Feet on The Ground: Capacity Building Programme to Foster New ICT-Based Public Library Services That Meet Community Needs

Guy Amarteifio  
*Regional Librarian, Greater Accra  
Ghana Library Authority  
guyoski@hotmail.com*

Ugne Lipeikaite  
*Impact Manager of Public Library Innovation Programme EIFL  
ugne.lipeikaite@eifl.net*

**Abstract**

Ghana public libraries function as a centralized network of 10 regional and 53 district libraries and information centres, managed by the Ghana Library Authority\(^1\) (GLA). Today half of these libraries are equipped with information and communication technology (ICT), creating exciting opportunities for enriching their work and to benefit communities. A key initiative to equip libraries with computers in Ghana is the Library connectivity project\(^2\) of the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC), implemented in collaboration with the GLA. As a result of this project, more than half - 10 regional libraries and 26 district public libraries – have been equipped with computers and internet connections. In addition to the equipment, GIFEC provided librarians with basic ICT training. However, although technical potential of Ghana public libraries was strengthened, challenges remained: research into perceptions of public libraries, commissioned by EIFL\(^3\) in 2011, showed that public libraries in Ghana are widely perceived to be spaces for books and study, and are not associated with ICT, innovation or community development, and that libraries lack relevant competences and funding\(^4\). These findings, and EIFL’s previous work in Ghana\(^5\), supporting pilot projects to develop new ICT based services, encouraged EIFL to engage in a new initiative aimed at strengthening capacity of public libraries to deploy ICTs for community development.

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\(^1\) Note: The Ghana Library Authority is a public library facility established by the Government of Ghana to support formal and informal education through the provision of reading materials such as books, periodicals and other non-book materials. More at: [http://www.ghla.org.gh](http://www.ghla.org.gh)

\(^2\) Note: Library connectivity project is meant to provide ICT connectivity and equipment to all regional, district and mobile libraries across the country. More at: [http://gifec.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91%Athe-library-connectivity-project&catid=44%Auec-programme](http://gifec.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=91%Athe-library-connectivity-project&catid=44%Auec-programme)

\(^3\) Note: EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to digital information and knowledge through libraries in developing and transition countries. More at: [www.eifl.net](http://www.eifl.net)

\(^4\) Note: EIFL-PLIP ([www.eiflnet/plip](http://www.eiflnet/plip)) commissioned this study to deepen understanding of the role of public libraries in Africa (Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Uganda) and of the vision, aspirations and expectations of the general public, librarians and national and local government. The study was conducted by the social and marketing
The paper presents the methodology and content of the EIFL capacity building initiative, and analyses preliminary results of the programme. It argues that similar training can be replicated in other African countries, to build potential of public libraries to offer innovative services; increase public libraries’ value, and improve their image as important players in community development.

**Keywords:** Ghana, public libraries, technologies, ICT, innovative services.

### Introduction

Ghana has historically been among the leading African countries in terms of telecommunications sector growth and policy. With over 100 cell phone users per 100 people, Ghana boasts one of the highest cellular penetration rates in the region. However, the country’s progress in Internet and broadband development has been far slower, with only 12.3% of Internet penetration in 2013 – two thirds less than Nigeria (38%) and Kenya (39%) in the same year⁶.

A study of the Digital Divide in Ghana⁷, showed that “typical” Internet users are mostly young, men, with higher levels of education, living in urban areas. The majority of Internet non-users are rural, female, older, and less educated. The study concludes that in Ghana there is a clear gap between people who have access to ICTs and those who are totally left behind. To minimize this gap, the study authors offer three main recommendations:

- to expand **public ICT access facilities** with the aim of reaching out to non-Internet users. Rather than mainly offering access to computers and Internet connections, there is a need for public access places that would also serve as public relations and capacity building vehicles to entice and support potential new users throughout the country, particularly in rural areas.

- to encourage use and inform new Internet users, through **digital literacy and capacity building programmes**, and to help existing users to take better advantage of Internet-based opportunities.

