional library use leads to improved performance in school**. The majority of patron survey respondents indicated using the library's resources has led to getting better grades on assignments (55%)

and getting better grades on tests/quizzes (42%). Further, panel respondents indicated that, overall, the library had a significant impact on their grades with more than 90% of both initial and final panel surveys noting either “somewhat significant” or “highly significant” impact and more than two-thirds indicating “highly significant” impact. When asked to think about the *last test* that they used the library to prepare for, the percent of panel respondents that indicated the library helped them to get a good grade remained at 100% for the duration of the study. Despite the distractions to studying respondents note above, learners continue to feel that the regional libraries help them to get better grades on some tests. However, it remains unclear if, overall, learner grades were positively or negatively impacted.

Table 17: Results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
Second-order outcomes. % of Patron survey secondary learner respondents.

Outcome	%
Completed school assignments	60
Got better grades on school assignments	55
Got better grades on tests or quizzes	42

It appears the above perceived impact could be connected to study behaviors. The percent of exams panel respondents indicated they used the regional library to prepare for over the previous four weeks increased from 50% to 75% over the course of the study. Likewise, while the percent of assignments completed using the library increased from 67% to 100%, both of these increases were seen despite little change in the average number of visits to the RSRCs over the previous month (from 6 to 7 times). For both exam preparation and class assignments, 100% of respondents in both the initial and final interview indicated the library was helpful.

During panel interviews, when asked the question “If you had to summarize how this library has impacted you, what would you say?” many secondary learners responded in ways that illustrated how their performance at school has improved as a result of library use with no clear indications of negative outcomes. Some illustrative examples include the following:

It brought good change because I get more clearer answers from the different booklets, helping me to perform well in some of my subjects.

I have improved in my subjects, because I was not doing well in my previous grades (9 and 10). Now that the library is here and I am making use of the resources there, it is helping me a lot to understand topics better thus improving my grades. The first term I was failing very badly now I am improving, because I spend more time here than before and also spend time on my school work even though not as much as I would have liked.

This library brought a big change in my life. The reason I am perform very well at school is because of this library by providing me with free Wi-Fi and computers. Sometimes teachers tell us to come watch video on YouTube about topics we have covered in the class. I remember there was a day she referred us to the library to come watch video on how an embryo is formed and the other day we came to watch video on how earthquakes occurred. Just after I watched the videos, we were given a quiz and I did very well, got 100%. I remember that those same questions were in the last exams we had and again I passed. I am sure that if I keep using this library I will pass my grade 10.

The library has good impacts. It helps me to complete my assignments, complete group work with friends. It is a place for helping me with all my resources like school related books, novels, Wi-Fi and computers. A place that is peaceful to study for tests and exams whereby you will perform well and get good marks.

Further, when asked “How necessary is this library for you to succeed in your education? What would it be like if this library was not available?” learners tended to characterize the library resources as crucial. This is illustrated by one panel respondent, who noted how access to the internet, books, and computers enabled them to move up significantly in class rankings:

I moved from 15th position to 7th, that alone is showing you that the library is very necessary for my studies. Very quiet place to study, resources are available and can be used anytime. The library is a good place for those who are taking it seriously. I think if it was not available, where will we go to get free internet, books, computer? Nowhere.

Other responses to this question touched on the importance of school books, the internet, help from librarians, and quiet study spaces:

It is very necessary. Although I think they need more resources, especially books relevant to different subject on secondary level, the available resources helps me meet some of my school needs and I do manage to complete my homework and assignments...This is the only place I can borrow books that can help me in my school work, especially because we do not even have enough textbooks at school.

It is very important. I get information here to assist me with my school work. I get assistant from the librarians with my homework and they also gave me guidance on how to study. If this library and all its resources was not here, it will be worse because there is no other venue where we will study silence. Nowhere, you can get free computer training. No place for affordable copies and printing. And we will have probably been performing poor in some subjects.

It is very important because we have a space to come and study and sometimes if you come here and you are not in the mood, just seeing others studying will motivate and attract you to do the same thing. The library is really important because the resources such as the different books and information from the internet, is adding more value and knowledge to what we are already learning at school. The library is also a place where groups of friends come together to study and we are able to help each other to better understand our subjects, so if the library was not here, we will not have these opportunities because we also meet with learners from other schools.

Of importance to note is that some learners indicated the library had a limited role in their school performance because it lacked some of the resources they needed. Resource challenges are discussed in detail in Section 5.3.

5.4.3.4 Non-educational outcomes

In addition to educational outcomes, the evaluators recognize the importance of measuring changes in other aspects of the lives of learners. As this was not a priority for this evaluation, the level of investigation of other outcome domains is less in-depth than those education-related and are not separated into first- and second-order outcomes. However, the evaluators are able to see changes in other aspects of respondents' lives. The evaluators see these changes in other domains, as well as evolving usage behavior.

Other domain outcomes

It appears that library outcomes span many domains. Below is a summary of outcomes in non-educational domains respondents reported as the results of using the regional libraries. It appears that the most prevalent non-education outcomes were in communications and leisure activities, reading culture, general knowledge gains, and community engagement.

Communications and leisure activities

Communications and leisure activities, which are commonly recognized rights as well as pathways to achieving outcomes in other domains²⁰, were supported through library use. 43% of patron survey respondents indicated they had a place to meet friends and socialize, while 36% indicated they communicated more with friends and family. When asked how many times they used the library for different reasons over the previous two weeks, the average number of times learners in the panel study used the library for socializing and entertainment increased (2 to 4 and 2 to 3.5, respectively). In addition, the percent of panel respondents that indicated the library helped them to meet up with friends or socialize increased from 56% to 80%.

Additionally, 49% of respondents indicated they were able to meet new people through using the library, and, importantly, nearly 40% of respondents noted that using the library allowed

²⁰ Sey et al 2013

them to have fun. It falls to reason, therefore, that learners recognize the positive outcomes the library can have in supporting “fun” and increase their use accordingly.

Some panel interview responses to the question about non-education related impacts mirror this, with responses such as, “I enjoy the environment, meeting friends and making new ones at the library and also through Facebooking” and “It has impacted me positively. In a place like Gobabis there are no recreational areas like swimming pools or parks. So it feels like this is a come together place a place to just hang out.”

Culture of reading

A culture of reading was clearly improved, which is something that was voiced as important during the Component 1 investigation.²¹ 47% of respondents indicated they read more than if they did not have access to the library, and 47% responded they found books to read for pleasure. The average number of times panel respondents used the library in the previous two weeks for personal interest reading doubled from once to twice over the course of the study, with the percent of respondents indicating that the library helped them to find books to read for pleasure increased from 56% to 68%. Indeed, it appears the regional libraries are supporting the building of a culture of reading. One educator’s comment during the FGDs illustrated how the library is contributing to building a reading culture: “For me, what I can tell is these kids, they like to read more now because they come to this library.”

General knowledge

General knowledge gains were also apparent, with 48% of respondents indicating they developed new skills or learned something new. Knowledge of government services also rose, with 10% of respondents indicating they were more aware of government services. Considering the age of respondents and their limited overall use of government services, that one-tenth of respondents saw a positive outcome in awareness of government services points to a broad scope of use and potentially large and continuing role as respondents age and face new needs.

Community engagement

Community engagement seemed to increase, with 42% indicating use of the library allowed them to be more connected locally and around the world. 3% indicated they were more aware of community events or activities. This points to an area in which the libraries could seek to engage patrons more actively. Discussion of community engagement did not arise in qualitative methods with learners.

²¹ Coward, et. al., 2015:7

Finances

Finances were also seen to improve, with 12% of respondents indicating they saved money. As respondents are learners, it was not expected for them to have significant financial obligations. As such, even 12% realizing financial benefit from using the library is meaningful. Some panel interview comments also reflect this. Learner responses include, “It’s also cheaper here to make copies and to print, so I am saving the little money that I have” and “Library saves our parents money by not buying examination booklets and textbooks; we borrow books for free from the library.”

Time

Time benefits were supported. This is seen in both time savings as well as how time is used. With respect to time savings, 31% of patron survey respondents indicated this outcome as a result of using the library. Interviews point to respondents feeling their time is used more productively. As noted by two learners:

Since the library opened I have a place where I can come for information or come to relax and socialize whereby first I was just staying home bored.

The library has changed my life in a good way. I remember last year when I was using it every day and not having time to be in the streets with my friend doing nothing important, this library has taken me out of the street, I hardly any time for friends because I really wanted to pass my grade 12 with good marks and now I am attending tertiary doing a course I always wanted to do.

Health

Health was also seen to have benefits, with 9% of respondents indicating they were better able to address health issues as a result of using the library. Not only is nearly 10% of respondents better able to support their health significant, the fact that learners are seeing the regional libraries as a place where they can find information to support health and not just education or employment needs points to an important role of the libraries going forward.

Further, several panel respondents hinted at healthy behavior changes as a result of using the regional library, illustrated by the following:

The impact has been very good. I used to do unnecessary things such as spending more time at the bars but now, I like spending more time at the library and I am really performing better.

It has impacted my life. I spend most of my time here at the library rather than being in bars and drinking. I focus on things like reading books and chatting with people. And I also use Wi-Fi to download different things like football news and music to listen to.

Local culture and language

Local culture and language do show some benefit, but at a low level. Just 14% of respondents indicated library use allowed them to be more connected to their culture and language. It is important to note that this investigation was limited to only one survey question. However, the finding does appear to follow staff comments that there are not enough books in local languages, as described in Section 5.3.

5.4.3.5 Evolving behaviors

It appears that as learners age, they naturally adjust their regional library usage behavior to adapt to their changing needs, indicating an ***awareness of different ways the library can provide impact***. For example, over time there was a ***significant increase in computer use for personal reasons*** among panel participants (e.g. socializing, entertainment). This is consistent with what the evaluators would expect of learners in their final weeks of school before graduation (post exams) as they shift from a focus of school to employment. Interestingly, the purpose of the last book or resource used at the library remained for school over the course of the panel study (62% to 64%) followed by entertainment use (15% to 16%). It appears, therefore, that school continues to be important for overall library use, even though learners are not required to go as they near graduation. Additionally, it seems that learners view the regional library as a resource to support not just their academics but their future careers and economic livelihoods.

The evaluators also see ***the average number of times learners report using the regional libraries for reading the news in the previous two weeks nearly triple*** from 1 to 2.8 times. Although the evaluators cannot attribute the regional library as the source of increased awareness of current events, it does appear the library is supporting learners as they mature and desire news and other information. When asked if they experienced any non-education related impacts, one panel interview respondent noted: "I developed the ability to always want to read the newspaper; I am now addicted to newspapers."

In addition, the average number of times secondary learners reported using the regional library over the previous two weeks for ***learning about admissions or applying to post-secondary education increased*** over the course of the study from .2 to .9 times. This four-fold increase suggests that as secondary learners advance in their schooling and needs change (such as nearing graduation and considering applying for additional schooling), they continue to see the regional library as a place to help them prepare for their next educational steps. Indeed, when asked how many times they used the library for different reasons over the previous two weeks, the average number of times learners used the library for obtaining tertiary school information increased from never to approximately 1, while studying for tests decreased from once to about .25 times.

5.4.3.6 Impacts by Gender

It appears that, overall, **females reported more perceived outcomes than males in education-related activities**. This includes nearly all measured first- and second-order outcomes, as seen in Table 18 below.

**Table 18 : Education domain results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
% of Patron survey secondary learner respondents.**

Outcome	Females	Males
<i>First-order outcomes</i>		
Understood things you are learning about in school	68	58
Completed school assignments	64	56
Found information that helped you contribute in class discussions	43	40
Got information about classroom assignments	45	30
Better prepared for future education needs	35	43
<i>Second-order outcomes</i>		
Got better grades on school assignments	56	54
Got better grades on tests or quizzes	43	42

Some participants in the learner focus groups described that there seems to be more girls engaged in educational activities compared to boys, who tend to be more consumed with entertainment:

...if you go there it's only ladies in the study room...If you see a guy it's either on the computer. In my own experience, if you see a guy either on the computer, it's very rare to find guys in the study rooms, all you find them doing is using the Wi-Fi in there down stairs or on the computers up stairs watching soccer.

Youth, especially the boys, come for entertainment. You will find them sitting outside most of the time using internet and when you see what they are doing, you will find them doing entertainment stuff...The girls are more for studying.

Boys are just here for entertainment. They will search for games and those kwaito stuff [South African music genre] and girls you will see in the study rooms, studying and some on the computers doing Facebook or searching for information.

Interestingly, however, more males reported feeling more prepared for their future education needs as a result of the library than females (43% vs. 35%). It is not clear from qualitative data why this was the case. It could be due to differences in confidence levels, as (western-based) research has indicated that boys tend to overestimate their abilities while girls tend to underestimate.^{22,23}

The majority of outcomes in non-educational domains were similarly reported by males and females. There were a few areas where this was not clearly the case. Whereas more males reported developing/improving computer skills (58% vs 45%) and other skills (52% vs. 44%), females were more likely to report being able to read more as a result of the library (50% vs 43%) or find books to read for pleasure (48% vs 45%).

**Table 19: Other domain results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
% of Patron survey secondary learner respondents.**

Outcome	Females	Males
Developed other new skills or learned something new	44	52
Developed/improved computer skills	45	58
Met new people	51	47
Read more than if you did not have access to the library	50	43
Found books you like to read for pleasure	48	45
More connected to what's happening locally and around the world	42	43
Had a place to meet with friends/socialize	46	39
Had fun	35	37
Communicated more with friends and family	35	38
Saved time	32	30
Saved money	12	12
More aware of how to use government services	10	10
More connected to your culture and language	13	16

²² Einar M. Skaalvik & Richard J. Rankin, 1994, Gender differences in mathematics and verbal achievement, self-perception and motivation.

²³ Hughes, S. P., & Fuentes-Fuentes, C., 2017, Little High, Little Low: Girls' and Boys' Academic Self-concept and Performance in English as a Foreign Language.

Outcome	Females	Males
Better able to address health issues	7	10
Increased awareness about community events or activities	4	2

5.4.4 Business patrons

Key Findings

- 60% of job-seekers in the patron survey reported increased skills related to job and employment activities, while 61% of the self-employed and 59% of wage earners reported an increase in skills to be better in their current jobs.
- 48% of the self-employed and 57% of wage earner respondents indicated use of the regional library allowed them to understand things they were learning about at work, while 43% of the self-employed and 50% of wage earner respondents indicated the regional library helped them get information that helped them contribute in work discussions.
- 77% of respondents in the final panel survey indicated “absolutely essential” or “very important” when asked how important the information accessed in the library’s resources was to achieving their employment and income needs.
- 61% of the self-employed and 52% of wage earner respondents indicated they were able to complete tasks at their job as a result of using the regional library resources.
- 39% of self-employed respondents and 16% of wage earners in the patron survey reported income increases as a result of using the library resources.
- 16% of wage earners, 9% of self-employed respondents, and 1% of unemployed job-seekers indicated that using the regional library led to gaining employment.

5.4.4.1 Program logic

Similar to learner outcomes, use of regional libraries for information access, trainings, and knowledge creation forms the output basis from which business patron outcomes are derived. First-order outcomes then follow, which include increased skills and improved understanding of issues at work. Second-order outcomes include increased income, improved work performance, and improved job prospects.

Table 20: Business patron outcome metrics

Outputs	First-order outcomes		Second-order outcomes	
	Outcome	High-level result*	Outcome	High-level result*
Access to business-related resources, including books, the internet, staff, trainings, study spaces	Increased skills	60% of job-seekers reported increased skills related to job and employment activities. 61% of the self-employed and 59% of wage earners reported increased skills to be better in their current jobs.	Improved work performance/ productivity	61% of the self-employed and 52% of wage earners indicated they were able to complete tasks at their jobs as a result of using the regional library resources.
	Improved understanding of issues at work	48% of the self-employed and 57% of wage earners indicated use of the regional library allowed them to understand things they were learning about at work. 43% of self-employed and 50% of wage earners indicated the regional library helped them get information that helped them contribute in work discussions.	Increased income	39% of the self-employed and 16% of wage earners reported income increases as a result of using the library resources.

Outputs	First-order outcomes	Second-order outcomes	
		Improved job prospects (e.g. getting a new job, advancing in current job, increasing business profitability)	16% of wage earners, 9% of the self-employed, and 1% of unemployed job-seekers, indicated that using the regional library led to gaining employment.

* Note this table only presents top findings around each outcome area, with additional quantitative and qualitative data provided in the following sections.

Investigation of business patron outcomes first analyzes first-order then second-order outcomes, followed by a discussion of outcomes in non-education domains. It concludes with a comparison of outcomes between males and females.

It is important to first redefine who business patrons are. As described in 4.3.2, business patrons are those who are (1) currently employed for wages (part or full- time), (2) self-employed, or (3) unemployed job-seekers. Further, and of significance for interpretation of findings, is that all these individuals are only considered to have the *potential* to use the RSRC to support their income or employment needs. They were not actively sampled at the business sections or confirmed through a set of screening questions to use the library for business-related activities.

5.4.4.2 First-order economic outcomes

As with the analysis of learners, first-order outcomes for business patrons are those that derive directly from having access to the regional library resources. First-order outcomes for business patrons, whether employed, unemployed, or self-employed, are looked at through changes such as increased skills, improved understanding of work issues, and changes in information behavior and use.

First-order outcomes appear largely met through access to information at the regional libraries. In particular, a large proportion of patrons see skill increases in business and work areas as well as improvement in their abilities to understand issues at work. However, while some outcomes appear to continue to increase, others appear to see less gains over time, and some show decreases. It is unclear why this is, although initial investigation points to overall reductions in use frequency potentially playing a role.

Increased skills

The evaluators examine changes in skills by the different business user types (e.g. employed for wages, self-employed, unemployed and looking for a job) as the skills relevant to each group are different.

Overall, it appears the use of the regional library is connected to skill enhancement. **60% of job-seekers in the patron survey, a key target group to gain job search skills, reported increased skills related to job and employment activities.** Furthermore, a significant number of those currently employed reported an increase in skills to be better in their current jobs (61% of the self-employed and 59% of wage earners). Responses from the panel studies illustrating this include discussion about learning how to run a business, using computers and computer software, and leadership skills. For example:

I'm really happy because of the information that I get from the library that helped me on how to run my business and it added to my knowledge as how to operate the computer. I did not know how to make wedding and business cards or even designing but I only had the idea but I could not apply it but since I attended the training I have learnt a lot. I even know how to put things in PowerPoint format and creating my own email which I did not know before I started making use of the library.

Without the library I would never had the chance to know how to use any computers and I gained experience and knowledge in computer use.

Very necessary because this library has helped me improve in my business; learning how to work with customers, improve my product and how to sell them.

I was actually just appointed as acting supervisor at my work, so I didn't have leadership skills. I came to the library to do research about books on the topic and I found a very interesting book that I am currently using now on how to do my work, it is a very nice book and it's helpful...I can see myself when I started reading that book, my working skills have been improved and the way how I have been working with my colleagues is great.

Other skills also increased. More than 50% of each type of business user reported developing or improving computer skills. Approximately 50% or more of each type of business user also reported developing other new skills or learning something new.

Table 21: Skill increases as a result of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
% of Patron survey business respondents.

	Self E.	J Seeker	Wage E.
Gained job search skills	39	60	30
Gained skills to be better in your current job	61	1	59
Developed/improved computer skills	57	62	64
Developed other new skills or learned something new	48	56	57

Despite the overall skill increases, it appears that the perceived impact of the regional library on individual user skills decreases over time (See Table 22 below). We see this when looking specifically at changes in skills over the previous four weeks. As with learners, this could be due to respondents completing all possible library-provided trainings and beginning to maximize other resources. Panel respondents, for example, indicated time spent learning job search skills reduced from 8% to 0%. There could also be a methodological explanation: perhaps if the questionnaire asked about skill development over a period of time longer than four weeks, more skill development would have been reported. This may also be a reason for similar trends seen with learners. However, qualitative methods do indicate this could in-part be a result of limited classes, and there remains **a potential area for improvement for the library: create opportunities for continuing and advanced training in business and employment skills.** One business patron, for example, noted:

I think they need to extend their computer classes because they only do it for two weeks, they need to extend it to maybe 3 months... They maybe cannot go to that extent to give more knowledge to someone who does not know the computer, that is why they only teach the basic skills maybe. The teachers only have the level of beginners and they need to bring up different advanced levels.

