

Research Incentive Grant Report

by Florence Mugambi, IPFW Helmke Library

I wish to thank InULA for awarding me a grant in support of my research, “Building library relationships in Ontulili, Kenya: Towards an effort to establish a community library as an environment that fosters multiple literacies, academic success, and community development.”

The aim of the study is to explore the extent of leisure reading and examine the factors responsible for lack of a reading culture among school-age children in the study area. The project looks beyond the formal education system and seeks to integrate all the essential variables of the broader literacy environment in order to raise and sustain literacy, and hence, academic success. The findings will be used to make decisions in establishing a library in the Ontulili community as well as add to the body of knowledge in the field.



I can say without a doubt that InULA's support has helped me launch a significant research career. The grant supported my five week trip to Ontulili in October 2011 to collect data for my proposed study. The study utilized a representative sample from five public primary schools, parents and community representatives, and used a multi-method approach including face-to-face interviews, photography, video, and focus group discussions. Unbeknown to me, I would also turn out to be a motivational speaker. Having grown up in Ontulili and attended one of the primary schools, I am an inspiration to many students who face daily challenges that seem insurmountable, and to many I represent a sense of hope. In fact, many students were delighted to see me in their schools and were sad to see me leave.

I also held impromptu discussions with non-school groups. On one occasion, I attended a clan group meeting with my mother and ended up being the speaker. Since those in attendance were

curious about what I was doing in the schools, the meeting's agenda shifted and became a discussion on the state of the local schools and possible reasons for students' poor performance in schools over many years. It gave me an opportunity to share with them my research problem and to have them provide feedback to my project.

The possibility of having a community library was exciting and brought a lot of hope to the students and the adults, as well, as they expressed confidence that the presence of a library would help them perform better in school.

Since returning from the trip, I have used some of the collected data to do a poster presentation at the 2011 Indiana Library Federation annual conference. I have also written a short article in *Helmke Highlights*, IPFW Helmke Library's newsletter. The poster was ranked second out of fourteen entries and attracted a cash prize and a t-shirt. I also hope to present my findings in more venues as well as submit the findings for publication in research journals.