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⁵ Note: During 2010-2013 EIFL-PLIP supported 3 projects in Ghana that were implemented by/through 2 regional and district public libraries. EIFL-PLIP also activities of a multi-stakeholder group set up to raise awareness about the potential of public libraries in Ghana.


• to develop and support **Internet services, applications, and content** of relevance and value to potential Internet users in various categories, especially marginalized communities in rural areas, including farmers, fishermen, and other working class Ghanaians.

The study suggests that there is a great need in Ghana for public ICT access and training facilities. These facilities, the study suggests, should provide access to technology and the support of knowledgeable intermediaries, who could perform digital literacy training and guide and help people to use the technology. The intermediaries could also serve as agents to reach out to diverse disadvantaged groups, and help them to understand the potential of technology, and to discover and master online content and services.

**Role of public libraries in addressing digital divide**

There are more than 320,000 public libraries worldwide, 73 percent of them in developing and transitioning countries. More and more libraries are equipped with computers and the internet to enable access to knowledge and information resources. In many communities, public libraries are the only place where any person, regardless of social status, education or skills level, can have access to information and the Internet free of charge. Moreover, library staff often provides training and support for first-time Internet users as well as those looking to improve their skills.

A five-year project, implemented by the University of Washington's Technology and Social Change Group (TASCHA), the Global Impact Study, proved that a central impact of public access to ICT is the promotion of digital inclusion through technology access, information access and development of ICT skills. Both library users and non-users also reported positive impacts in various social and economic areas of their lives. Community Informatics researcher Michael Gurstein, claims that libraries are the most appropriate institutions to provide ICT access to the public, because they are local initiatives with an immediate on-going organizational base, including financial management, physical presence and access to skilled personnel. This gives provision of ICT access a framework allowing for continuity, potentially, growth. Ghana public libraries function as a centralized network of 10 regional and 53 district libraries and information centres, managed by the Ghana Library Authority (GLA). Several community libraries have

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11 Note: The Ghana Library Authority is a public library facility established by the Government of Ghana to support formal and informal education through the provision of reading materials such as books, periodicals and other non-book materials. More at: [http://www.ghla.org.gh](http://www.ghla.org.gh)
been established with the support of benevolent individuals or groups, but most have stopped functioning because external funding ceased, and the Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) cannot sustain them.

In 2010 the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC) began collaborating with the GLA, which oversees the public library service in Ghana. The GLA- GIFEC collaboration aims to reach unserved and underserved communities. GIFEC, formerly Ghana Investment Fund for Telecommunications (GIFTEL), was born out of the Ghana ICT policy for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) as an implementing agency of the Ministry of Communications in January 2004. Financial resources for the operations of GIFEC are provided mainly by the telecommunications service providers, which, by law, are required to contribute one per cent of their profits annually towards the operations of GIFEC.

GIFEC is implementing 13 projects to meet its goal. The project involving the GLA is the “Library Connectivity Project”\(^\text{12}\), under which GIFEC intends to equip all public library service points and the Mobile Library Service with computers and Internet connectivity. The project has so far equipped all 10 regional libraries with 10 desktop computers, and connected them to the Internet; photocopiers to run the Regional Digital Library and Information Centres (RDLIC) and five desktop computers, six collapsible tables and chairs and a router for the Mobile Digital Library Vans to run the Mobile Digital-Cottages (MD-C) in two pilot districts in each region. GIFEC was to supply the same facilities to run the RDLIC to all 51 branch libraries by the year 2012. As at the end of 2013, a total 26 district public libraries have been connected\(^\text{13}\). In addition to providing equipment, in 2013 GIFEC also organized five days of basic ICT training for librarians.