Qualitative methods also point to indirect skill development, particularly as a result of using computers. Examples of responses that allude to this include the following:

- *And the more I use the computer, the more I am improving on my skills.*
- *Using the computer to type documents also improve my typing skills.*

Table 22: Reported highly significant or somewhat significant skill impacts from regional library use over the previous 4 weeks. (% of Business Panel respondents.)

	Self-employed		Job-seekers		Wage Earners	
	Surv 1	Surv 2	Surv1	Surv 2	Surv1	Surv 2
Skills to find information on new career options	60	0	44	36	73	25
Skills for getting a new job	NA	NA	22	36	20	0
Skills to advance in current job	NA	NA	NA	NA	73	50
Resume writing skills	60	0	67	27	67	0
Interview skills	60	0	44	27	46	0
Networking skills	60	25	61	27	60	25
Vocational skills	40	0	55	9	73	25
Skills to start a business	60	25	22	18	40	0
Skills to increase your income	60	25	0	0	33	0
Skills to increase business profitability	40	25	NA	NA	NA	NA
Skills to increase business productivity	60	25	NA	NA	NA	NA
Skills to increase the number of business clients	40	25	NA	NA	NA	NA
Skills to expand existing business	60	25	NA	NA	NA	NA

* Cells marked with "NA" indicate areas respondent groups were not asked

Improved understanding of issues at work

Understanding of issues at work appears to improve as a result of regional library use. As noted above, a majority of business respondents in the patron survey indicated they gained skills to be better in their current jobs (61% of self-employed; 59% of wage earners). Furthermore, **48% of the self-employed respondents and 57% of wage earners indicated use of the regional library allowed them to understand things they were learning about at work, and 43% of self-employed and 50% of wage earners indicated the regional library helped them get information that helped them contribute in work discussions.**

**Table 23: Results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months. First-order outcomes.
% of Patron survey business respondents.**

	Self E.	Wage E.
Understood things you are learning about at work	48	57
Got information that helped you contribute in a work discussion	43	50

**Note:* this does not include those unemployed and looking for a job

When asked how many times in the last four weeks the regional library helped with understanding things for work or helping with work discussions the mean number of times decreased over the course of the study (2.5 to .5 for understanding things at work; 2.5 to 0 for helping with work discussions). Some of this could be attributed to overall decreased regional library use, or it could be a result of the limited library resources being maximized. Qualitative data does not provide insight to understand these decreases.

Despite this decrease, the value of the regional library for employment and income remains high. When asked how important the information accessed in the library's resources over the last four weeks was to achieving their employment and income needs, 77% of respondents indicated "absolutely essential" or "very important" in the final panel survey. Nearly 60% of those indicated it was "absolutely essential." The 77% is a decrease from 84% at the first panel survey yet remains high.

**Table 24: Importance of the regional library to achieving employment and income needs.
Percent of business panel respondents.**

	Percent of Respondents	
	Panel Survey 1	Panel Survey 3
Absolutely essential	50	44
Very important	34	33
Important	5	6
Somewhat important	3	6
Not at all important	8	11

5.4.4.3 Second-order economic outcomes

Moving beyond first-order outcomes, we now investigate second-order outcomes—those that involve changes in income, job performance, and job prospects.

As noted in the introduction to this section, confidently linking use of the regional library to secondary outcomes is challenging without a counterfactual, especially for those outcomes such as gaining employment or increasing income. Additionally, under the current social and economic environment, some secondary outcomes (like obtaining a job) may be practically difficult to achieve, even with the support of the regional library's resources. Given this, the evaluators present second-order economic outcomes as an insight into the potential role the regional library may be playing in the lives of patrons.

Overall, the library appears important in helping patrons achieve their work-related goals. One way this is seen is with gains in work performance and productivity. These gains, however, appear short in duration and do not continue over time for most patrons. Outcomes around increased income were mixed, with initial high outcomes that appear to be seen less frequently over time. And although patron survey responses indicate the regional libraries are successful in helping patrons improve their job prospects, unemployed job-seekers reported very low levels of finding employment.

Improved work performance/productivity

Work performance and productivity appear to increase as a result of regional library use. **61% of the self-employed and 52% of wage earner respondents indicated they were able to complete tasks at their job as a result of using the regional library resources.** In addition, as described above, increased skills and information from using the regional library seem to result in improved work performance.

Looking over time at the panel study, the average number of times business patrons reported the regional library helped with completing tasks for their job over the previous four weeks decreased from 3 to 0.6 over the course of the panel study. Again, this could be a result of decreased overall use, as the decrease in the number of times reported appears to coincide with the decrease in number of times using the library. This could also be a result of resources not being available at the regional library for increasingly complex or newly emerging work issues. Certainly, physical resources remain a challenge. One focus group participant mentioned how they experienced difficulties in preparing job applications because of a lack of ink:

Sometimes we come to the library just to make photocopies for applications. Like the jobs that was advertised here for Ministry of Education. We came to the point where we were disappointed because the library was out of ink for a very long time.

Qualitative methods point to different ways the regional libraries support work performance outcomes. When asked “How necessary is this library for you to succeed in your job search or work? What would it be like if this library was not available?” items of note include working better with customers, learning how to better sell products, and the ability to conduct business on library computers. Illustrative examples include:

Very necessary because this library has helped me to improve in my business; learning how to work with customers, improve my product and how to sell them. It would have been bad if a library of this size was not available. Everything will be limited. I won't be able to do the research I need because if I am using the phone, the data will finish and it is very expensive. internet at the internet café will also be very expensive. Using the free Wi-Fi at the library, there is no limitation, you have access to the internet to search/research whatever you want until you find it.

It is very necessary because I can see that since I started using this library and have learned about marketing and research my business has done better...My expenses would have been a lot because I would have used other service providers and I also would not have learned computer skills I have now. I would not have benefited as I have if the library was not available.

It's important because all the resources I need to use are available in the library, like the computers, which have free internet, which is mostly to check my work related emails. If the library was not available then it would have been difficult, because sometimes I have to use the internet at the library since I stay at the village and the network is not good there. I have to use my phone and I will force to drive to town or a nearby place where I can get network to have access to the internet and for my emails to through.

The library is very important to me because having access to the internet using their computers enabled me to import things from China and South Africa and I also managed to keep the communication going via email with people that I buy the products from. I found a new method on the internet on how I could buy cars from Dubai and it is something I am busy exploring more in order to buy cars there and come sell here.

Increased income

This study did not undertake an in-depth examination of income changes as a result of regional library use. High-level investigation indicates mixed outcomes from the regional library for increases in income. **39% of the self-employed and 16% of wage earner respondents in the patron survey reported income increases as a result of using the library resources.** At the same time, however, the average number of times panel respondents indicated they learned something at the regional library over the last four weeks that helped them increase their income dropped from 1.2 to 0.

The decrease in instances of income gains requires further study to understand. This could be a result of decreased library use. Or, since (as previously noted) “business patrons” are targeted groups and may not necessarily intend to use the library for business or economic purposes, their use of the library specifically for income generation support may be inconsistent. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, income gains cannot be reasonably expected to consistently occur or increase over time for the same group of people.

Qualitative data do not inform us why there has been a decline in instances of income gains. The cases illustrated below, however, point to income as an outcome that, once experienced, might be maintained but not will necessarily increase over time:

The information I obtained from the internet on wedding planning, décor and catering I was able to start off my business, earning an income; now I am able to take care of myself and my family.

My income has improved through advertising my business and also the fact that the library staff were ordering take-aways from me that I deliver to them. They also allowed to sell my products in front of the library, resulting in my getting many customers.

...the other thing is that I have learnt how to make wedding cards [as part of a regional library program] and I make an income from selling those event cards. I also get to create my business cards which I get to hand out to people to promote and market my business in order to get more customers.

It has also made my work easier by providing me with the necessary information that I needed for my business and that has improved my income

When it comes to work, I still did not find a job. However, I do architectural drawing part time and I make use of the library for that reason, so I am able to earn money, even a little but I can do something with that little.

Improved job prospects

16% of wage earners, 9% of the self-employed, and 1% of unemployed job-seekers, indicated that using the regional library led to gaining employment. As noted above, there are many factors that may impact finding employment, and the job gains described here, although limited in overall number, may be taken as indications of successful use of the regional library. One area for improvement could be around supporting unemployed job-seekers. However, it is not clear if patrons reduce or cease their use of the regional library once a new job is attained, thereby impacting our sample. This may be particularly relevant for job-seekers, who, upon gaining employment, may face new work schedules that conflict with the limited library hours. In addition, as noted above, the current economic downturn in Namibia has led to high unemployment and overall limited availability of jobs. More context and understanding of that group is needed. It is important to re-emphasize that this study did not use a counterfactual

or investigate in-depth the social and economic structures that allow for attribution of these types of outcomes to regional library use.

Responses to panel interviews and other qualitative methods also largely illustrate a perceived connection between having access to regional library resources and improvement in job prospects. When asked “How necessary is this library for you to succeed in your work/job search? What would it be like if this library was not available?” the variety of responses from the panel interviews included:

If the library was not available I would have never had the chance to get a job or gained that experience. The library is very important for me as I have said, I usually come here to search for work in the newspapers and the notice board and I also do applications from here. It would have been very tough if the library was not available. I would have spent money on newspapers or data, money that I don't have.

As shown in the above quote, positive outcomes around job prospects were seen in both the ability to better find a job, as well as being able to apply for jobs. These point to the potential for securing a new job in the future, with the timeframe of the study too short for it to be captured. With respect to job searches, as noted above, 39% of the self-employed, 60% of unemployed job-seekers, and 30% of wage earners credited the regional library with providing them new job search skills. Some illustrative examples of job search outcomes include:

So when looking for employment, I find out more about the company and the vacancy advertisement and also the objectives of that company, to know more about it.

When job hunting it helps me sometimes because there are times when I don't have money to buy a newspaper. Here they print it out and cut out vacancies and paste them on their notice boards whereby everyone can see.

I cannot really say that it's helping me, because I did not get a job yet. I am still struggling to get a job...But somehow it helped me because sometimes, I don't have money to go buy newspapers and I also search for advertisements on the internet.

It is very important because now that I am able to use the computers I do more job searches and I apply more.

I have been unemployed for a while now and if the library was not available with free resources it will be difficult for us who are unemployed to search for vacancies because we will not have money to pay for newspapers and pay for internet.

I gained more knowledge about what I wanted in terms of my career.

In terms of applying for jobs, we also see respondents note ways access to the regional library has helped them. Some examples include:

You can apply online, so you can submit your things online and on time.

[The staff] also try to give specific directions on where to go and submit the application forms.

If the government has vacancies they will provide you with the job application forms. Or if you have it on your phone they will print it out for you even if you don't have 50 cents to pay.

When there are a variety of vacancies on the internet, they usually print them out and place it on their notice board.

Lack of printing resources may be limiting the potential for job-related outcomes. The noted role of the regional library as a place to print job applications is important as it points to a recurring challenge seen in this evaluation. Namely, that printing and copying resources often are not available, which is discussed in detail in Section 5.3.5.

5.4.4.4 Non-economic outcomes

As with learners, the evaluators recognize the importance of measuring changes in aspects of the lives of business patrons beyond the primary evaluation focus areas. Again, the level of investigation of other outcome domains is less in-depth than for economic-related outcomes.

Other domain outcomes

It appears that positive library outcomes span domains beyond those economic or job-related, particularly saving money, saving time, and community engagement. Small but important gains were also seen in the reading culture, health, and local culture. Below is a summary of outcomes in non-economic domains business patron respondents reported as the results of using the regional libraries.

Communications and leisure activities

Communications and leisure activities saw positive outcomes through library use. 31% of respondents indicated they had a place to meet friends and socialize, while 43% indicated they communicated more with friends and family. Additionally, 48% of respondents indicated they were able to meet new people through using the library, and 34% of respondents noted that using the library allowed them to have fun.

When asked how many times they used the library for different reasons over the previous two weeks, changes seen in the business panel study were mixed. While the average number of times respondents used the library for socializing decreased from 3.1 to 1.6, the average number of times used for entertainment increased from 3.4 to 3.6. The value of the library as a place to do activities that bring fun is illustrated by the following panel respondents:

The library for me is also a source of entertainment, when I have nothing much to do at home, I come to the library to come and relax and do some fun activities, just keeping me from getting crazy for just sitting all day and feeling lonely and depressed.

In the past, I stayed home doing nothing, now I spent my time at the library doing fun things.

Culture of reading

A culture of reading appears to be positively supported. 22% of respondents indicated they read more than if they did not have access to the library, and 32% responded they found books to read for pleasure. Despite the previously noted overall decrease in use by business patrons, the average number of times business panel respondents used the library in the previous two weeks for reading books for personal interest remained the same, at 1.8 times, while reading the news increased from 4.4 to 4.9 times. Further, the percent of respondents indicating that the library helped them to find books to read for pleasure increased from 56% to 63%. The regional libraries appear to be building a culture of reading even with non-students. Some examples include:

- *When I borrowed some novels from the library for reading they kept me busy and I enjoyed reading them instead of just being at home sleeping.*
- *I spend more time here reading because I am surrounded by books and internet for information I need.*
- *I am reading novels regularly since I started using this library, which helps me clear my thoughts to keep me relaxed when I am tired.*
- *Yes, I developed interests in reading things that have nothing to do with my job search or school but just interesting facts.*

General knowledge

General knowledge gains were also apparent, with 55% of business patrons indicating they developed new skills or learned something new. Knowledge of government services also rose, with nearly 30% of respondents indicating they were more aware of government services. New knowledge was addressed by panel respondents in the form of studying for formal courses or doing self-directed learning, as illustrated with the following:

The library helped me to improve on my studies, having access to examination booklets, made me study hard and I passed the last exam in August.

I have gained a lot of personal knowledge through the internet and by reading different books.

Community engagement

Community engagement appeared to increase, with nearly 50% indicating use of the library allowed them to be more connected locally and around the world. 7% indicated they were more aware of community events or activities. The evaluators also see the percent of respondents in the panel survey that indicated the purpose of the last book/resource used was to get information on government services remained around 15% in the beginning and end of the panel, pointing to consistent use to remain engaged with the government:

Wi-Fi [is the most important resource] because it keeps me informed of what is happening in the world. It also keeps me in contact with people around the world and when you want information you can get it very fast and easy through the internet.

Finances

Finances also saw positive outcomes, which can be seen beyond income gains and points to other types of economic impacts. 41% of respondents indicated they saved money. Some responses from study participants expressing financial gains include:

Saves money or removes financial barrier in gaining information

Before I started to use this library I did not have any money to make use of internet cafés so I did not have any information regarding studying or on careers.

With the newspapers, I have to spend money and at the library is for free.

Time

Time benefits seemed to see positive outcomes. This is seen in both time savings as well as how time is used. With respect to time savings, 41% of patron survey respondents indicated this outcome as a result of using the library. And in regard to better use of time, having options to be somewhere and feel productive was voiced by several panel respondents as important. For example, "I will say that it has completely changed my life. I don't spend my time at bars anymore. If I'm not working I will be at the library doing assignments or reading books or studying."

Health

Patron health also appears to have positive outcomes. 10% of respondents indicating they were better able to address health issues as a result of using the library, which is similar to what was reported by learners. However, as with learners, this should not be overlooked as it points to an important personal outcome and role of the regional libraries not widely mentioned as a priority domain area.

Local culture and language

Local culture and language appear to see positive outcomes, as 16% of respondents indicated use of the library allowed them to be more connected to their culture and language.

5.4.4.5 Impacts by Gender

Overall, ***males reported more perceived outcomes than females in business- and income-related activities***. This includes the majority of measured first- and second-order outcomes. The one area where females reported higher outcomes than males was in gaining job search skills (52% vs. 42%).

Table 25: Business/income domain results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
% of Patron Survey business patron respondents.

Outcome	Females	Males
<i>First-order outcomes</i>		
Gained skills to be better in your current job	20	38
Understood things you are learning about at work	17	35
Completed tasks in your current job	17	35
Got information that helped you contribute in a work discussion	14	31
Gained job search skills	52	42
<i>Second-order outcomes</i>		
Increased income	4	18
Gained employment	7	7

Outcomes in non-business/income domains had mixed reporting by males and females.

Areas where more females noticeably reported outcomes at a higher rate than males were in developing computer skills and saving time. A much higher percent of males reported outcomes in having fun, being more connected to their culture and language, and being able to address health issues.

Table 26: Other domain results of using library resources, information, and opportunities accessed over the previous 12 months.
% of Patron survey business patron respondents.

Outcome	Females	Males
Developed computer skills	67	56
Developed other new skills or learned something new	58	52
More connected to what's happening locally and around the world	45	52
Met new people	45	51
Better prepared for future education needs	41	48
Communicated more with friends and family	41	45
Saved time	48	35
Saved money	41	41
Had fun	26	41
Found books you like to read for pleasure	32	32
Read more than if you did not have access to the library	23	21
Had a place to meet with friends/socialize	32	31
More aware of how to use government services	30	28
More connected to your culture and language	12	21
Better able to address health issues	4	15
Increased awareness about community events or activities	6	8

5.5 Broader influence of the regional libraries

5.5.1 Overview

Prior to the regional libraries opening, some stakeholders envisioned the regional libraries would have positive ripple effects for surrounding communities, the region, and the country. While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to study such large-scale changes resulting from the RSRC Activity and the evaluators only devoted modest attention to this question, the evaluators offer the following tentative findings. At the community level, survey results indicated a small ripple effect as many library patrons sought information or performed tasks on computers on behalf of

family and friends. At the regional level, no other regional libraries were completed during the evaluation period, though two were reported under construction. Nationally, through an analysis of media reports, the evaluators were unable to detect broader impacts, such as an increased reading culture. However, this was a very limited analysis and as such the evaluators can neither confirm nor reject this possibility.

5.5.2 Introduction

The regional libraries were created with a hope that the venues would not only benefit the people who use them, but also people in the surrounding communities and throughout the country.

This section explores the evaluation question #7: “*What is the influence of the regional libraries beyond their walls?*” Our focus is on the ripple effect of the regional libraries and specifically, community members who have not used the library directly and intangible effects reported more broadly. The evaluators consider the extent to which the regional libraries have had any influence on four areas:

- Benefitting the patrons’ families, friends, and coworkers
- Encouraging the creation of regional libraries in other regions
- Enhancing the reading culture in Namibia

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to study large-scale changes or impacts resulting from the existence of the three regional libraries. The evaluators do not make definitive claims in this section. Doing so would require resource-intensive data collection methods, such as a community or non-user surveys over wide geographic areas. Rather, the evaluators present the results of a relatively light analysis of national media sources and responses from evaluation participants.

Data sources. This analysis draws on a mix of data from media analysis, patron surveys, key informant interviews, and FGDs. The evaluators examined if the benefits of library use reach the families and friends of patrons by analyzing responses from the patron survey and FGDs. Key informant interviews supplied information on the status of expanding the regional library model to other regions of Namibia. The evaluators look into Namibia’s reading culture among non-library users is informed by media sources, which consisted of newspaper articles collected by TASCHA for Component 1 of this evaluation, and Sustainable Development Africa (SusDAf), our local data collection partner in Namibia for Component 2. (For more information, see Section 4 for information on media analysis methodology.)

5.5.3 Benefitting patrons' families, friends, and coworkers

Key findings

- A substantial proportion of respondents had used the library to get information or help for someone else, such as a friend or family member.
- This behavior was highest among patrons who were employed, self-employed, or using the Ohangwena library—with nearly 50% of these groups having done so.
- This behavior was lowest among patrons who were secondary learners or using the Omaheke library—with less than 20% having done so.

The patron survey asked library patrons if they had “used this library to get information or help for someone else, such as a friend or family member” in the previous four weeks, with the implication that if patrons were indeed doing this, a circle of close relations could be accruing some of the benefits of the regional libraries without ever directly using their services. This effect has been observed in other library evaluations. In the U.S., for instance, a study of public access computer use in libraries found that nearly one-third of patrons used the computers to access information for someone else.²⁴

One-quarter of survey respondents reported using the library for someone else. This amounted to one in three business section patrons and one in five learners/students. The evaluators saw this response most often among the self-employed (55%) and wage earners (45%), in contrast to secondary learners (17%). Meanwhile, job-seekers (26%) and post-secondary (31%) students fell in the middle. Given the demographics of these groups, it is possible that this difference may correspond with age, with older people bearing more responsibility for others in their families and communities than learners do.

Nearly half of Ohangwena patron respondents report using the library for someone else. At Ohangwena, 47% of respondents stated as much, compared to 22% of Oshana respondents and 9% of Omaheke respondents. The evaluators do not have insight into the factors that might explain these differences.

Most often, the main purpose of using the library for someone else was to obtain information or perform a task related to educational needs (67%). Yet this response was more prevalent among learners and students (84%) than business section patrons (50%). Rather, business section patrons were slightly more likely to use the library for someone else to obtain information or perform tasks related to economic or employment needs (50%). Only one respondent reported doing tasks related to government service needs for someone else.

²⁴ Opportunity for all: How the American Public Benefits from internet Access at U.S. Libraries. Available at <https://www.ims.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/OpportunityForAll.pdf>

5.5.4 Expanding the regional library model

Key findings

- Four years after the close of the Compact, no additional regional libraries had opened in Namibia

Several years ago, when NLAS developed the concept of the regional library, the plan was to eventually establish one in each of Namibia's 14 regions. It was hoped that MCC's investment in three regional libraries -- and the libraries' subsequent performance -- would demonstrate the value these institutions can bring, which might further persuade MoEAC and other officials to expand the regional library model across the rest of the country. This expectation had continued through 2017, as captured by this statement from an interview participant:

If we can continue having the type of results that we're getting, and the type of statistics that we are getting, we can easily and proudly stand up and say, Mr. President, we need additional budgets to build additional regional libraries in all the other 11 regions because the results we have gotten from these current regions are a, b, c, d, and it can be proven.

Four years after the close of the Compact, no additional regional libraries had opened to the public. During interviews with key informants in 2015 and 2018, we learned that two new facilities were under construction. As of October 2018, it appeared none of those facilities had been completed. Specifically:

- In Outapi, the Omusati Regional Library was said to be “*at the advanced stage, almost complete,*” yet the project had stalled, presumably because the government was behind on payments to contractors: “*It stopped somewhere along the way, but we're still getting communications from the [architects]. I think the little bit of money that they get... they would put it there because they want to really complete it.*” The Omusati library was expected to be comparable to the facilities built by MCA-N, with a budget of over N\$50 million, excluding furniture and equipment. In 2018, a key informant said “*It's a beautiful place. Almost the same as the regional-- okay, just that it has one floor. But it's as big as the regional libraries... I've been there and I've seen it*”. It appears construction had progressed since 2015, when a key informant said that the foundation had likely not been dug yet because they were having problems with the main contractor.
- In Ngoma, the Zambezi Regional Library had also stalled. A key informant in 2018 stated: “*That was actually supposed to complete some years back but then, I think, there were delays, delays, delays until we come in this situation... that one is on hold...*”. Presumably, the facility referred to was the same one described three years prior, in 2015, by two key informants, who explained it was possible a facility in Ngoma that had been “built up to the ceiling” as a Community Learning and Development Center (CLDC) would be changed to a library because that is what the region demanded. (The MoEAC operates the CLDCs and the regional libraries.) According to that respondent, the building was in a nice location, next to a school.

Furthermore, key informants explained in 2015 that other regions desired a regional library after seeing the ones built in the Ohangwena, Omaheke, and Oshana Regions. These included the Khomas Region, that had spoken about renovating and expanding a small library in Katutura, a township outside of Windhoek of around 40,000 people, and the Ilkaras Region, which said they would like to build a regional library in a town there.²⁵

Regional library projects were likely on hold due to a combination of challenges around funding and staffing. Given what the evaluators heard, the evaluators are reasonably confident that Namibia's economic downturn, which began in 2017, played a significant role in these delays, as well as problems that predated the economic downturn, such as a shortage of qualified librarians in the country. Staffing the regional libraries in Ohangwena, Omaheke, and Oshana had been challenging, and some key informants believed that building and opening new regional libraries would only compound the problem until a solution for the librarian shortage could be found.

5.5.5 Enhancing the reading culture in Namibia

Key findings

- A review of newspaper articles published during the evaluation period did not provide evidence to suggest the culture of Namibia had shifted its attitudes toward reading, nor that the regional libraries have or have not played a role in that shift.
- Other sections of this report indicate the regional libraries are helping to shift reading patterns among library patrons. For example, many patrons indicated they read more than they would have if they did not have access to the library (see Sections 5.4.3.4 and 5.4.4.4).

The regional libraries were anticipated to help drive the hoped-for emergence of an enhanced reading culture in the Ohangwena, Omaheke, and Oshana Regions and in Namibia as a whole. This evaluation did not produce sufficient evidence to say if reading culture did or did not expand in Namibia as a result of opening and operating regional libraries in the three regions. Below, the evaluators present what the evaluation found in this respect given the data sources available to us.

Media analysis returned more than 40 articles related to the regional libraries from national news outlets. None of the articles reported an increase in reading culture attributed to the regional libraries. Instead, articles spoke about the limited reading culture that exists in Namibia and the hope that regional libraries would improve reading culture. Some articles reported on large numbers of children accessing and using regional libraries, especially during examination time. One article explored the link between libraries and poverty alleviation, mentioning the

²⁵ Estimated population of Katutura Central and East combined. Source: <http://www.khomasrc.gov.na/constituencies>

regional libraries could possibly support enhancement of grades and possible impacts on unemployment. However, none of the articles reported on actual impacts.

6. Factors influencing performance and usage

During the evaluation period, the performance and usage of the three regional libraries was largely determined by sustainability and leadership factors. Specifically, budget and staffing challenges constrained operations and service provision. Although library leadership successfully overcame several critical issues for the libraries, operational challenges remained, such that the libraries were missing opportunities to strengthen operations in strategic areas. Additionally, the regional libraries varied in regard to long-term financial sustainability.

Below, the evaluators focus on sustainability and leadership as factors that influenced library performance and usage. In doing so, the evaluators address two evaluation questions:

- EQ 5: How sustainable are the RSRCs?
- EQ 6: How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the RSRCs?

6.1 Leadership

6.1.1 Overview

Library leadership—the chief librarians, the regional directorates of the MoEAC, and NLAS—worked through several critical issues to raise the quality of library services. Most respondents characterized leadership as being supportive and doing the best they could to uphold the original vision of the libraries given budgetary constraints. However, a few respondents intimated that at least one regional directorate may not fully value the regional library and was not providing adequate support. Also, a few staff respondents believed at least one regional library’s vision to serve the general community was being supplanted with an orientation toward primarily serving learners and schools.

The regional libraries have led efforts to build partnerships across ministries and with the local business community, with the chief librarian and staff leveraging the relationships to provide community programs and trainings for patrons and staff. The evaluators did not hear about the regional directorate or NLAS forging strategic partnerships across agencies, which in some instances they could be better positioned to do.

In addition to running the regional library, the chief librarian has been responsible for overseeing all of the community libraries within the region. Based on interviews with key informants and regional library staff (but not community library staff), the evaluators heard the chief librarians have worked with community libraries by holding monthly meetings, reviewing reports from the community libraries, and sharing ideas and approaches.

6.1.2 Introduction

At the outset of this evaluation, stakeholders emphasized that the success of the regional libraries would hinge on the quality and commitment of leadership in their ability to make strategic management decisions and develop plans that drive the libraries toward achieving their goals. Stakeholders anticipated several challenges for leadership, including securing ongoing funding for the libraries, effectively advocating for the libraries, managing high expectations, and making difficult decisions about prioritizing some library services over others if the need arose (Sey & Fellows, 2016:74).

When the economic downturn in 2017 and 2018 hit and budgets were cut by 75%, leadership found itself unable to conduct planned activities (as described in Section 6.2.3) but pushed forward nonetheless.

This section addresses Evaluation Question 6: *How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the RSRCs?* It addresses leadership's vision, priorities, strategic partnerships, and role in supporting the community library system.

Data sources. This analysis is based entirely on the perspectives of key informants and staff as informed by interviews in 2017 and 2018. Given the nature of the matter discussed, the evaluators were not able to triangulate these perspectives with data from other methods.

6.1.3 Leadership roles

For the regional libraries, leadership roles were assigned to three government entities: the regional libraries (in the role of chief librarian), the regional directorates of the MOEAC (located in the Ohangwena, Omaheke, and Oshana Regions), and NLAS (located in Windhoek).

- The chief librarian is responsible for day-to-day operations, managing the regional library and all community libraries in the region.
- The regional directorates—and specifically the director and deputy director of Lifelong Learning within the directorate—provide library oversight, allocate the library's budget, handle HR matters, and perform other management functions.
- NLAS provides library expertise and technical support to the regional libraries, especially in areas that benefit from national coordination, including: acquiring books, maintaining the integrated library management system (ILMS) and online catalog, providing expertise and funding for staff training and professional development, advocating for libraries in Namibia, and other activities.

Beyond day-to-day responsibilities, the regional library leadership has at times mobilized to address critical issues facing the libraries. Demonstrations of leadership included the role of NLAS in negotiating a much more favorable internet contract (as described in Section 5.3.3 of this report) for the three regional libraries and working with external organizations and library

associations to bring training and professional development opportunities to library staff (as described in Section 6.2.5.2). The regional directorates and chief librarians (permanent and acting) played a critical role in keeping the libraries operating through the country's economic downturn (as described in Section 6.2.3) and in supporting the Omaheke library while the permanent chief librarian position was vacant (as described in Section 6.2.4).

Another major success for leadership at the Ohangwena and Oshana regional libraries was opening the libraries on Saturdays. This was a very important achievement for three reasons: patrons had overwhelmingly indicated that library hours needed to be extended, staff had indicated that community members with full-time jobs could not take part in library programs, and being open on weekends was an explicit expectation of the RSRC Activity, as shown in agreements between the MoEAC and MCC (see Coward, et. al., 2019:73-75).

To open their doors on Saturdays, the libraries had to devise strategies for overcoming staffing shortages, staff reluctance (from some, not all staff), conflicting interpretations of national labor laws, and initial resistance from labor unions (See Coward, et. al., 2019:73-75). When asked how the Oshana library was able to extend its operating hours to Saturdays in 2017 and 2018, a key informant explained:

I think it's an issue of leadership convincing colleagues, saying "let us put our interest first aside, and let us look at what really the community needs." The community needs those services.

Additionally, one key informant stated the Deputy Director of HR in the Ohangwena region played a critical role in working with labor unions to understand what extending operating hours would mean for staff.

The regional directorates, NLAS, and chief librarians have been able to navigate complex issues to keep the regional libraries running and serving their communities, which is evidence that leadership has indeed worked to promote and achieve the vision of the libraries in a general sense. However, leadership has at times approached similar challenges in different ways or has prioritized some activities over others, out of necessity or not. As such, the rest of this section looks more closely at a few topics to illustrate the nature and extent of leadership's initiative and extent of support for the regional libraries.

6.1.4 Vision and priorities

Most key informants and staff respondents believed the overall vision of the regional libraries has remained the same:

The goals still remain the same, to serve the communities to serve the school to serve all stakeholders in different levels from being children to the youth to the adults to the out of school youth, the university students, [and the] government employees.

Key informants and staff portrayed leadership as generally supportive, and especially supportive in the Ohangwena region. Two key informants and one staff member attributed the successes of the Ohangwena regional library to the strong contributions from the regional directorate, the chief librarian, and NLAS:

[The regional libraries are doing] more or less, the same. But out of the three, you can single out some where you say, "But this one, they are doing better," like Ohangwena. Ohangwena is excelling like very well. Yeah, whether it's in terms of rendering services, in terms of even the statistics and so forth. And I think it also goes back to the issue of management. Like the management within the [regional directorate], they are supporting their librarians. Where, maybe in others, management are more concerned with other issues and libraries are like just pushed aside like, "Oh, no, we have other—.

[The Director, Deputy Director and everybody at the regional directorate] really support us. When it comes to finance, they really support us. We don't have any problem with that.... [And at NLAS], they also do support us whenever we need something....

The Helao Nafidi one is also working very well because the [chief librarian] is a very active person. And this is the one who wants to start a community garden and all this okay.

Comments also suggested that the regional directorate in Omaheke has been supportive, particularly given that the library there had functioned without a chief librarian for more than two years. For instance:

Omaheke was doing excellent job... until the [Chief Librarian] left, okay. Now, there is a person, the Deputy Director [of the regional directorate], who's also trying to keep it up. But the [Chief Librarian] position has been vacant for a while. And [the Deputy Director] also has other responsibilities. But you can see that there are some efforts there.

Yes, [from] the regional directorate, we do have unconditional support... If we tell them that this is the challenge that we are having, they always try to advise better or look at other means. The support is there [...]. [Also], financially, yes the government is trying its best way it can.

However, there were indications that leadership at the regional directorates and the regional libraries did not always see eye to eye. A few respondents spoke about how the goals or priorities of the regional directorates and regional libraries could be at odds because the regional directorates are a ministerial unit traditionally focused on schools and formal learning, whereas the regional libraries are an institution designed to serve everyone in the community. This challenge appears to have played out on more than one instance. According to one key informant:

The moment that you don't have regional support, management support at the regions, then it's a problem. It's really a problem... if there is no support, if the management does not understand fully how libraries are supposed to function, then things are not going to move because

librarians can also sometimes give up... And we don't want to drive them to that point where they will give up. So sometimes that's why sometimes [the libraries] report straight to the head office and [NLAS will] try to intervene.

A library staff respondent expressed frustration in working with the regional directorate:

I am operating under someone who doesn't know anything about librarianship ... if you raise a professional argument there is no one [at the regional directorate] who will understand you... We have been dumped somewhere there, where nobody recognizes you, what you are doing, nobody recognizes your power.

Additionally, a few respondents perceived that the regional library's priorities had shifted from serving all community members to focusing on learners. A key informant saw this as a result of budget cuts:

Those [targeted] services have been scaled down to concentrate more on the core duties of the library in terms of teaching the learners and helping the learners. And so, these extra services, although very good objectives, very good aims, but somehow we had to scale them down.

Staff also indicated the priority has shifted toward learners but attributed the shift to the library's reporting structure:

Currently, if you look at our operations, it's more and more focused on learners, school learners. The communities are taking a very small part. [When the] library was constructed, the main focus was the communities, to help the communities improve their economic well-being so that they can contribute to the region's gross domestic product and gross national product, but the focus is now more and more inclining on education on the learners secondary school, primary school, university, and a bit of nursing colleges.... My idea [was] the reason why we are more and more inclining on education is because the library is operating under the directorate of education... 90% of the activities here are focused on learners and not more on communities.

6.1.5 Relationships

The regional libraries have led efforts to build partnerships across ministries and within their local business communities, with the chief librarian and staff leveraging the relationships to provide community programs and trainings for patrons and staff.

The regional libraries have built some relationships with government agencies. These tended to be organized around public information sessions and trainings these organizations could provide at the library. In Oshana, the Ministry of Trade regularly provided the library with trade publications, and the library had worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to run public events on agricultural information. In Omaheke, staff had worked with the Ministry of Health to provide information to the public about cancer awareness and with the Ministry of Defense to talk with community members about crimes and how they could be prevented. In Ohangwena, the library

had worked with the Department of Adult Education to teach about computers in Oshiwango. The libraries also talked about being in touch with the U.S. Embassy, particularly in Omaheke.

Staff at all three libraries described relationships they had with the business community. The Chamber of Commerce was a valuable partner in Oshana, especially for its role in providing business training to staff and patrons. Ohangwena described working with the Ohangwena Businesswomen's Group and the Ohangwena Youth Development Club and has been planning to facilitate a workshop on information literacy and awareness for the latter. A staff member in Omaheke talked about having had a good relationship with individuals in the business community and individuals who had donated books to the library and saw room to strengthen the relationships. None of the regional libraries had worked with the Community Skills Development Center (COSDECs), which were funded by MCC as part of the Compact's Education Program.

The evaluators didn't learn of any instances whereby the regional directorate or NLAS forged strategic partnerships across government agencies. The evaluators see a leadership opportunity for the regional directorates to take a stronger role in developing relationships with other government ministries and for NLAS to develop ways to scale successful partner-based programs so they can be implemented across libraries in the country and on a regular basis.

It appears in some instances NLAS and the regional directorate may be better positioned for relationship building than the regional libraries and could help the libraries make the connections needed to develop programs that would benefit the broader community. For instance, a staff member described an area where the libraries could benefit from action from MoEAC:

So we should be thinking of how we can empower the business section to work independently. Involvement of the other ministries like Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries are very lowly appearing in the overall picture. They are not caring much.

6.1.6 Community libraries

The regional libraries were established to serve as the new administrative centers in each region for what had been a national system of community libraries overseen by NLAS. The role of chief librarian was created not only for managing the regional libraries but also for overseeing and developing community libraries throughout the region.

For this evaluation, the evaluators interviewed key informants and staff at the regional libraries but not staff at the community libraries. Based on those interviews, the evaluators found the regional libraries may benefit the community libraries in a few ways (e.g., related to closer oversight, sharing ideas and approaches, and potential operational efficiencies), yet the evaluators were not able to detect the actual benefits of these changes through the interviews. Additionally, some stakeholders had proposed that the new administrative structure would

benefit the community libraries in terms of increased access to resources and trainings, but it was unclear if this had happened.

Some key informants saw value in the libraries reporting to the chief librarian, who was geographically closer to the community libraries, allowing them to visit and converse with the libraries more frequently:

The link [between the regional libraries and the community libraries] is good because even the head of the library services sub-division, [the chief librarian,] is based there.

I do know that the [chief librarians] are really -- they were visiting these places. I know that when Jean was there [working as the chief librarian in Omaheke], she was visiting all these libraries. And also, [the chief librarian in Ohangwena] is very much involved in all these libraries in his region.

However, some of the potential advantages of proximity between the libraries may not have been realized due to budget cuts. One anticipated effect of budget cuts mentioned in the interim evaluation report was that the chief librarians would probably need to begin to speak/interact with community libraries over the phone rather than in person (Coward, et. al., 2019:71). In 2017, a staff person in Omaheke reported that they had not worked with the libraries as closely since the chief librarian departed in 2015:

Our senior who went away... she was usually the one who was liaising with those people [at the community libraries], but now due to these budget cuts we are not even able to go out. It's just through the phone, "Can you do this? Can you bring this? Come and take this," but we are working hand-in-hand.

Some respondents explained how the community libraries and regional libraries were sharing ideas for services and approaches for performance improvement. From the view of a key informant (2018) and regional library staff member (2017):

The community libraries, for example since there is regional library, you find that community libraries they're also tapping into the regional libraries, because sometimes even the activities that they're running, you'll find they want to imitate also what is happening and that is what is very, very important, because at times you find that maybe they might not be having a direction but if they see that maybe this is what is happening in the regional library, and maybe we should also do the same.

Normally when [the regional library chief librarian and the community library senior librarians are] meeting it's about how can we improve our services. And last time we were talking about outreach to say what outreach programs can we have. And I know another library, the one in Eenhana, they were talking about going into hospitals especially children's wards where there are some children who are not going to school because of sickness, and they want to reach out to them and provide reading material. Those are some of the things we discuss.

The operations manual/toolkit IREX developed with the regional libraries was in the process of being adapted for the community libraries according to one respondent. The community libraries want to use it, as “they have things that would like to pick from that toolkit.”

However, the extent to which the regional libraries were sharing resources like books and expertise at the three libraries in 2017 and 2018 was unclear.

Whatever [the community libraries] need here [at the regional library], they are supposed to go borrow resources from here. And then, take it back and borrow some more through either the mobile library or directly through the regional library. I don't know [if it's happening].

One key informant believed the Oshana regional library had a closer tie to community libraries in the region in part because they were located more closely together.

The libraries in Oshana definitely benefit from year all, from the Oshana library maybe resource wise and so on. Now in terms of other libraries very far from these libraries only through maybe in the lending with their lender book form from Oshana, Omeheke or Ohangwena but they only have a relationship with the libraries in the respected feature. ... The other libraries, community libraries I don't think they have that huge relation in between in case they have resource we've hosted in the library for them for maybe two, three weeks.

In 2017, the chief librarian at Ohangwena described how he brought staff from the community libraries to the regional libraries to partake in training: “I was thinking of just empowering them as people who are so I called them so that we can also have a training together.”

6.2 Sustainability

6.2.1 Overview

By the end of this evaluation, financial sustainability was on uncertain terms at all regional libraries, and none of the regions had a long-term sustainability plan in place. The regional libraries' budgets had changed significantly over the evaluation period, including cuts that reduced operating budgets by more than 75% in one year (FY 2017-2018) due to the country's economic situation. The libraries received slight increases the following year (FY 2018-2019), but nothing close to pre-economic downturn levels. The apparent increase in Ohangwena's budget is misleading.

Staffing the library was also a challenge throughout the evaluation period. Fortunately, the staffing situation slowly improved over the evaluation period for the libraries in Oshana and Ohangwena, with upward of 80% filled. In contrast, staffing levels decreased overtime in Omaheke, with the library only about half staffed at the end of the evaluation period.

The functionality of the physical library buildings and their various systems did not seem to be too affected by the economic downturn. Rather, problems with the facilities were attributed to the implementation phase of the RSRC Activity in the choice to equip the libraries with sophisticated systems that were too complicated for the Ministry of Works to repair and a Compact exit strategy that wrapped up so quickly it resulted in wasted costs and lost opportunities, such as a generator that was delivered but never installed.

6.2.2 Introduction

This section addresses *Evaluation Question 5: How sustainable are the regional libraries?* The evaluators review the two major resource constraints faced by the libraries—operating budgets and staffing levels. The evaluators also consider the sufficiency of both in meeting the regional libraries' various types of needs, including those related to operations, maintenance, personnel development, income sources, and community engagement.

Data sources: This analysis is largely derived from the opinions of key informants and staff as informed by interviews in 2018. Administrative data was incorporated on the subjects of the budget and staffing levels but no other subjects. Observations informed the topic of facilities maintenance.

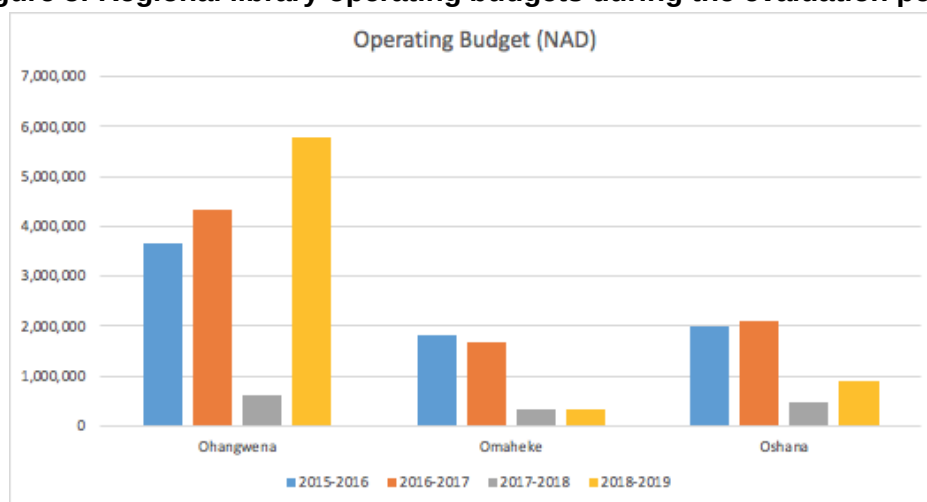
6.2.3 Operating budget

A comprehensive financial analysis was outside the scope of this evaluation. The analysis that follows is based on aggregate budget figures and interview data.

Analysis of the operating budget is complicated by a number of factors. First, in Ohangwena, the budget covers the entire Library, Archives and Information Services Subdivision – which includes school libraries, archives functions, and the community libraries in addition to the regional libraries. We do not have a breakdown by these functions. Second, there is not consistency in what line items the operating budgets cover. In Ohangwena, for instance, over 95% of the budget was allocated for utilities (internet connectivity, etc.), leaving very little discretionary budget for library programming. Third, the approved budget was not necessarily fully received by the regions. If the national government revenue projects fell short during the fiscal year it would distribute less funds to the regions.

The libraries' budgets fell precipitously during the evaluation period. Over the first two fiscal years (2015-16 and 2016-17) the budget situation improved slightly for Ohangwena, remained steady in Oshana, and fell very slightly for Omaheke. In 2017-18, all three regions experienced significant declines – to between 14% and 22% of the previous year's budget. In 2018-19, the final year of the evaluation, Oshana saw its budget double from the previous year, while Omaheke's remained the same. Ohangwena received a huge increase, greatly surpassing its 2016-17 level, but as noted earlier nearly all of this was for utilities.

Figure 5: Regional library operating budgets during the evaluation period



Despite the negative impact on library services, evaluation participants widely perceived the cuts as fair given economic situation. Budget reductions applied to all government agencies (Coward, et. al., 2019:72). Key informants widely accepted this situation and explained the extent of the budget cuts could not have been predicted at the start of the RSRC Activity. The result was that the libraries were operating in “a *totally different economic environment*.”

The regional libraries had no financial sustainability plan in place. It appears that the libraries were largely in survival mode over the last two years. The libraries were dependent on the regional directorates, who were dependent on the allocations they received from the MoEAC, which received its budget from the Ministry of Finance. Revenue-generating activities at the libraries (via NLIC, see Section 6.2.6.3) provided some supplemental funds but were not sufficient to cover day-to-day expenses.

To keep the libraries running, staff at the Omaheke and Oshana libraries said they would require support from outside organizations. Staff in these locations did not know if their funding would ever be restored:

We're trying to make ends meet with the little that is there but it's difficult. It's very, very difficult, very difficult. So we really don't know what will happen next year. Whether the budget will increase or it will remain the same.

They described donors as being “the only way” to continue to provide important services to the community, particularly around computers, printers, and copiers. All of the chief (or acting chief) librarians had spent some amount of time online looking for funding opportunities:

We've worked out a plan of saying let's write letters to donors, let's see if they respond. So when people come to visit, we tell them about the problem, we tell them about the good things that we've done also, so it's out of their own will to help us if they want.

At least one library had been in touch with the U.S. Embassy in Namibia for support. Additionally, the Oshana Regional Library had reported some success with grant writing, having secured a sizeable collection of books. (See 5.3.6 for more information on book acquisition.)

A few staff at the libraries described paying out of pocket for supplies. As described by one staff member:

I used to pay for the [software] licenses myself, from my salary, because they're not too much anyway if you look at them. It's something like a thousand bucks, two thousand, so I used to pay for the license myself. But then this year I told myself that I'm not paying for any license because these people have become too reluctant because they know I'll do something out of my own initiative. So this year I didn't pay for any license for the library except for the antivirus. That's the only thing I paid for.

A staff member described personally paying for small prizes for children's activities. Another described a deputy director who bought cleaning supplies. One respondent described how staff would sometimes pool their money to buy items:

And this also happens sometimes when we need some funding. We call a meeting and tell the other librarians from the other sections that we want to conduct this type of activity, what the aim is, and what the benefit will be, "But we want your donation... Normally we just list, like, if we need pencils we just say, "Look, we need 50 pencils. If you can just afford to buy us even five." Or, "We need these snacks for the kids and we need this. Okay we need sweets or we need biscuits. It will cost us this amount, but if you can make it to, go and buy a packet just bring a packet to us."... Yes, we just ask them at least they must donate in-kind, not money. Those who say, "I cannot go to the shop. Just get the money, you go buy on your own," we also accept... just an example like we wanted to come up with a soccer team for the children's library and we found ourselves we have to buy a ball because we see most children are interested in sports. We have to buy a ball. What can we do? Okay, let's bring it up in the monthly meeting. Let's tell other colleagues. Let them contribute if they can, everyday one dollar, two dollars. At the end we get enough money, we buy the ball, then we have a soccer team for the children's library.

At Ohangwena, staff described adjusting to the funding situation:

We are fine. We can handle. We can cope. We're coping, so I can't say there's still more. As the situation is not in our favor, so what we are trying to do, we're just trying to do with what is there, rather than demanding [what] you know you can't have... I was recently reading an article on how to manage a library in an economic downturn. Somehow they say try to cope with what you have and try to work around, then how it can work better.

6.2.4 Staffing

Hiring and retaining staff was a consistent challenge for the regional libraries, as noted in previous reports (Sey & Fellows, 2016:34; Coward, et. al., 2019:78). Staffing levels increased gradually over the evaluation period in Oshana and Ohangwena until more than 80% of positions were filled. (The staffing structure called for 32 to 36 positions to be staffed at each library.) In Ohangwena, the staffing level declined over time and was only 56% as of October 2018.

The positions most likely to be vacant were the ones required for providing library services to patrons (including positions based in user services, business services, and children's services), as opposed to support staff like cleaners, watchmen, and drivers.

The single position most likely to be vacant across the regional libraries was the mid-level librarian (Grade 9) position—which falls between the senior librarian and library assistant positions. Of the 19 mid-level librarian positions approved, only four were filled as of October 2018. Consequently, the Ohangwena and Oshana regional libraries were run primarily by senior librarians and library assistants under the direction of a chief librarian. Ohangwena and Omaheke were said to have filled some library assistant positions by individuals without previous experience working in libraries (what was previously a top qualification), and instead, out of necessity, hired individuals with a college degree and a willingness to learn how a library works.

As suggested by its low staffing rate (56% of positions filled), the Omaheke Regional Library struggled to fill multiple types of positions. For instance, only three of eight library assistant positions were staffed as of October 2018, which further reduced the library's capacity to provide targeted services to the public.

Omaheke may have also struggled more than the other locations because it lacked a chief librarian for nearly two years. During that time, two senior librarians acted as chief librarian on an alternating and interim basis, at which time they were responsible not only for managing the entire library, but also for running their respective library sections (school services and children's services)—a job made even more difficult given the library's staffing shortages. These interim chief librarians appeared to put a great amount of effort into running the library, but it still seems likely Omaheke may have benefited from having a dedicated, full-time leader with the bandwidth and professional experience to address high-level problems at the library, including those related to recruiting and retaining staff.

The regional libraries' struggles with staffing were attributed to (1) the limited talent pool in Namibia, (2) a low government pay scale, and (3) library location. Specifically, the regional libraries found themselves struggling to compete with other institutions to attract (and retain) qualified library professionals because there were so few in the country, and staff at the regional libraries were said to have sometimes left for better paying positions at the University of Namibia and in the private sector. The Omaheke Regional Library was understood to face

additional hiring challenges due to its location further from urban centers like Windhoek and Oshakati, where it was believed young professionals (e.g., recent graduates of library science programs) typically preferred to work.

These hiring challenges were compounded by a nationwide hiring moratorium instituted in fiscal year 2017-18. The moratorium, which is still in effect, applies to all government departments. Only positions deemed critical have received continuous funding. Departments may apply to the Secretary to Cabinet to fill non-critical positions, which the libraries have done with some success, but entry level and other positions have not been approved.

There did not appear to be any plans on the horizon to make library service positions more competitive or qualified candidates more numerous. No one mentioned lobbying the government for higher salaries (as MCA-N had helped with during the implementation phase), which is understandable given the ongoing economic situation. Stakeholder's hopes that the University of Namibia would expand its library science program to accept more candidates did not come to fruition. Instead, NLAS and the chief librarians encouraged some staff members to pursue degrees and gain the qualifications for a promotion (as described in Section 6.2.5.2 on staff training and development).

6.2.5 Sufficiency of budgets and staffing to meet library needs

Throughout the evaluation period, the regional libraries consistently provided a basic level of service for their communities. The libraries were open at least five days a week. They provided internet access, computers, books, children's activities, and other programs to their communities. Each section of the library (e.g. user and outreach services, business and research services, children's services) was staffed with at least one qualified librarian.

Beneath the surface, constrained by budget cuts and staffing issues, the regional libraries were challenged to conduct the types of strategic activities intended to support library performance and promote long-term sustainability. Given the mixed results of our analysis, we find that the libraries generally did not have sufficient budgets in key areas, including operations, personnel development, promotion, needs assessment, and maintenance.

6.2.5.1 Operating hours

The libraries kept their doors open five days per week for more than four years, even amongst budget cuts and thin staffing. All of the three regional libraries were regularly open from either 8am - 5pm (in Ohangwena and Oshana) or 9am - 5pm (in Omaheke) as of March 2019, five months after the final data collection period (July-September 2018).

In Ohangwena, the regional library was regularly open on Saturdays. As described earlier, this can be considered a considerable achievement because many working people could not visit the library otherwise, and MCC expected extended hours, as shown in MCCA's agreement with the MoEAC. The Ohangwena Region began offering Saturday hours in October 2017 and

continued to do so on a regular basis. To do so, the library formalized a staffing schedule whereby staff worked Tuesday through Friday, and then also on either Saturday or Monday, making sure hours did not exceed 40 per week.

Operating Saturdays put strain on staff, however, because it meant the library was only half staffed on Saturdays and Mondays, exacerbating staffing shortages. One staff member described the situation as such:

It affects me, more especially when I have to work on Saturday, I have to be alone. More especially Saturday and Monday, I'm alone at the section. That's where the problem comes in because if you look at it, it means we are understaffed. Now, the problem with coming now, what about if I get sick or something?... Maybe, when the [vacant librarian position is filled], then maybe it will be better when it comes to shifts, when it comes to helping with your other colleagues here.

The Oshana Regional Library also opened its doors on Saturdays, specifically from September 2017 to November 2018 (not including December and January given the holidays). Yet as of March 2019, five months after the evaluation period, it appeared the library's official hours were restricted to Monday through Friday.

Unlike in Ohagenwa, the Oshana library was not able to formalize Saturday open hours, and instead relied on staff to voluntarily work on a Saturday and not work another day during the week. When four or five staff were available to work on a Saturday, they would open their doors. This appeared to be a positive thing for staff, where no one was forced to work on Saturdays, yet the consequence for patrons was that Saturday openings were inconsistent. Yet the Oshana library compared the number of visitors on Saturdays to other days of the week and found them similar:

If you look at it, [Saturday] is just like any other day. Some even go over 100 or 200 [visitors].

The Ohangwena and Oshana libraries attracted more working adults on Saturdays than other days of the week, as described by staff at both locations.

One thing I've noticed for Saturdays, we have more adults on Saturdays compared to during the week. Mostly during the week we have school kids, and the other small ones there, and a few of – maybe you can see a few tertiary students. But during Saturdays you... can see that these are adults. So probably these are the people who work Monday to Friday, 8:00 to 5:00.

I think [opening our doors on Saturdays] is really wonderful, welcomed by the community, and I see quite a number of people coming to use the library because now. It's accommodating people who are working from Monday to Friday.... Yes, they are new people who were not able to come, and now they can come which to me is very positive. However, even the members of the community who were able [to visit throughout the week], I think on a Saturday they are more relaxed, they are not rushing.

6.2.5.2 Personnel development

Investments in staff—to develop their knowledge, skills, and competences—has long been seen as a critical element to improving the quality of library services over time. At the outset of the Regional Library Activity, MoEAC signed an agreement with MCC stating that the MoEAC would be responsible for providing training to library staff so as to allow them to develop expertise “in administering quality programs and resource acquisition” and “in income generation for rural communities” (Coward, et. al, 2019:83).

Library staff received several types of training in 2014, before the regional libraries opened. These included training on operations, customer service, conducting community information needs assessments, leadership, how to train other staff, facilities and equipment training, and Symphony training (the national library’s integrated library management system, or ILMs). Due to delays in construction and hiring, some training opportunities were scaled back. These included IT training (not offered), maintenance training (which was truncated to a single day at a single library), and trainings provided at the Omaheke library (including training on customer service and community information needs assessment). Most of these trainings were led by IREX – a contractor tasked with providing training and technical expertise during the Regional Library Activity’s program implementation phase –although the Mortensen Center and Universal Knowledge Software (UKS) had begun to provide trainings in leadership and using Symphony, respectively (Sey & Fellows, 2016:39).

The earliest staff members in Omaheke received fewer training opportunities than their counterparts in the North. Some of these initial trainings were attended by only one or two staff from Omaheke (Sey & Fellows, 2016:38-40). This is because few positions at the Omaheke regional library had been filled at the time these trainings were offered and because any additional trainings from IREX would no longer be covered by the Compact, which closed on September 1, 2014.

Since 2015, most training and professional development opportunities seem to have been available only to select individuals or small groups of staff. These included trainings provided by external organizations, including the Namibian Institute of Public Management, the National Archives of Namibia, the U.S. Embassy, UNICEF, the Mortensen Center, the Finnish Library Association, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Some staff have also attended conferences organized by IFLA (the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) or AFLIA (African Library and Information Associations and Institutions). These opportunities were generally made possible with financial support from outside organizations, either by funding a training program or by sponsoring staff to attend an event, such that NLAS would mostly need to cover incidental costs, like gas. For example, one staff member described being selected for a long-term leadership training program provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation:

This program is training African librarians to become innovative... It’s a program for two years, which is more in the library, how to do management in the library, how to deal with the

community, how to source for funds. It's covering quite a lot, which I see that it's good for me. After completing this I'll gain more knowledge which will help me develop all the business services in my section.

Two staff members continued to receive tuition assistance from NLAS in 2018, fewer than in previous years. A key informant describes the program: *"Before a lot of them were being trained because there were studies we paid for, but now with the limited resources, it is also a challenge to us."* As explained by a staff member, the rationale for providing tuition assistance was that there were technical services UNAM can train staff on that the library cannot, and so: *"[Staff] end up registering for long term courses and upgrading their skills.... Sometimes they pay 50% and the region pays 50%, but in some cases they would say," No we don't have funds it's your own."*

More generally, the chief librarians encouraged their staff to pursue a degree while working at the library so that they could advance in their position. The chief librarian at Oshana appeared to make this a personal mission:

What I have done during my three-year stay, I motivated these people to go to school and turnout has been very good.... I have about five or six people who have now moved from their positions and they are now coming up.... Yes and the biggest success that I attained is the watchman.... Now he is doing a diploma at UNAM, there he is at the college now, and I am expecting him if he finishes next year... we will have won.

As for opportunities provided to general library staff, the regional libraries provided some in-house, staff-led trainings. Overall, the evaluators heard about fewer instances of these trainings in 2018 than in 2017. For example, the staff-led capacity-building workshops in the North may have been discontinued, as they were not mentioned by staff as they had been the year before. However, the evaluators heard of two in-house training activities in 2018: (1) staff members training other staff on office software at the Oshana regional library, and (2) NLAS and senior librarians at Ohangwena providing training for staff on customer care and other topics to address an issue at the library: *"they were forced by the situation to hire people without library science qualifications."*

Otherwise, training and professional development opportunities had been stopped in 2017-2018 due to the national economic downturn.

You know, when the economic situation changed, the first thing that was stopped - training. No training. That was the first, first memo that we got.

Here, the trend has been very much compromised by the budget. Trainings at the national level or regional level have been all suspended, if I can use that word.

The exception was, perhaps, Ohangwena's training in 2018, which the chief librarian and other leadership may have had to advocate heavily for. A key informant, speaking of workshops more generally, emphasized how challenging this sort of activity was in the current climate:

Workshops have almost become a nonexistent something now. But we sometimes have to force that, whenever librarians - some were having some workshops, [NLAS will] send one or two people there even if it is very difficult. It is very difficult.

Largely, staff learned on the job and taught other staff on an ad hoc basis. A few senior librarians seemed to see mentoring as an important part of their job. A key informant explained: *We don't have money for training but still we try to coach our staff members who might be lacking in skills. The ideal thing was to organize a training, fund it, and then, you give them proper training. But you just do the coaching and they are performing.*

Yet a few staff respondents insisted that informal coaching and learning on the job were not a replacement for formal training. From Omaheke:

We need to develop ourselves. We need to acquire different skills. We are working in a very modern and diversified community whereby you need to get new ideas, new things that are happening, but with no trainings, it means we're still at that level.

As of the time of the interviews, chief librarians and their staff were organizing trainings on business-related subjects that library staff could benefit from:

- Omaheke was planning to hold a business management training starting for patrons the following week, and librarians would take part to build their skills, too. It was to be led by a volunteer from the municipality, and *"that's her area of specialization, in training businesspeople, so we came to an agreement."*
- Oshana was planning to hold a training on self-employment-related skills for staff, in partnership with the chamber of commerce: *"Currently we are waiting for the letter for agreement between us and the chamber for commerce."*

Notably, key informants described a two-year training in the pipeline provided by EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) from August 2018 to August 2020, a train-the-trainers program for libraries throughout Namibia. Topics covered would include topics such as: developing new technology-based services, change management, impact assessment, communications, and advocacy.²⁶

²⁶ For more information about the training program with EIFL, see: <https://www.eifl.net/news/strengthening-public-library-training-namibia>

Luckily, this one is co-funded by [EIFL... so we managed to get a budget from outside. It's going to go on for two years. It's on continuous professional development. We want all public librarians to be trained and also to be able to train others.

Additionally, two key informants stated that if more funding was available to the regional libraries, they would prioritize an investment in staffing.

Luckily, right now, the infrastructure is intact. But you need materials and you need staffing who can really train, staffing, proper monitoring programs because you want to be able to tell Cabinet or decision makers that through this program, these learners who were not performing, they are now A students because of the intensity of the programs that we have been running through this.

6.2.5.3 Promotion and community engagement

Library promotion and community engagement play a critical role in sustainability because they help stimulate demand—and having a strong number of visitors is good for its own sake—as well as drawing positive attention to the library from decision-makers, future strategic partners, volunteers, and financial supporters. It is also important that the libraries engage in these types of activities to attract a broader range of people to the library so they can target and market to certain groups who would be most in need of the services. Additionally, because the library services are expected to evolve over time to meet communities' changing needs, it helps to let the general community know about new services, resources, and events at the library.

Overall, the primary avenues for promoting the regional libraries in 2018 appeared to be social media, radio, and speaking directly with community leaders. These promotional activities were led by regional libraries acting independently, often to advertise programs or events.

Social media appeared to be the libraries' primary platform for publicizing in 2018. All of the libraries used Facebook to some extent. They also mentioned using Instagram and WhatsApp. For instance, the Ohangwena business section created a WhatsApp group to advertise events, services, and resources directly to the patrons who had signed up for updates and found it to be effective. In Omaheke, the IT section head used different platforms to announce sign-ups for computer training classes.

The regional libraries also advertised their services on the radio in local languages. The Oshana regional library spoke about advertising their programs in 2017 and 2018: "If we have any program coming up, the radio is the most effective media to get people." A staff person in Ohangwena concurred in 2017, explaining that the regional counselor, who gets airtime each week, would highlight regional library activities "and the radio reaches every corner of the regions so we use that opportunity."

In 2017, the chief librarian at the Oshana regional library went beyond radio broadcasts to highlight several examples of library coverage through other forms of media, including news

articles and a 30-minute television interview on “Good Morning Namibia.” He also described working to build promotional savvy among his staff:

Here I am doing a lot of library marketing; I indulge my staff members through a lot of library marketing. We need to market this library and we have been very successful in marketing. So these skills they are lacking in most of them. I have to impart them afresh. So I organize sometimes classes with them to give them the ABCs, or sometimes I talk to them one to one on how to do these skills and they are catching up, for example with media information. They have been able now to undertake, for example at the children section there. I invited the media to and they came there, they were able to talk to the journalists, show them what they are doing and the next day we were fully in the newspapers.

Promotion also proved to be effective when speaking directly with community leaders, as described by staff at Ohangwena and Oshana. Most noticeably, a staff person in Ohangwena reported having great success promoting computer training classes with this approach:

Yes, they were not aware of the trainings so when I came in. I spoke to the counselors, I spoke to the church leaders, principals, and the headmen, then from there the headmen, the counselors, they spoke with their communities and the communities responded. They came here. So like last year we had about 483. We trained 483. But before the figure was not that – it was very low.... Around 200, 200 plus minus.

In 2017, the regional libraries also spoke about promoting the library in concert with outreach activities. All three talked about attending trade fairs, schools, and other locations in the community where they could speak with large numbers of community members about the types of services offered at the library. In 2018, when the vast majority of funds for outreach had been cut, this type of promotion presumably happened less often.

At the Omaheke regional library, staff most often spoke about promotional activities in relationship to outreach, as opposed to the other channels described above. For example:

When we first begun as well, we would go into the community to market the library and also to get people to register as members, explain to them what type of services we're offering, encourage them to send their children, and then we would also have a few of our activities taking place there while we are doing the community awareness programs.

Although engaging with people face-to-face to conduct outreach was said to be an effective approach by multiple staff, the Omaheke regional library faced significant challenges in conducting outreach due budget cuts, understaffing, and non-operational mobile library unit. The library had not conducted this type of joint outreach/library promotion activity since July 2017 according to one staff person. From the view of another staff member, the mobile library unit was key to effective promotion:

We're no longer marketing the library. All along that mobile library unit was marketing the library... That's why I'm saying the breakdown of the mobile library has also affected the marketing strategies. We [still conduct outreach], yes, like when I go to the schools, when the business section also goes to schools. They market the library to the communities but it's not as enticing as the mobile library unit.

Overall, the chief librarians and library staff found ways to be resourceful and inform a broader audience about their work, while leadership at the national and regional levels did not appear to drive publicity efforts or promotional strategies for the regional libraries.

6.2.5.4 Needs assessment

Community information needs assessment (CINA) is a mechanism for letting the community inform the types of resources and services provided by the library. The assessment takes place outside of the library in the form of surveys and/or interviews to capture the views of library users and non-users.

As reported previously, the Oshana and Ohangwena regional libraries conducted a needs assessment in 2014, prior to opening to the public, and Omaheke conducted one within six months of opening to the public (Sey & Fellows, 2016: 30). The evaluators recommended additional assessments be conducted “for a more complete assessment of the information needs of community members or, at the very least, to verify that the current body of services provided at the RSRCs is adequate” (Sey & Fellows, 2016: 22).

In light of budget cuts and a staffing shortage at the Omaheke library, the evaluators understand the amount of resources required to conduct a community information needs assessment—to plan, collect and analyze data, develop recommendations and a strategy for implementing them—could be prohibitive. Nevertheless, it remains important that the library keeps feedback channels with library patrons and non-users open so it can offer in-demand services as the needs of community members shift.

The Oshana Regional Library appears to be the only library that adopted the practice of conducting CINA. The library conducted needs assessments with community members in 2015 and 2016, but not in 2018. Staff respondents had various accounts of if CINA had been conducted in 2017, or if CINA was to be conducted on an annual or biennial basis. However, three respondents confirmed the library planned to conduct another CINA soon, with one staff person describing how they were working out the logistics. On the other hand, neither Omaheke or Ohangwena had been out to the communities to assess the information needs of library users and non-users since their initial activities in 2014-2015.

It is possible that the Omaheke regional library is no longer staffed with chief or senior librarians experienced in conducting CINA with the general community. If so, this may help explain why the library has not conducted any assessments of community needs since early 2015. IREX trained only one individual from Omaheke on conducting CINA because he or she had been

the only library services staff person hired there when the training occurred in mid-2014. Furthermore, the senior librarian who led CINA activities in 2015 left the library sometime prior to mid-2017.

The Oshana and Ohangwena regional libraries have developed ways to obtain feedback on library services from patrons. Ohangwena systematically solicited feedback from business section users as recently as early 2017, about a year before the time of the interview. According to a staff person:

It was just kind of a mini research or mini assessment on the users. We asked [business section patrons] how can we improve, what do you need more, what is it that you can see needs improvement, how are the staff treating you, and then later we sit, look at if it's okay. We can see here this is what we want to improve. Let's improve where we can.... Yeah, for example they also said we needed more books in Oshiwambo.

For patron feedback, Oshana provided a suggestions box. The chief librarian there also described how he had tried to establish a culture of continuous assessment of patron needs and behaviors:

I was telling them that in order to sit comfortably as a librarian you must always be doing research. Either you are researching on your users or you are researching certain behaviors or you are doing this or you are doing that. In that way you find that your work is becoming more enticing and you find means and ways of satisfying your users... I've motivated them to do research, all of them they are now doing research.

At Omaheke, there was virtually no effective feedback mechanism for patrons to provide feedback since the main library discontinued its suggestion box in early 2018, according to one respondent. Around that time, the IT department implemented a suggestion box for their section, but complaints about other library issues were not dealt with because they were outside the purview of IT, including patrons' reports about instances of unprofessionalism among library staff. (The evaluators did not know if these complaints reached library management or if/how complaints were addressed.)

Key informants believed community information needs assessments were important but not feasible at the time given budget limitations. As such, some key informants encouraged informal methods for gathering user feedback.

At least when the people are coming in... they're requesting for things that we are not doing so at least we can address their needs. I think to us is also very important because the budget is limited these days. Then if we are finding those type of ways to get our information from the people also, I think is still fine.

Looking forward, most chief librarians and senior staff believed CINA was a necessary activity. For instance, from Omaheke:

User services [needs] to do a community needs assessment every year. A community needs assessment has to be done. There should be someone responsible for that. Because this is a community library, we need to know what the community needs, and how do you establish that?

Only through a needs assessment. But we don't have a person responsible for that who can actually make the questionnaires, distribute to the community members so that at the end of the day they know what the community wants and how we can approach the community.

Yet a few staff members implied there was not a strong need to conduct needs assessments because, based on their personal observations, children and adults primarily wanted to use the library's computers, and no other types of resources.

6.2.5.5 Services

The regional libraries were designed with high expectations—they would exceed what libraries in the country had done before by offering a wider range of services, attracting a broader array of users, and extending services to areas far from town centers. Some Component 1 key informants believed managing all of the expectations would be a challenge in itself, that leadership would inevitably need to be pragmatic and emphasize some services above others (page 74).

The prediction did come true, as the budget cuts affected virtually every library service, and staffing issues sometimes limited services even more. Services that were most affected included outreach and business services, which are covered briefly below. (For more information on the provision and usage of these two services, see Sections 5.3.11 and 5.3.8, respectively, and for other services, elsewhere in Section 5.3.)

- **Outreach.** Library staff and key informants frequently described the success of outreach activities conducted during the first two years of operations, including the pride they felt at being able to bring a variety of resources (e.g., Wi-Fi, printing, books, computer training, educational films) to community members who would otherwise not have access. The practice of different sections working together for site visits to provide specialized outreach appeared to be a strong practice. Yet the libraries did not have the funds to maintain, repair, or operate the mobile library units, which were critical in bringing an array of services to remote communities. The economic downturn compounded the situation, by denying funds to cover the cost of staff meals while traveling. Outreach in any method was difficult during periods where the libraries lacked adequate staff coverage to send people to community sites while also running the library at full capacity.
- **Business services.** Like outreach, business service programs were more frequent toward the beginning of the evaluation period than the end, with staff describing trainings for people who wanted to start a business, improve an existing business or livelihood (farming), or entering the job market. Yet few of these types of programs were provided

in 2017 and 2018. Setbacks were numerous. For example, given staffing issues (and some staff resistance), the regional libraries were often only open during regular business hours, and so trainings were generally provided at times when working people, secondary learners, and post-secondary students could not attend, and, reportedly, as a result, trainings sometimes were not well attended. Challenges attracting qualified staff to work in the libraries were magnified in the business and research services section, given the distinctive challenge of attracting candidates with knowledge in the areas of library service and business skills; this meant that new staff lacking these skills needed access to trainings that was rarely provided (in part because of funding challenges). With allegedly relatively low wages compared to the private sector, regional libraries were prone to staff turnover, ultimately meaning that business section management struggled to develop knowledgeable staff specialized in assisting patrons in business-related areas, and so patrons may have received less consistent or lower quality service. There were other challenges, too, such as rules during the economic downturn that the library could no longer provide refreshments and some of the materials required for business trainings, and that library leadership may have steered programming more toward serving learners than business patrons.

6.2.5.6 Facilities maintenance

This section addresses maintenance of the facilities themselves. Maintenance of IT equipment, photocopiers and other equipment related to program offerings are covered in Section 5.3 on library services.

The country's economic downturn did not appear to have a significant effect on overall facilities maintenance. During that time, the biggest challenge appeared to be purchasing cleaning materials, as described in Omaheke and Oshana:

There was a period where we did not even have cleaning material... I think it was in June, July [of 2018]. [No soap]. Yes, there was nothing. I remember our deputy director, who is retired had to use her own money.... Yes, to buy. So last year there was a period we did not have.

Instead, facilities maintenance challenges were attributed to choices made during the implementation phase of the RSRC Activity, procurement choices of the regional library buildings, and its various systems. Specifically, maintenance is a challenge because systems are too sophisticated, as described by one staff person:

Then the other thing is, when I look at this place it looks so great. But each time I call people from [the Ministry to come and fix anything from here they drag their feet because this place is so complicated for them. They cannot do things. This is why you see even the air-con is not working. Why? Because the pump which is supposed to feed the system, the pump is down and they say it's computerized. How far true that is I don't know. But they say the system is computerized, only the people who installed it should come and assist us. The same with air-con. The air-con, it's another company which installed the pump down there which pumps water

to the system is down it is another company. So all those things and also the electrical room, the fuse got burnt and I called people from Works to come and fix it. Then they cannot find the fuse to replace. Why look for complicated things and not just deal with what is there. I don't know the architectural part of the building, who did it, how it was done, but I'm just saying if things that were used are not locally available and this is maybe third or fourth year, what about after ten years? The skilled people who should be actually helping us, the Works people, they are not able to deal with that... But the place itself looks so nice. When I was working here and even now, my desires to see the value that was put into this building, people getting the rewards. They should be valued. People get from such a value of the building.

Some staff also described facilities issues they understood as a direct impact of MCC and MCA-N's exit strategy, whereby payments for materials and services could only be made after an item was delivered and no payments could be made after the end of the Compact. Just as the library was not able to receive a large collection of books that arrived in Namibia a day after the Compact closed, most facilities issues that were not resolved before the Compact closed would remain unresolved. Such is the case of a working generator that was delivered but never installed:

One of my stressful moments here was to know that we have a generator at the back there, and electricity goes and that generator is not connected to anything but it's just there. I just said to myself, "How could someone abuse money like this. The generator is there, and it is not connected. Why it was not connected I have no clue.... The system has been made in such a way that the solar system, and the generator, and the no rate electricity would be working together. If there is no electricity, the solar system and the generator would go on. But again we cannot do that. The solar system, I think it has run for four years now, I think the batteries should actually be flat because it's not working as it ought to be. So that part again brings a lot of questions.

6.2.6 Income sources

The regional libraries were designed and equipped to bring in some amount of revenue. They were built with large meeting rooms that could be rented out to various businesses and organizations in the community, with three kiosks that could be rented to local businesses, and with photocopiers and printers that patrons would pay a small fee to use.

The libraries are indeed generating revenue. The large meeting rooms have been well used by the community, photocopying and printing are popular services (when available), and kiosks, although not always occupied, also bring in some money.

However, there appears to be some controversy as to how these funds are managed. The libraries send their revenue to the Namibia Library and Information Council (NLIC), which stays in an account NLIC controls, redistributing funds upon request. This is allegedly done for safekeeping, as historically funds that stayed at the regional libraries had been hard to account for once spent, and any funds sent to the regional directorate would go toward their general

fund without being earmarked for the libraries. However, requesting funds from NLIC takes time and requests are sometimes rejected.

Paying for printing ink cartridges has been particularly frustrating for some. Generally speaking, the evaluators heard from interviews with key informants and staff that the regional directorates felt printing costs should be covered using the revenue generated from printing services, such that NLIC should pay. But NLIC felt printing is a basic operating cost that should be covered by the budget the regional directorate provides to the libraries. In the past, this has resulted in the regional libraries' requests for funds getting rejected, resulting in even longer delays in purchasing ink cartridges. It appears the process has been improved over time, but the regional libraries still must wait more than a month to get through the government procurement process to purchase ink.

The evaluators also heard about more substantial items that were very difficult to purchase because the process requires the regional libraries obtain quotes from sellers for the price of items they would like to purchase, but the evaluators have heard from staff that by the time their request is approved by NLIC, the quotes have expired and the price has increased, requiring them to go through the process again. The evaluators heard from multiple respondents that the procurement process is too slow.

Ultimately, service disruptions of this kind frustrate patrons and reduce the capacity of the library to provide needed services. Service problems of this nature can reduce public support for the libraries, which in turn can threaten their sustainability.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

7.1. Summary of findings

This section summarizes the major findings by evaluation question.

7.1.1 To what extent were the RSRC implementation activities completed by the end of the Namibia Compact? (EQ1)

(Note: This is a modification of the original EQ1 -- Was the MCC investment implemented according to plan? -- due to the absence of a clear master planning document.)

At a high-level, regional library construction was completed before the Compact closed, overcoming substantial construction delays, and MCA-N and its contractors provided assorted technical assistance and training, the scope of which grew in response to the increasingly apparent needs of the MoEAC. To this extent, it can be said that the RSRC Activity met its high-level implementation goals.

At the task- and subtask-levels, by the end of the Compact there were several items that had not been completed or still needed to be resolved. To a large extent, ***the late completion and opening of the Omaheke Regional Library affected all ratings.***

Completed Tasks:

- All IT and office equipment had been procured and installed, even if not fully operational.
- Operational plans and policies had been prepared, and the consultative process for design and construction of facilities had occurred.
- Mobile library units had been purchased and operational plans were ready.
- The regional library venue was setup to ensure that all three service priorities (students, business, other) were being addressed.

Uncompleted Tasks

:

- Training and pilot community information needs assessment had been conducted in Oshana and Ohangwena only.
- The staffing plan had been developed but positions were not fully filled (63% at Ohangwena, 48% at Oshana, and 15% at Omaheke). Three chief librarians had been selected, but only one had begun working. Senior librarian and IT positions were generally the slowest to be filled.
- The Oshana, Ohangwena, and Omaheke buildings were designed, constructed, and furnished before the Compact closed. Maintenance plans were not in place, however.

- Some books and media had been procured. It is unclear what level of stocking was expected to be complete by the end of the Compact.
- Some relationship-building had occurred, but regional library staff were mostly unequipped for this task. It is also unclear what the precise expectations were for MCA-N and NLAS versus regional library staff.

7.1.2 Did the regional libraries meet their performance targets? (EQ1a)

(Note: The evaluators added this evaluation question because the time period of this evaluation allowed the evaluators to analyze the performance targets established at the outset of the Compact.)

The RSRC Activity succeeded in constructing and equipping three new public libraries that are impressive facilities in the communities they serve. Significantly, the libraries have continuously attracted large numbers of visitors -- nearly 250,000 in 2017, or 2.5 times the amount anticipated in the Compact. Visitation is arguably the strongest indicator of success: if the libraries were not providing valuable services people would not come. On the other hand, staffing -- a critical indicator for successful library operations -- falls short of achieving its target of 100% staffed. Two of the libraries gradually improved staffing over time, increasing to upward of 80% staffed, whereas the third library's staffing situation has declined over time to just more than 50% staffed. Additionally, the figures on book lending are far below targets. In part this is a reflection of the rising popularity of internet resources. Figures on book lending are further complicated by the inoperability of the mobile library units, which were expected to loan library items to outlying areas.

Table 27: Monitoring targets: Actuals vs targets

Monitoring Target	Target ²⁷	Actual
Number of regional libraries completed and opened to visitors (2014)	3	3
Percent of positions staffed (2018)	100%	76%
Total number of annual visits to the 3 regional libraries (2017)	100,000	249,292
Total number of library loans at the 3 regional libraries (2016)	32,000	5,322
Total number of library loans at the three libraries' mobile library units (2015)	1,980	N/A

²⁷ Target figures were originally expected to be attained by 2014 (end of Compact), on the assumption that the libraries would have been operational by then. The targets from the original M&E plan correspond to the first, second, or third year of operation. We selected actual data corresponding to these years of operation.

7.1.3 What types of resources and programming are the regional libraries providing? (EQ2)

The regional libraries provide a range of programs and services, far beyond just providing a collection of books to the communities they serve. Of the library services offered, this evaluation focused on the nine the evaluators found to be significant to patrons: computers and internet/Wi-Fi, computer training, printing and copying, collections of books and other resources, study spaces, business section services, children's reading programs, school library services, and outreach services. The evaluators found that:

- Computers and internet access were in high demand at all three regional libraries, and patrons' decisions to visit the library largely depended on the availability of these resources. Yet the libraries have varied in their capacity to fix and maintain equipment, and none of the libraries had a plan to replace the computers when they exceed their lifespan over the next few years.
- Free basic computer training was extended to more than 3,000 community members over a three-year period. It appeared the regional libraries could extend training to more people in the community by offering courses at different times (e.g., after 5pm on weekdays, on weekends) or providing new courses to cover different topics and more advanced skills.
- Printing and photocopying services have been very affordable and valued by patrons, yet the regional libraries have struggled to purchase ink, paper, and service the machines, resulting in service disruptions that have frustrated patrons and library staff.
- Books and other materials play an important role in supporting education and recreation according to patrons and educators. NLAS purchased books for the libraries until the budget cuts of FY 2017-2018, and the libraries have had some success in expanding their collections through donations.
- Study spaces benefited secondary learners and students by providing them with a place to study and concentrate on their work.
- The most popular business section services were ones that helped patrons find and apply for jobs. Patrons wanted the library to offer more workshops and trainings related to business development and vocational skills, as the libraries had started to do during their first couple years of operation. Patrons also saw opportunities for the libraries to support their career and educational advancement by working more closely with government agencies and post-secondary institutions.
- The children's section of the library led several types of reading programs for children with the aim to support basic literacy and encourage reading among young children, effectively growing the local reading culture.
- School library services support schools throughout the region by working closely with them to set up and operate school libraries. Budget constraints have limited the ability of these librarians to travel to schools and train teachers to run their libraries.

- Outreach services were scaled back due to budget cuts and grounded mobile library units. None of the vehicles were operating due to lack of funds for maintenance, petrol, and sustenance for the staff conducting outreach. Staff and key informants recognized the importance of outreach services to remote communities and have sought ways to provide the service, if only at a reduced capacity, with mixed success.

7.1.4 Who uses the regional libraries and what do they do? (EQ3)

The regional libraries were designed to serve a broad range of people in the community, providing them with a variety of services to support learning, skill development, and their information needs. The evaluators found the libraries were popular among all three of the evaluation's target groups -- learners, students, and business section patrons -- as well as children. The evaluators did not detect significant usage outside of these groups, though as this was not a primary focus of the evaluation, the evaluators have lower confidence in this finding.

Secondary learners (the equivalent of high school students in the US) comprise the largest group of regional library users. Many of them can be considered “non-traditional” learners: 42% of respondents attend the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), and one-third are in their twenties. Secondary learners do a variety of activities at the library. However, they appear to spend the most time on education-related tasks, with two-thirds of this group spending at least 50% of their time at the library on school-related activities. Secondary learners also use the library for leisure, most frequently for watching videos/playing games and meeting up with friends. Only one in four secondary learners has access to a computer at home—underlying the importance of the regional libraries’ computers for these groups. However, this group reported that books were the most important resource the libraries provided. They visit because it is the only place in the area to get what they need, and it has a quiet ambiance.

Post-secondary students also comprise a large group of library users, particularly in the Oshana Region. The highest proportion of students attend distance education institutions, including the Institute for Open Learning (20%) and NAMCOL (15%). Most frequently, students use the library for education-related activities, entertainment, and catching up on the news. Yet students are academically-minded, with 75% of them spending at least 50% of their time on school-related activities. For this group, internet access is by far the most important resource. They visit the library mostly for its convenient location and because it is the only place in the area to get what they need.

Job-seekers are younger and more economically vulnerable than other types of business section patrons. The majority of job-seekers visit the library to do and learn things related to their job search or career path. However, while at the library they most frequently do other activities like reading the news, playing games/watching videos, or socializing. They use the library because it is convenient, affordable, and the only place to get what they need.

Self-employed patrons tended to be older than other library patrons. Nearly one-quarter have graduated from a vocational school or technical institute, much more than other groups.

Although a relatively small proportion of library patrons were self-employed overall, this group uses the library intensively, visiting twice per week on average. Sixty percent visited the library primarily to improve their business or income or learn job skills. Frequent activities include reading the news and doing tasks that supported their business and life goals. Self-employed patrons use the library because it was the only place in the area with the resources they needed, and the location was convenient.

Wage earners appear to be more financially secure than other patron groups, and nearly one-third had graduated from a university. Wage earners frequently engaged in a wide range of activities. Most frequently they read the news, but after that they were as likely to play games and watch videos as look for education-related information. Like other business section patrons, wage earners visit the library because it is convenient to access and provides resources that can't be found anywhere else.

In general, **females** visit the library somewhat less frequently than males—possibly due to obligations at home and safety concerns about walking alone to the library. However, a larger proportion of females use the library for education- or work/employment-related reasons, and females seem to participate in programs, workshops, and trainings at a higher rate.

7.1.5 Do learners, job-seekers and businesspeople report outcomes such as improved test scores, job-seeking and acquisition, and business creation and enhancement as a result of using the resources provided by the regional libraries?²⁸ (EQ4)

Learners and business section patrons associate positive outcomes with regional library use and these two groups overwhelmingly indicate that the regional libraries were important for them in meeting their respective education and job-related needs. Learners report increased skills, understanding of things they learn in school, completion of school assignments, and better grades. Business patrons saw increases in job skills and understanding of things they were doing at work, support in completing work tasks, and increases in income and job prospects. Although many outputs continued to grow over time, learner and business patron skill increases appear to plateau, perhaps due to limited regional library training offerings or because these outcomes require more conditions than can be met by the library alone. Mixed results were also seen when comparing outcomes across genders. While female learners in the patron survey reported more perceived outcomes than males in education-related activities, male business patrons reported more perceived outcomes than females in business- and income-related activities.

²⁸ The outcomes analysis only covers learners and business section users, and not students, due to the longitudinal nature of this component of the evaluation. The “student” category was added at the interim analysis phase. See methodology for the explanation.

In addition to the priority outcome areas associated with each user group, the evaluators see a variety of positive outcomes in other domains, which include communications and leisure, reading culture, and health. These point to the potential to reach the needs of patrons in ways not currently emphasized at the regional libraries.

7.1.6 How sustainable are the regional libraries? (EQ5)

By the end of this evaluation, financial sustainability was on uncertain terms at all regional libraries, and none of the regions had a long-term sustainability plan in place. The regional libraries experienced dramatic budget cuts (over 75% decrease in FY 2017) during the evaluation period due to the country's economic situation. The libraries received slight increases the following year (FY 2018), but nothing close to pre-economic downturn levels. The apparent increase in Ohangwena's budget is misleading.

Staffing the library was also a challenge throughout the evaluation period. Fortunately, the staffing situation slowly improved over the evaluation period for the libraries in Oshana and Ohangwena, with upward of 80% filled. In contrast, staffing levels decreased overtime in Omaheke, with the library only about half staffed at the end of the evaluation period.

The functionality of the physical library building and their various systems did not seem to be too affected by the economic downturn. Rather, problems with the facilities were attributed to the implementation phase of the RSRC Activity in the choice to equip the libraries with sophisticated systems that were too complicated for the Ministry of Works to repair and a Compact exit strategy that wrapped up so quickly it resulted in wasted costs and lost opportunities.

7.1.7 How active is leadership in promoting and achieving the vision of the regional libraries? (EQ6)

Library leadership—the chief librarians, the regional directorate of the MoEAC, and NLAS—worked through several critical issues to raise the quality of library services. Most respondents characterized leadership as being supportive and doing the best they could to uphold the original vision of the libraries given budgetary constraints. However, a few respondents intimated that at least one regional directorate may not fully value the regional library and was not providing adequate support. Also, a few staff respondents believed at least one regional library's vision to serve the general community was being supplanted with an orientation toward primarily serving learners and schools.

The regional libraries have led efforts to build partnerships across ministries and with the local business community to provide community programs and trainings for patrons and staff. The evaluators did not hear about the regional directorate or NLAS forging strategic partnerships across agencies, which in some instances they may be better positioned to do.

In addition to running the regional library, the chief librarian has been responsible for overseeing all the community libraries within the region. Based on interviews with key informants and regional library staff (but not community library staff), the evaluators heard the chief librarians have worked with community libraries by holding monthly meetings, reviewing reports from the community libraries, and sharing ideas and approaches.

7.1.8 What is the influence of the regional libraries beyond their walls? (EQ7)

Prior to the regional libraries opening, some stakeholders envisioned the regional libraries would have positive ripple effects for surrounding communities, the region, and the country. While it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to study such large-scale changes resulting from the RSRC Activity and the evaluators only devoted modest attention to this question, the evaluators offer the following tentative findings. At the community level, survey results indicated a small ripple effect as many library patrons sought information or performed tasks on computers on behalf of family and friends. At the regional level, no other regional libraries were completed during the evaluation period, though two were reportedly under construction. Nationally, using a media analysis, the evaluators were unable to detect broader impacts, such as an increased reading culture. However, this was a very limited analysis and as such the evaluators can neither confirm nor reject this possibility.

7.2 Conclusions

In many respects, Namibia's regional libraries can be considered a strong success. They are heavily used facilities in the communities, with annual visitation far exceeding original targets. Learners, students, job-seekers, self-employed and wage earners -- the focus of this evaluation -- all use the libraries for education- and career-related tasks, with especially high positive outcomes in educational performance and more modest outcomes related to work performance, income generation, and new employment.

Many library patrons come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is not surprising that across all groups, majority of respondents reported the library is the only place in the area with the resources they need. While females visit the library less frequently than males, they are more likely to participate in programs, workshops, and trainings, and to use the library for education- or work-related purposes. All people also use the libraries for pleasure as well.

Library operations paint a more complicated picture, though some context is helpful. The Compact had high aspirations for the regional libraries, far exceeding what libraries in the country had ever attempted before by offering a wider range of programs and services, attracting and catering to a broader array of users, and extending the library into remote areas. Also, the challenges the libraries faced were largely foreseen. From interviews in 2014, when the libraries were still under construction, stakeholders predicted challenges around staffing,

funding stability, the cost of IT services (internet, computer replacement), procuring books, and the mobile library units. Many of those challenges were exacerbated by a national financial downturn that led to drastic budget cuts for the libraries in 2017-18 and 2018-19, the period when the bulk of this evaluation's data collection took place. In this context, the overall achievements of the libraries are commendable, and in many instances quite remarkable given the lack of resources.

With regard to the official Compact targets, the three libraries were completed and opened to the public in 2014, far behind schedule and just before the closing of the Compact. In 2017, the third full year of operation, they served nearly 250,000 visitors, far eclipsing the 100,000 target for the third year according to the M&E Plan. 100% staffing, however, was not achieved. In two libraries the staffing levels improved to about 85%, but in the other it declined to nearly 50%. Book circulation was a reverse of the visitation trend, with the actual number of loans about one-fifth of the target. However, books that could only be used in the library were very highly used and do not show up in circulation data. The mobile library units were a major challenge, with the vehicles mostly inoperable and thus incapable of reaching remote areas.

At the operational level, the evaluation examined nine services deemed most significant to patrons: computers and internet/Wi-Fi, computer training, printing and copying, collections of books and other resources, study spaces, business section services, children's reading programs, school library services, and outreach services. All of these services were used by patrons, with varying degrees of popularity and satisfaction. The libraries had varying challenges providing the services, as well as successes that can be shared among the three libraries.

Outside the walls of the three libraries, the evaluators found some ripple effects in the surrounding communities as a significant number of patrons used the libraries to obtain information or perform a task on behalf of a friend or family member. Two more regional libraries were reportedly under construction, though none had been completed by mid-2019.

Has leadership supported the libraries? Generally, yes, particularly in two of the regions where the regional directorates seemed to make strong efforts to uphold the original vision of the libraries despite the budgetary constraints. In the third region it appears that the library was given lower priority. Each of the libraries led efforts to build partnerships with the local business community and other organizations, though there was little evidence indicating that the regional directorates or NLAS had forged strategic partnerships across government agencies, which they are in a better position to coordinate.

Lastly, sustainability is a concern. Financially, all of the libraries are on uncertain footing, and none of the regions had a long-term sustainability plan in place. The library budgets experienced operating budget cuts of more than 75% in the peak year (FY 2017-18), a situation that has largely continued. From both a financial and staffing sustainability perspective, it appears the three libraries are on somewhat different trajectories, with Ohangwena in the most advantageous position, followed by Oshana, and then Omaheke.

7.3 Recommendations

This section contains recommendations for Namibia and MCC. With regard to Namibia, several of the recommendations from the Component 1 and Interim reports are still valid and are repeated here. Many of these draw on international best practices. There are also issues specific to Namibia, and these are noted as well.

For MCC, some of the earlier recommendations are repeated as well. Additionally, we offer lessons from the Namibia project for possible future investments elsewhere.

7.3.1 Namibia

Fully staff the libraries. Fully staffed libraries were an important commitment of the Namibian Government for the MCC Namibia Compact. Staff are the lifeblood of the libraries, the professionals who provide assistance to patrons, offer trainings, develop new programs, and otherwise cater to the information needs of their communities. Inadequate staffing levels has negatively impacted service delivery. Furthermore, staff require ongoing professional development to learn new skills, a practice that is common throughout the world.

The staffing levels at Oshana and Ohangwena are about 85% of positions filled (October 2018), and Omaheke is under 60%, indicating there is room for improvement.

Fully staffing the libraries and providing opportunities for professional development should be a high priority for the government.

Develop new sustainability and maintenance plans. Currently, the regional libraries do not have strong sustainability or maintenance plans in place, a situation that puts critical services at risk. This includes computers, internet connectivity, copier machines, collections (print and electronic), facilities, and other items that require regular attention.

Developing sustainability and maintenance plans are particularly important in the ongoing budgetary situation. In some cases, planning can result in a better allocation of resources. For instance, equipment maintenance and software licenses could be handled by the ministry that is responsible for these contracts for other ministries, thereby reducing the cost for the libraries and improving service. A sustainability plan will also allow the libraries to revisit policies and strategies for sustaining popular services such as photocopiers. Currently, the low fee to use the photocopiers does not cover expenses. Should schools, which use up a disproportionate amount of the paper and ink, have priority over library patrons? Or should they pay more? Lastly, libraries need to plan for larger expenses such as computer replacements.

Make operating budgets more transparent and predictable. There was a lot of confusion among stakeholders concerning the library budgets. The budgets cover different things in each region, and the actual budget available for library programs (as opposed to fixed costs such as

utilities) was difficult to discern. Another challenge was a lack of predictability regarding the disbursement of funds. Funds are disbursed periodically throughout the year and may not equal the allocated amounts. This situation makes it very challenging to undertake proper financial planning, including maintenance and sustainability plans.

Attend to Omaheke. Omaheke appears to have faced greater challenges than the other two libraries. This has manifested in a precipitous decline in visitation, from 40,900 monthly visitors in 2017 to 23,820 in 2018. And as mentioned above, the staffing level is very low. Omaheke staff are performing exceptionally well under the circumstances and have instituted model programs that can be replicated elsewhere, but overall the evaluators are concerned about its long-term sustainability given the downward trends. The government should explore more deeply the issues affecting Omaheke and institute measures to place the library on a more stable footing.

Rededicate efforts for the business sections. It appears that the business section has been given less priority than services for learners and students. There is demand for business services as business section patrons reported a desire for more workshops, advanced IT training, and other services. Staff commented that business services were cut back due to budgetary constraints. Going forward, the libraries should rededicate efforts for this important target population. One example that does not require resources was partnering with local businesses to provide needed trainings, a creative and effective strategy under the present circumstances.

Make community needs assessment an ongoing commitment. Communities evolve, continuously facing new challenges and surfacing new priorities. As such, it is essential that libraries actively seek input from patrons and non-users alike. At a minimum, the libraries can seek feedback from patrons in ways that do not require a large budget (e.g. encouraging staff to ask patrons what they need, suggestion boxes, WhatsApp groups, etc.). Ideally, the libraries should also devote greater resources to more robust efforts, particularly when there are known issues (e.g. declining visitation in Omaheke). However, this is approached, what is important is an ongoing commitment to continuous learning and improvement.

Invest in rural outreach. The mobile library units were intended to enable the libraries to serve their respective remote populations. Due to faulty construction and budget cuts, the libraries have been unable to make the vehicles roadworthy or provide sufficient funds to cover petrol, staff expenses, or routine maintenance. The evaluators learned of creative work-arounds -- such as using other vehicles to transport books -- but the mobile library units were also equipped with computers and internet. According to leadership and staff, rural outreach remains an important priority, requiring renewed effort and budget to pursue in a meaningful way.

Improve data collection and its use for decision-making. The evaluators detected inconsistencies in data collection, including a probable overcount of Oshana visitation figures, something that would be helpful to rectify. Leadership may also want to revisit what kinds of

data would be most useful for making decisions. For instance, it is probably as important to track computer usage as book circulation, which is a worldwide trend.

Implement awareness raising strategy. Visitation data and staff interviews suggest there is an opportunity to attract new patrons to the libraries. This is particularly the case for general community members. Communications techniques such as posters, social media outreach, radio and other activities are effective for reaching specific target audiences.

Implement advocacy strategy. An important tool for libraries is to develop an advocacy strategy aimed at influencing decision makers at regional, national, and international levels. Effective advocacy strategies can result in greater support for the libraries. In Namibia, this could include embedding libraries more deeply into the national development plan. Many organizations, such as EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) offer advocacy training for libraries in Africa.

Shift operating hours. There appears to be large demand for accessing the libraries in the evenings and on weekends. Closing at 5:00 PM prevents many learners and students from having adequate time to complete their studies, and a Monday-Friday schedule inhibits working adults from taking full advantage of the libraries. People who have to travel to the library are further inconvenienced. The evaluators recognize Ohangwena and Oshana have experimented with Saturday operations, which appears to have been highly valued by the communities.

In many countries, libraries operate on staggered schedules to accommodate different patron needs -- for instance, 9-5 on some days, noon-8pm on others, or a Tuesday-Saturday schedule. Namibia should learn what will be most useful for each community and institute shift schedules for the staff.

Develop stronger partnerships with other government agencies. Some interview respondents believe there has been a natural tendency, because the libraries are housed in the MoEAC, to focus more on learners and students than other community members. If the libraries were to develop stronger relationships with other government agencies, they could strengthen the libraries' services for other patrons, such as business services.

Fully restore operating budgets, with increases as needed to address particular needs. Many of the challenges faced by the libraries can be traced to inadequate operating budgets. This includes issues with equipment maintenance, library programs, outreach services, and professional development, among others. Library staff have done an admirable job managing the situation, but the ongoing sustainability of the libraries requires a greater budgetary commitment going forward.

This recommendation is listed last because the evaluators acknowledge that the ongoing national budgetary situation makes it highly unrealistic to fulfill this commitment at this time. Many of the above recommendations can be pursued without significant expenditures, and if

they are undertaken, should build an even stronger case for increased budgets for the libraries when the economic situation improves.

7.3.2 MCC

Improve the exit strategy. This was reported in the Component 1 report and resurfaced as a theme during data collection for Component 2. Namely, many respondents expressed concerns about rushed completion dates, the handover of facilities, and local knowledge and capacity to maintain the libraries. The libraries faced challenges with electrical generators, solar panels, and mobile library units. The hard cut-off date led to issues such as books that had arrived a day late being returned. And delays in one area (e.g. construction) led to other types of delays (e.g. hiring and training of staff).

Specific recommendations to address issues caused by the rushed completion and handoff include:

- 1) Ensure warranties and service contracts are in place. More effort should be directed at warranty plans and service contracts, especially since the delays were well known in advance of the Compact closure.
- 2) Ensure maintenance plans are in place. Proper training could not be conducted for maintenance and other staff since generators, solar panels and other systems were installed near the deadline. It took some time to receive maintenance plans from the architect and contractors so that the libraries could learn the systems.
- 3) Enable contractors to provide services post Compact. Amend Compact agreement so that contractors can stay engaged in a project after Compact closure. This would allow the orderly transfer of knowledge.
- 4) Better involve other Ministries. In Namibia, the Ministry of Works is responsible for procurements, training on systems, reviewing warranties and service contracts, and other activities. However, it appears that they were only partially engaged during the Compact period. Had they played a more prominent role in decisions and implementation it's likely Namibia would have had a smoother handoff and post-Compact experience.

Invest in public libraries in other countries. Overall, the regional libraries are meeting critical information needs and supporting community members in achieving a range of livelihood goals. These range from instrumental activities, such as students working on school assignments and the unemployed learning how to search for jobs and prepare a resume, to more recreational activities such as catching up on the news and pursuing hobbies. Libraries accomplish this through a number of information assets -- digital and print resources, trained information professionals, classes and other programs, and welcoming facilities. Furthermore, library development strategies can be pursued in coordination with education, business development,

agriculture, citizen engagement, and other initiatives since information assets are foundational to so many social, economic and political realms of activity. Indeed, many countries are positioning their public libraries as critical infrastructure in their national plans for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Namibia case illustrates this potential through tangible results, accomplished despite a dire financial situation, while also revealing some pitfalls and challenges that can be applied to future library development programs.

7.4 Next Steps

This is the final report, revised based on feedback from MCC and stakeholders in Namibia. The evaluation is complete.

7.5 Dissemination procedures

A dissemination workshop for Namibia stakeholders was held October 30, 2019. A presentation for MCC was held September 20, 2019. On its own budget, the evaluator would like to schedule another presentation in Washington DC at a convenient time in 2020. This presentation would take a broader look at public libraries in international development, using Namibia as the primary case study.

7.6 Additional analysis and deliverables expected

TASCHA will explore opportunities to share the results of this evaluation through conference presentations and journal articles.

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9 Annexes

9.1 Stakeholder comments and evaluator responses

MCC provided comments directly in the manuscript, and through the Master Tracking report. The evaluators addressed all comments.

Namibia stakeholders provided numerous oral comments during the dissemination workshop on October 30, 2019. The evaluators addressed these comments. No other written comments were received.

Most of the MCC and Namibia stakeholder comments were questions seeking greater clarity or more information about a particular point. In addition, there were a number of more substantive issues as follows.

Representation of monitoring targets

Comment: How can the evaluation properly reflect the degree to which the RSRC Activity achieved the M&E monitoring targets when the M&E plan shifted the targets to the final year of the Compact due to the delayed opening of the libraries?

Response: The evaluator aimed to present the most meaningful comparison for the purposes of this performance evaluation. An example illustrates the challenge and the decision we took. The visitation target was originally 60,000 (2012), 80,000 (2013), and 100,000 (2014). When it became apparent the libraries would not open until the end of 2014, the M&E plan was amended to 240,000 for 2014 (the total of 60,000 + 80,000 + 100,000). Needless to say, it was not realistic for the libraries to achieve a cumulative three-year target within the couple of months of operation remaining in 2014. Thus, for the purposes of the evaluation we compared the original targets with the actuals, commencing with 2015, the first year of operation.

Program logic clarification

Comment: How did the evaluators operationalize the program logic for the outcomes assessment?

Response: The program logic includes a number of inputs, outputs, immediate outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and ultimate impacts. For the purposes of designing a research approach to assess patron educational and work-related outcomes, the evaluators needed to develop a series of indicators that mapped to the program logic. This effort necessitated a more granular approach to fully tease out the effects of library usage among the studied patron groups. For example, while the program logic posits “increased skills” as an immediate outcome, the assessment included a number of different skills that one could acquire so as to be able to point with greater specificity to the ways in which the library did or did not fulfill various functions.

Self-reported data

Comment: Does the evaluation team consider it a limitation that we are relying on self-reports for the key outcome measures of interest, such as whether library use affected learning outcomes, jobs, or income?

Response: The ideal evaluation would have obtained the school grades, college admission letters, pay stubs, and other forms of authoritative data to assess individual outcomes in educational attainment and income generation. As this would have been a prohibitively costly study, the evaluation decided to rely on self-reported data. While not as rigorous, we employed a number of methods – patron survey, longitudinal panel study, and FGDs – and triangulated the data to generate the findings. The evaluation team is confident in its overall assessments. We also note that outcomes such as increased grades or obtaining a job are the result of numerous factors beyond the control of a library. As such, in our experience with library evaluations we do not typically advise a more rigorous treatment.

Budgets

Comment: How did the evaluation team assess the budgets of the regional libraries, and did certain regions give the libraries greater priority?

Response: The regional library budgets turned out to be very challenging to assess, and the Namibia stakeholder workshop in October 2019 served to clarify some fundamental misunderstandings. The evaluation team performed its assessment based on aggregate budget data provided by NLAS. An in-depth financial analysis was beyond the scope of this evaluation. Based on aggregate data it *appeared* in the first three years of the evaluation (FY 2016, 2017, and 2018) Ohangwena received approximately double the resources of either Omaheke or Oshana, and in the final year of the evaluation (FY 2019) received a significant increase to approximately NAD 5.8 million, compared with under NAD 300,000 for Omaheke and NAD 500,000 for Oshana. It turns out that the Ohangwena operating budget includes resources for several other library systems, thus a direct comparison with the other two regions leads one to erroneous conclusions. Similarly, a further examination of the FY 2019 budget found that over 95% was for utilities, with very little remaining for library programming. Ultimately, we were only able to arrive at tentative conclusions around the budget, especially with regard to regional differences. What was indisputable was that budgets were grossly insufficient for the long-term sustainability of the libraries, a situation caused by the overall economic downturn. When the situation recovers, library budgets should be fully restored.

9.2 Stakeholder statement of support or difference

The Namibia Library and Archives Service (NLAS) and other stakeholders in the Namibian government reviewed the evaluation report and had no further comments.

9.3 Panel studies methodology

Panel studies focused on secondary learners and business section patrons, with the objective to monitor their use of the regional libraries, and associated experiences and outcomes. As noted in MCA-N's M&E Plan, the study was not a good candidate for a traditional impact evaluation and, as such, the evaluators did not employ a counterfactual or randomized control trial.

Panel participants were recruited from the initial patron survey. Panel activities begin with a semi-structured face-to-face (F2F) interview, followed by a total of three follow-up telephone surveys in 2017 and 2018. A final summative face-to-face semi-structured interview was held in mid-2018.

Table 28: Panel study interviews and surveys

Activity	Dates
Initial F2F interview	Q3 2017
Survey 1	Q4 2017
Survey 2	Q2 2018
Survey 3	Q4 2018
*Final F2F interview	Q3 2018

*Note: A methodological requirement of the secondary learner panel is that participants must have been in school for a minimum of 4 consecutive weeks prior to participating in each activity event. As such, practical limitations in structuring field work around holiday schedules and graduation at the end of Q3 2018 necessitated the final interview being moved to Q2 2018, followed by the final surveys in Q3 2018. This was done to provide adequate time for conducting the interviews before learners return home after graduation.

Each of the two panels (business and learners) consisted of an initial sample size of 60 participants (20 from each RSRC). Attrition of participants is factored into this sample: the final sample size for each panel needed to be at least 40 participants (after attrition) in order to conduct statistical analyses across the three RSRCs. The sample was drawn from the secondary school learners and business section patrons recruited for the patron surveys in the three venues. Final sample sizes and attrition are described below.

Methodology Notes

The following provide context for decisions made in structuring analysis methods:

- The sample size in the longitudinal study was too small to measure differences in outcomes across regional libraries. This was a known limitation when designing the panel study.

- Given attrition and the movement of individuals in and out of the study at various points in time, analyzing outcomes by tracking changes at the individual level was not possible. Only changes at the aggregate were investigated.
- Outcomes are investigated by studying both changes over time as well as user perceptions of the regional library's role in achieving certain outcomes

Testing for attrition

Attrition was tested to determine whether dropouts from the initial panel interview are associated with any responses in that interview. E.g. are people who have certain responses more likely to drop out? Tests did not indicate any association with specific questions and, as such, the evaluators determined attrition was random.

Panel interviews

Tests used:

- For categorical questions: the evaluators conducted a log-linear analysis and chi-square test to test the dependency of dropouts and initial interview responses.
- For quantitative questions: the evaluators conducted a two-sample t-test to compare the response differences between people who did not drop out and people who dropped out.

Panel surveys

Test used:

- For categorical questions: Fisher tests were used to test the association between dropping out and survey responses questions.
- For quantitative questions: two sample t-test were used to test the difference between the responses of people who did not drop out and people did drop out.
- Because there was re-entering (e.g. not in panel survey 1 but in panel survey 2) except for dropouts (e.g. in panel survey 1 but not in panel survey 2), the above tests were also used to test whether respondents re-entered the panel study at random.

Sample Sizes

Panel Interviews

Table 29: Sample sizes and attrition of the first and final panel interviews.

	Business Patrons			Learners		
	Males	Females	<i>Total</i>	Males	Females	<i>Total</i>
Initial Panel Interview	30	30	60	30	30	60
Final Panel Interview	18	14	32	21	19	40
<i>Attrition</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>20</i>

Panel Surveys

Table 30: Sample sizes and attrition of the first and final panel surveys.

	Business Patrons			Learners		
	Males	Females	<i>Total</i>	Males	Females	<i>Total</i>
Initial Panel Survey	25	21	46	24	24	48
Final Panel Survey	17	19	36	21	18	39
<i>Attrition</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>8</i>

9.4 Literature review

Introduction

This literature review was prepared to provide context for a performance evaluation of Regional Study and Resource Centers (RSRCs) in Namibia. It presents an overview of monitoring and evaluation approaches used in the public library sector. This review will be used to inform research design in conjunction with the results of TASCHA's inception mission.

This review is grouped into three categories:

1. Practitioner guides
2. Evaluation reports
3. Studies

Resources were selected on the basis of relevancy, currency (for the purposes of this report, published in or after 2000), influence, and focus on public libraries. Resources were assessed on the following:

Type of evaluation/assessment – e.g., process evaluation, outcome evaluation, or, in some instances, needs assessment, perception study, etc.

- Subject focus – e.g., the quality of a library service, the impact of services on a domain, accessibility for a population group, etc.
- Country – e.g., developed and developing countries or an international approach
- Usefulness for this performance evaluation

The literature reviewed includes multiple evaluations types and approaches, including:

- Formative and summative evaluations – i.e., supporting program improvement versus assessing if expectations were met
- Traditional and results-based – i.e., assessment of inputs, activities and outputs versus outcomes and impacts
- Focus on at least one of five domains: (1) the need for the program, (2) the design of the program, (3) program implementation and service delivery, (4) program impact or outcomes, and (5) program efficiency (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004, p. 18)

This review also includes literature on monitoring, or performance measurement, an approach closely related to evaluation. According to experienced evaluator, Michael Quinn Patton, “In developing countries, the standard reference is to ‘M&E’—monitoring and evaluation. These are close siblings, always together” (Patton, 2008, p. 127). Performance monitoring assesses program implementation and outcomes without in-depth examination, while evaluations provide in-depth information that answers questions and is considerably more valuable to policymakers and program decision-makers (Hatry, 2004). As stated by performance measurement expert Harry Hatry, “We believe these processes are complementary. We believe that performance monitoring can and should be considered a subset of program evaluation” (p. 676).

This review does not discuss shifts in library M&E practices over time. However, it is worth noting that in the past twenty years, the field has increasingly stressed the importance of measuring the benefits received by library users and communities at large – in the form of outcomes and impacts – in addition to standard measures on library activities and outputs. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) summarized the changing tide in its call for papers for a satellite meeting of its 2012 Helsinki conference:

The radical change in the operational environment of libraries has set new challenges for library leadership and management. The traditional method for libraries has been collecting a

substantial amount of statistical data. This is no longer enough for modern management. New ways of analyzing efficiency, impact, and outcomes measurement are needed to obtain better data and information for marketing and managing as well as demonstrating the impact of libraries. In addition to the quantitative data, one also needs qualitative data and methods of identifying users' needs. Finally, combining different types of results and data will provide new possibilities in fighting for the library's resources and meeting the users' service needs (IFLA, 2012).

Evaluation is, in essence, a systematic method for collecting and interpreting information to answer questions. The types of questions asked determine the evidence and approaches needed. This review begins with a focus on questions asked by library practitioners—administrators, managers, and staff—and then large-scale funders, and finally with the inquiries of social-science researchers.

Practitioner guides on how to conduct an evaluation

There are currently dozens of practitioner guides designed to help public libraries evaluate their services. A few of the most notable resources are mentioned below. All were published in the US or UK.

In *Measuring Library Performance: Principles and Techniques* (2006), Peter Brophy reviews dozens of assessment strategies. Brophy highlights effectiveness, outcome, and impact measurers, then discusses ways to evaluate the resources, processes, and products that comprise a library's services, including staffing, technology, and infrastructure.

Like Brophy, Joseph Matthews emphasizes the importance of internal and customer-centric approaches to evaluation using process and outcome indicators in *The Evaluation and Measurement of Library Services* (2007). Because Matthews organized his book by library services and resources, it is a helpful resource for evaluating specific programs. Chapters include: the physical collection, electronic resources, reference services, technical services, interlibrary loan, online systems, instruction/information literacy, customer service, and broader outcomes.

Other resources focus specifically on outcome measurement. Rhea Joyce Rubin offers *Demonstrating Results: Using outcome management in your library*, written for the Public Library Association (2006). It is a workbook designed to introduce library managers to measuring the outcomes of their programs, and it contains worksheets to help draw up a data plan.

Sharon Markless and David Streatfield offer an impact evaluation framework and guide in their book, *Evaluating the Impact of Your Library* (2013). The book's international approach distinguishes it from similar guides and is informed by the authors' experience evaluating library programs internationally for IFLA and the Global Libraries Initiative at the Bill and Melinda Gates

Foundation. The book includes a chapter on conducting international evaluations. Markless and Streatfield's approach concentrates on the impact of library services on people, community and organizations – which is a more external-focus than most evaluation guides, particularly by introducing organizations to the arena.

While practitioner guides on outcomes and impact date are relatively recent, guides on performance measurement go back to the 1970s (De Prospe, et. al., 1973; Ramsden, 1978). One modern classic is *Measuring Quality: Performance Measurement in Libraries*, 2nd ed, by Roswitha Poll and Peter te Boekhorst for IFLA (2007). The first edition, written for academic libraries, was published in 1996 and has been released in six languages. The scope of the second edition was expanded to include public libraries, and sections on electronic services and cost-effectiveness were added. Most of the book is dedicated to detailing 40 process and efficiency indicators. Because of this, *Measuring Quality* is well grounded and may be more accessible for practitioners than guides that do to operationalize their assessment framework as clearly.

The monitoring and evaluation guides mentioned above focus on library services and do not pay much heed to financial indicators. Two common performance frameworks that use financial data along with output and outcome data are the balanced scorecard (for monitoring) and cost-benefit analysis (for assessing social returns on investment). Cost-benefit analysis, and related assessment, will be discussed in the following section. The balanced scorecard, designed by Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton in the early 1990s, is one of the most well-known performance measurement systems in the private and public sectors. Although a few of the books mentioned above include a short discussion on the relevancy of the balanced scorecard system for libraries, Joseph Matthews expanded on the subject, releasing a workbook, *Scorecards for Results*, in 2008. The balanced scorecard incorporates four perspectives that reflect the vision and strategies of a library: financial, customer, internal business processes, and learning and growth. Each perspective includes three to five indicators. The system can be expanded to include performance targets and strategy maps. Matthew's workbook includes sample indicators and worksheets.

The guides reviewed above represent a small sample of the work on library M&E for practitioners. In particular, there are numerous guides designed to help practitioners assess performance, but the number of resources for assessing user outcomes is growing. Additionally, there are evaluation frameworks, assessment tools, and indicator sets published for individual library services, including reference services, electronic services, youth services, information literacy, staff training, and several others that have not been reviewed here. There are also training resources available in the form of interactive, online formats that have likewise not been reviewed.

Benchmarks

Like practitioner guides, national benchmarks support self-assessment in libraries, but they do so by revealing libraries' relative strengths and weaknesses against a group of peer libraries

(e.g., libraries with similar budgets or servicing similarly sized populations). Public library benchmarks are sometimes publicly available, such that funders, policymakers, and the general public can also assess a library's outputs.

Public library benchmarks and indexes are typically organized and assembled at the national level. In the US, this data generally comes from the Public Library Survey, conducted by the US Census Bureau, which collects data from over 9000 libraries (or about 17,000 library outlets). The indicators are entirely quantitative, and include information on library visits, circulation, size of collections, public service hours, staffing, electronic resources, operating revenues, and expenditures and number of service outlets (IMLS PLS, n.d.).

The Library Journal Index uses the PLS to rank public libraries on four outputs, which are measured per capita: library visits, circulation, program attendance, and public internet computer use. The index recognizes its limited approach:

“By definition, service outputs do not reflect quality, excellence, effectiveness, or value of services to the library's community. National-level data required to measure these aspects of library performance, even in a limited fashion, do not exist.” (LJ Index FAQ, 2013)

Other national and international organizations apply similar benchmarks. The library Index BIX is a benchmarking program for public libraries in Germany that has been running since 1999. Their system provides 18 indicators in the areas of services, usage, efficiency, and development. Like the Library Journal Index, BIX recognizes the usefulness and shortcomings of benchmarking systems which “cannot reflect local profiles, basic conditions, or specialized services” (BIX, 2013).

Benchmarking systems are becoming more sophisticated, however, with heightened efforts to measure service quality and value. The Edge benchmarks library technology provision, use, and impact. The system was recently developed by the Urban Libraries Council and 12 other organizations in the US with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The *Edge Assessment Workbook* (Edge, 2013) is a self-assessment tool for libraries to measure themselves against other libraries. The benchmarks measure public technology services in three areas:

1. Community value: external practices that connect the library to the community
2. Engaging the community & decision makers: specific programs, services, and supports that enable people to get value from technology use
3. Organizational management: internal management, infrastructure, and policies

Clearly, benchmark indicators alone are not robust enough to capture the performance quality, effectiveness, and impact of a library system. However, benchmarks are standard, industry-wide performance measures that have achieved some level of acceptance and familiarity.

Evaluation reports

Evaluation reports released by public agencies, private foundations, and nonprofits are generally more summative than formative. They are also more externally-facing than practitioner guides, as their aim is to influence public policy and public perception, often at the national level. These reports usually assess whether or not a funder's expectations were met, however simple or complex those goals might have been. Libraries and funders usually agree on at least a few output targets during the grantmaking process. Increasingly, outcome targets are required as well (for example, see IMLS, n.d.) but this is not always the case. Other evaluation reports are more focused on examining the success or weaknesses of a funder's strategic agenda than program goals.

The following evaluations have a national or state focus and are based in Myanmar, the UK, Australia, and the US. Other national studies on the perceived benefits of libraries have been based in Finland (Vakkari and Serola, 2010) and Canada (Fitch and Warner, 1998). Two multi-country studies are also discussed, as well as reports on economic outcomes and return on investment.

National approaches

The *Myanmar Library Survey* was commissioned by the Asia Foundation and the Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation (2014) to obtain holistic understanding of the country's public library system and contribute to information architecture improvement and community initiatives. Methods used included semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The participants were diverse: librarians, township officers of the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) under the Ministry of Information, village and ward administrators, and library users and non-users. The study gathered information in various areas such as "library infrastructure and operations," "library management and operations," "library usage," "expectations towards the library," "internet usage and potential," and "impact of libraries on the community" (Asia Foundation and Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation, 2014: a-b). One of the notable findings was that although public libraries in Myanmar suffered from budget constraints, lack of well-trained staff, poor facilities, and lack of collections and computer availability, many citizens perceived community libraries as central to village life. In terms of specific outcomes, villagers responded that "the opening of a library creates a better atmosphere and that people gain moral values, improve their thinking skills and behave better thanks to reading" (Asia Foundation and Myanmar Book Aid and Preservation Foundation, 2014: 40).

In the UK, evaluators assessed the effectiveness of *Big Lottery Fund's Community Libraries Programme* (MLA, 2011). The £80 million program funded 58 authorities to refurbish 77 libraries. Although the program involved mostly capital funding, evaluators focused on a main provision of the program: a requirement for libraries to actively involve communities in the design, delivery, and management of the funded libraries. The final updated evaluation (prepared by Renaisi in 2011) examines program delivery – how well the community

engagement approach was implemented by participating libraries – and the impacts of libraries' approaches as well as their sustainability efforts and best practices. Earlier evaluation reports (baseline and interim) acknowledged that measuring “community engagement” across multiple sites was a challenging exercise, given the term is very context-specific and hard to define. And yet, the researchers ultimately settled on six dimensions of community engagement: volunteering, partnership working, workforce development, learning/skills, health/well-being, and sustaining/advancing community engagement. Their methodology included document review (for all participants) and two levels of case study – intermediate case study via phone interviews (with 16 libraries), and intensive case study using field visits, interviews, and focus groups with community groups (for six libraries). The evaluation applied a theory of change model. The evaluation framework, survey instrument, and program logic are available in the report's appendices.

The first comprehensive study on the value public libraries in Australia was based in the State of Victoria (State Library of Victoria, 2005). *Libraries Building Communities* recorded the views of 10,000 people – users, non-users, library staff, and community leaders – using surveys (online and telephone), focus groups, and interviews. The study measured public libraries' contribution to their communities, and the findings were published in four reports: research background and key concepts, the community perceptions of libraries, user and non-user profiles, and examples of excellence and innovation in libraries. The findings were grouped into four themes: overcoming the digital divide, creating informed communities, convenient and comfortable places of learning, and building social capital. The study also surfaced new questions. One question, regarding how to better serve “hard to reach” groups, spawning a follow-up study, *Connecting with the Community* (State Library of Victoria, 2008). For that study, researchers investigated the characteristics and barriers to participation for five groups: Indigenous Australians; disadvantaged young people; Horn of Africa communities; low-income families and vulnerable learners. Qualitative information was gathered through literature review, interviews with community stakeholders, and focus groups with targeted groups. Taken together, *Libraries Building Communities* and *Connecting with the Community* helped libraries in Victoria identify their greatest assets to the community and ensure that a widening circle of users could share in the benefits.

Also, in Australia, the Library Council of New South Wales sponsored *Enriching Communities*, a study examining the perceived economic, social, and environmental outcomes of public libraries across their state (LCNSW, 2008). “Environmental” was defined, very broadly; the category included the library atmosphere, availability of information on environmental issues, and personal satisfaction derived from sharing resources. Data came from a survey of library managers across the state and ten case studies. Data for each case study was collected from 200 in-library user surveys and 200 mailed household surveys (with a 19% response rate). Unfortunately, the household survey responses were largely skewed toward library users: although the researchers had hoped for a balanced response, only one-sixth of returned surveys were from non-users.

International approaches

Although most large-scale evaluation reports examine library systems in Europe, North America, and Oceania, EIFL's focus on Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) in *Perception of Libraries in Africa* is a notable exception (EIFL, 2012). The study used outcome and impact indicators to identify the opinions of national-level and local stakeholders, including library users, non-users, government officials, and media representatives. Researchers examined ten subjects: education, economic development, health, communication, social relationships, culture, social inclusion/community development, citizen empowerment/democracy/e-government, agriculture, and the information society/digital divide. The project's survey instruments are readily available on the project website.

Another international study on perceptions of libraries was the *Cross-European survey to measure users' perceptions of the benefits of ICT in public libraries*, prepared by TNS (2013). That study surveyed people in 17 countries across Europe, both library users and those who use public access computers at other locations. Overall, the study found the most commonly reported benefit for people who used computers in libraries was saving time and money, but positive educational, government, and occupational outcomes were also important for many respondents.

The *Global Impact Study of Public Access to Information & Communication Technologies* is a large-scale study of public libraries and similar places where people can use public computers, led by Dr. Araba Sey at the University of Washington. The five-year project examined the social and economic impacts, and the magnitude of those impacts, of public technology use on users and non-users. The study's final report, *Connecting People for Development*, describes how both groups report positive impacts, both social and economic, from having greater access to technology. Like the EIFL study, impacts were aligned with key development domains: communications and leisure, culture and language, education, employment and income, governance, and health. However, the *Global Impact Study* used a three-tiered research design to not only collect perceptions, but to test the magnitude and assumptions at a national level. This included (1) national inventories of the venues that provide technology for the public, (2) surveys of users, non-users, and staff, and (3) several semi-independent in-depth studies.

Economic approaches

Another method for assessing the value of libraries involves weighing the benefits of services against the costs of providing them. Since the late 1990s, multiple studies have used cost-benefit analyses, return on investment calculations, and econometric modeling to capture libraries' value in financial terms. Although the calculations required for these studies are typically outside the scope of performance evaluations, cost-benefit analyses can offer alternative ways to capture direct and indirect benefits, although some rely entirely on conventional output measures (e.g., number of visitors, number of books circulated, etc.).

Glen Holt, Donald Elliott, and Leslie Holt brought cost-benefit analysis to the attention of library practitioners in the US in the late 1990s through their analyses of library systems in Baltimore County, Birmingham County, King County, Phoenix, and St. Louis (Holt, et. al., 2001). Their approach measured service use by classes of patrons (i.e., households, teachers, business, and caregivers), the relative value of different services (i.e., youth services versus technology services), and the relationship between funding for library programs and the economic value placed on them. (Elliott, Holt, and Holt, along with Sterling Hayden, published a practitioner guide for conducting these types of analyses. See Elliott, et. al., 2007). National economic studies have also come out of the UK (British Library, 2004), Norway (Aabo, 2005), and Latvia (Strode, et. al., 2012).

Studies

Studies published in journals are much more diverse than practitioner guides or evaluation reports in regard to the types of questions asked and approaches used. Studies aim to fill a gap or extend a body of academic research, and so at times they can be too technical or abstract, too context-specific or esoteric for general readers. Yet studies can also have far reaching influence, providing evidence and experimental approaches that practitioners and funders can draw from.

Evaluators draw from studies strategically, depending on the questions they seek to answer. Studies can be particularly helpful when listing and testing assumptions using an evaluator's theory of change model. The aim of this section is to show (1) research on library outcomes and (2) the most popular nooks of social science research on the topic of public libraries and evaluation.

Outcomes across users

There have been studies which have examined outcomes of public library use, but they mostly took place in the Global North. Compared to the number of researches and reports on public library usage pattern or service provision, not many studies focus on analyzing the outcomes of public library use on learners, students, or the group we call business section patrons.

Vakkari and Serola (2012) examined individuals' perceived outcomes of using public libraries. The participants were 1000 Finnish adults in age of 15 to 79, well representing age, marital status, and geographic region of the overall population. They used mailed questionnaire as study instrument. In general, it was found that respondents perceived major benefits from reading fiction and nonfiction and from self-education. Public libraries were most used for "literary recreation and experience, and self-development during leisure time" (Vakkari and Serola, 2012: 41). There were some notable differences among gender, educational level, and age. For example, it was found that females, compared to males, saw more benefits from library services in terms of cultural interests^[1] and career matters^[2]. Library visitors with low- or mid-education level benefited more in everyday activities from library use^[3] compared to the more-

educated who used library more for cultural interests and career related benefits. Compared to younger Finnish individuals, older patrons obtained less benefits in terms of cultural interests and careers but more in everyday activities.

A few years later, the same study model was extended to compare and contrast five culturally different countries (Vakkari et al., 2016) – Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, South Korea, and the U.S. Each country had different number of respondents, ranging from 538 to 887. It was found that the level of benefits from public library use was perceived differently across countries. Finns and Americans saw more benefits than South Koreans. After South Koreans, Norwegians and the Dutch perceived less level of benefits. In particular, the study revealed that U.S. patrons perceived more benefits throughout the 19 areas assessed^[4], compared to patrons in the other four countries. Moreover, across the five countries, fun in reading and self-education were perceived as the two most significant benefits from public libraries use. Top three perceived benefits (among the 19 areas assessed) in each of the five countries are listed in the table below.

Table 31: Top three perceived benefits

Country	Top three benefits
Finland	1. Fun in reading 2. Self-education 3. Travel and vacation
Norway	1. Fun in reading 2. Self-education 3. History and society
The Netherlands	1. Fun in reading 2. Travel and vacation 3. Self-education
South Korea	1. Fun in reading 2. Educational opportunities 3. Self-education
U.S.A.	1. Fun in reading 2. Self-education 3. History and society

Reference: Adapted from Vakkari et al. (2016: 354)

Pabērza and Rutkauskiene (2010) assessed the outcomes of public access computing (PAC) in public libraries of Lithuania and Latvia. The study used quantitative and qualitative methods, with instruments such as questionnaires, interview scenarios, and focus group scenarios. The study surveyed nationwide samples of library directors/managers, librarians, library users, library non-users, and children. 60% of Lithuanian users responded that they saved resources

by using the internet at libraries – they do not have to pay for the internet connection, newspapers, or journals. Also, by accessing the internet in public libraries, the Lithuanian users were able to save time, access a wider range of publications, use e-banking, download films, and communicate with friends with no cost. 64% of Lithuanian respondents mentioned that library internet access led to improved performance at work. In Latvia, perceived benefits of library PAC users included receiving support in studying, using e-services, contacting state or municipal institutions, saving financial resources, earning money, finding a job, and meeting shopping needs. Lithuanian and Latvian users perceived social outcomes of library internet access in terms of having more meaningful leisure and communicating better with friends and close ones.

Outcomes for learners

Bhatt (2010) explored the impact of public library use on reading, television, and academic outcomes in the U.S. The author utilizes data gathered from the Current Population Survey, American Time Use Survey, and National Household Education Survey. In particular, the National Household Education Survey (NHES) gathered by the National Center for Education Statistics was implemented in 1996, covering over 15000 households with children of age 3 to grade 12. NHES collected information on “demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics of the household, as well as whether or not anyone in the household used the library in the month prior to the survey..., and the household’s distance to the library (coded in mile categories)” and “information about household reading behavior with children (for children age 3–10), and children’s school experience (for those enrolled in elementary or secondary school), such as misbehavior problems, average grades, homework completion, and grade retention.” (Bhatt, 2010: 151) Analyzing the NHES data illuminated association between library use and a 16 percentage point rise in the probability of a child doing more homework compared to their peers’ average, and nearly the same degree of decrease was found in chances of misbehavior.

Nielsen and Borlund (2011: 106) interviewed 12 Danish high school students and examined how they viewed the role of public libraries in “learning, user education, information literacy, and librarians’ information competencies.” The students mentioned how they see public library as “a place for independent learning” (Nielsen and Borlund, 2011: 113) – one student responded that learning experience at the library is better (compared to that in school), because it implies that one has actively taken the initiative to visit the venue and learn something. Moreover, the interviewees’ comments suggested that the supportive environment of public libraries for independent learning generated a sense of freedom to do or learn things at their comfortable pace and enabled them to explore a topic of interest in-depth.

Dent and Goodman (2015) conducted a mixed methods study in the Kitengesa Community Library in Uganda to explore possible associations between secondary school students’ academic outcomes (in terms of overall grade average (OGA)) and several factors such as reading frequency, library access, and presence and type of reading materials in the home. One of the researchers’ assumptions was that “students who have access to and use a rural village

library would have higher OGAs than students who do not.” (Dent and Goodman, 2015: 57). However, conducting an independent-samples t-test comparing means of OGAs for library users and non-library users did not show any significant difference between the two groups.

Antell (2004) examined the reasons why college students go to public libraries rather than university libraries when doing school assignments. Although the study was not focused on revealing outcomes of using public libraries by the students, it did so indirectly. The participants were 17 students from five different colleges located in three different cities. The responses included that public library provides a better environment and has a better set of collection that are supportive for studying (“It is easier to concentrate at the public library;” “There are a lot of books but not necessarily a lot of helpful books [at the campus library]” and “It [the public library] usually has sources that are simpler that I can understand better. That gives me somewhere to start.”).

Outcomes for business section patrons

Roy et al. (2010) examined the outcome of computer classes for job-seekers. The classes were run by a team of students from the University of Texas at Austin’s School of Information (iSchool) and librarians at the Austin Public Library. The five classes covered topics including “job searching on the internet,” “cover letter writing,” “resume writing,” “interviewing skills and tips,” and “social networking and managing [one’s] online identity” (Roy et al., 2010: 198). The patron participants of the classes were described as “older [than the traditional profile of a job seeker] or employed at one place for over 20 years or from a foreign country” (Roy et al., 2010: 202). Most of the patrons completed an evaluation form after each class, resulting in 28 evaluation forms collected. The evaluations were done in 5-point scale, covering a range of areas such as: satisfaction on workshop content, materials, facilities, and time length; perception towards the instructors (i.e. the iSchool students); and contribution of class to job performance improvement. One of the lowest-ranked aspects in the evaluation was the impact of the workshop on job performance enhancement. The authors predicted that this perhaps was because the attendees did not actually have an opportunity to apply what they learned from the training, as they might had been unemployed or underemployed. The program also generated positive outcomes for the library and the iSchool students – the library saw an increase in number of participants in other computer classes and the iSchool students learned practical teaching skills.

Gichohi et al.’s (2017) study explored how information needs of small-scale business enterprises (SBEs) were addressed by public libraries in Meru County, Kenya. The study used survey instrument and collected data from 296 SBE traders and 20 staffs from three public libraries in the region. Although the study was not directly measuring outcomes experienced by business section patrons from public library use, of important to note is that the “most SBE users were not submitting formal business information requests” (Gichohi et al., 2017: 427). It was also found that their level of awareness of public or community library as a source of business information was lower compared to alternative channels, such as suppliers, fellow businessmen/women, customers, the internet, social media groups, college or university

business libraries, and church. This implies that, before one examines the outcomes of business patrons' public library use, it might be necessary to assess the level of their awareness of public library as a provider of business information.

Related areas of research

The following list of studies was generated in 2014 via searches in Library and Information Abstracts (LISA), an abstracting and indexing tool that draws from research published in more than 68 countries (CSA, n.d.). Search terms included "public libraries" and "evaluation" as keywords and subject terms. Over 800 results were culled to a list of 100 studies. Based on a review of abstracts, the research was grouped into the following topics: monitoring and evaluation methods, technology and electronic services, staffing, targeted populations, collections, social and economic value, and public perception.

Evaluation

- Benchmarking and best practices – Filho, de Aquino, Soares & Lyra, 2004 Brazil; Berghaus, 2001 Germany; Lobina, 2006 Italy/international; Suaiden, 2001 Brazil; Rasinkangas, 2008 Finland; Lynch & Yang, 2004 China; Mihocic, 2011 Croatia; Lu, 2006 Taiwan.
- Library self-assessment – Hansen 2000 Denmark; Bertot, 2006 USA; Jones, Kinnell & Usherwood, 2000 UK; Ikeuchi, 2002 Japan; Borbely, 2011 Hungary.
- Developing evaluations/indicators – Kortelainer, Rasinkangas & Hakala, 2001 Finland; Kaczmarek, 2012 Poland; de Jager & Nassimbeni, 2005 South Africa; Preiser & Wang, 2006 USA.
- Secret shoppers – Burkamp & Virbick, 2002 USA; Clark, 2005 UK; Calvert, 2005 New Zealand.

Population groups/inclusion/exclusion

- People with disabilities –Lilly & Van Fleet, 2000 USA (websites).
- Children information needs, collections and services – YALSA, 2001 USA; Shiu & Huang, 2000 China; Maynard & Davies, 2005 UK; Graham & Gagnon, 2013 Canada; Kanazawa & Maruyama, 2008 Japan.
- Adolescents – Bamise & Oyedapo, 2012, Nigeria.
- Equity and social inclusion – Usherwood & Linley, 2000 UK; Pateman, 2006 UK; Jue, Koontz & Lance, 2005 USA.
- Distance learners -- Mcharazo, 2004 Tanzania.
- LGBTQ – McKenzie & Pecoskie, 2004 Canada; Moss, 2008 USA; Curry, 2005.

Library staffing

- Staff training – Stephens & Cheetham, 2012; Australia; Dalston & Turner, 2011 USA.
- Knowledge/competencies/credentials – Houston, 2000 USA; Dali & Dilevko, 2009 Canada.
- Well-being – Juniper, Bellamy & White, 2012 UK.
- Attitudes about technology -- Goulding, Murray & Spacey, R. 2004 UK.
- Volunteers -- Hewitt & Eve, 2012 Canada.

Technology/electronic services delivery

- Public access computers and internet – Kendall & Craven, 2005 UK; Eve, 2000 UK.
- Websites – Marcucci, 2004 Italy; Hildebrand, 2003 Australia; Aitta, Kaleva & Kortelainen, 2008 Finland; Shen, Li & Hu, 2006 Taiwan; Welch, 2005 USA.
- Online reference – Carter & Janes, 200 USA; Breidenbaugh, 2006 USA; McCrea, 2004 UK; Gilbert, Liu, Matoush & Whitlatch, 2006 USA.
- Digital services – Galluzzi, 2001 Italy.
- Longitudinal assessment – Craven, 2002 UK.

Social and economic value

- Outcomes/impacts-- Kostiak, 2002 Canada; Mac Eachern, 2001 New Zealand; Halper, 2004 UK; Streatfield & Markless, 2011 UK.
- Cost-benefit analysis – Elliott & Holt, 2003 USA; Aabo, 2005 Norway.
- Socio-cultural function -- Klopfer & Nagata, 2011 Japan.

Collections/acquisition/circulation

- Collection development – Sullivan, 2004 USA; Pogorelec, 2006 Slovenia; Walia & Gupta, 2012 India.
- Collection quality – Revelli, 2000 Italy/international; Bell, 2000 UK/international; Dilevko, 2003 UK.
- Circulation/borrowing -- Van & Parrott, 2012 Canada.

General library or other services

- General – Saleh & Lasisi, 2011 Nigeria; Heitzman & Asundi, 2000 India; Nishino, Nozue, Oshima, Yamashige & Nikami, 2002 Japan; Tseng & Lu, 2007 Taiwan.
- Health information – Oh & Noh, 2013 South Korea; Smith, 2011 USA; Furness, & Casselden, 2012 UK; Hoffman-Goetz, Friedman & Celestine, 2006 Canada.

Conclusion

As this review shows, there are many ways to evaluate a library. Books for practitioners, performance measurement systems, benchmarks, evaluation reports, and academic studies demonstrate various approaches for designing a framework, creating indicators, collecting evidence, and sharing findings. The evaluation approach used ultimately depends on one's questions and audience.

This review does have gaps. Despite searching, the following types of documents were particularly difficult to locate, presumably because they tend to be kept as internal documents or were challenging to cull from the body of literature:

- Baseline and interim evaluation reports
- Formative/process evaluation reports
- A survey of performance measurement systems used by public libraries
- Practitioner guides written outside of the US, UK, and Australia
- Longitudinal studies of library users

^[1]Benefits in cultural interests included: reading fiction or non-fiction, cultural activities, interest in history, self-education, travel, and creative activities.

^[2] Career benefits included: e.g. finding jobs, executing work tasks, and developing job skills.

^[3]Benefits in everyday activities related to e.g. household, childcare, housing, consumer issues, health, social relations, outdoor activities, interest in nature, and societal discussion.

^[4]The 19 areas were categorized into four broad categories: work (finding jobs; executing specific work tasks; developing job skills); education (finding educational opportunities; completing formal education (acquiring a degree); self-education during leisure time); everyday activities (household; childcare and schooling; housing including home repairs; consumer issues; health; travel and vacation; social relations); and leisure activities (fun in reading (combined reading fiction and reading non-fiction), cultural activities, creative activities, outdoor activities, interest in history or society, participating in and following current events).