However, although the technical potential of Ghana public libraries was strengthened, challenges remained: research into perceptions of public libraries, commissioned by the international not-for-profit organization EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries)\(^\text{14}\) in 2011, showed that public libraries in Ghana lack skills and funding, are widely perceived to be spaces for books and study, and are not associated with ICT, innovation or community development\(^\text{15}\). To change this perception, the EIFL Public Library


\(^{14}\) Note: EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) works with libraries to enable access to digital information and knowledge through libraries in developing and transition countries. More at: [www.eifl.net](http://www.eifl.net)

\(^{15}\) Note: EIFL-PLIP ([www.eiflnet/plip](http://www.eiflnet/plip)) commissioned this study to deepen understanding of the role of public libraries in A[http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/librarians-training-builds-young-leadersfrica (Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Uganda) and of the vision, aspirations and expectations of the general public,](http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/librarians-training-builds-young-leadersfrica (Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Uganda) and of the vision, aspirations and expectations of the general public,
Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) started a number of initiatives in Ghana, including small grants to pilot innovative public library services to advance community development; small grants support efforts of a multi-stakeholder group to raise awareness and change perceptions of public libraries, and, finally, a capacity building programme that would reach all Ghana public libraries equipped with ICT and provide them the knowledge and skills to develop new services. EIFL-PLIP is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

**Encouraging new service innovations in Ghana public libraries**

Since its launch in 2009, EIFL-PLIP has supported the start-up of 49 new public library services in 27 developing and transition economy countries. These services have enabled more than 10,000 people to gain new skills and knowledge, which directly benefits their education and health, as well as their social and employment prospects. Effecting real changes in lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services, and demonstrating the contribution by libraries to building strong communities is the main goal of EIFL-PLIP. In Ghana EIFL-PLIP supported implementation of three successful projects by two regional public libraries in partnership with other local organisations:

- GLA and Northern Regional Library introduced the Internet Access and Training Programme. The programme combines ICT and leadership training for vulnerable, unemployed youth living in Tamale and surrounding villages. Marketing attracted hundreds of applicants, and in just one year (2010/11), the library trained 190 youth (125 women and 65 men).

- GLA and Volta Regional Library’s Mobile Library project takes laptop computers with wi-fi internet to schools in under-developed parts of Ho Municipality in Volta Region, so that children can get hands on experience. In two years (2012/14) the library taught 350 students how to use computers, increasing their potential to pass their exams.

- GLA and Northern Regional Library’s Technology for Maternal Health project improved access to vital health information for pregnant women and health workers. The library used computers, the Internet, mobile phone text messaging (SMS) and radio to access and disseminates information. The library hosted maternal health events at which health workers could meet women and discuss their concerns and fears about pregnancy and childbirth. In less than a year (2012/13) the library trained 15 health workers to conduct research online, sent weekly SMS

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17 Source: Hands on computer classes for struggling students. EIFL. URL: [http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/hands-computer-classes-struggling-students](http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/hands-computer-classes-struggling-students)
messages to 94 expectant mothers and hosted health events for over 180 community members\textsuperscript{18}.

Through these projects, as well as other 46 projects, EIFL-PLIP has devised a model for introducing new services in libraries (see picture 1). The model shows steps through that the library undergoes in the process of introducing and implementing an innovative service, from recognizing community needs to taking action; from achieving outcomes to assessing impact, evaluating and sustaining new services. These steps include advocating for the library to play a greater role in development of the community, and raising awareness about the impact of its services in the community. Every library must take into account the conditions of a starting position, specific assumptions on causes and effects, and expected challenges and outcomes. In the process of implementation, there is always a need to modify and improve the initial plan, based on learning, and in the end, there is always the challenge of quantifying and capturing outcomes and impact.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{model.png}
\end{center}

\textit{Picture} 1. Model of development of new innovative services in public libraries

Experience gained from the programme’s work suggests that there are at least five factors that are essential for library service innovation to be truly successful and valuable to the community:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Understanding of community challenges (as opposed to challenges of public library) and accurate definition of community needs and existing gaps in support and services This enables the library to define needs and focus the service on important local issues.
  \item Sound assessment and selection of relevant and affordable technologies and tools to meet the identified needs.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{18} Source: Health information service keeps rural mothers healthy. EIFL. URL: \url{http://www.eifl.net/eifl-in-action/health-information-service-keeps-rural-mothers-healthy}
• Capacity building of library staff, so that they feel confident and competent to assist and train visitors to take full advantage of the new tools and resources.

• Selection and, if needed, repackaging and making available digital content relevant to local community needs Capturing evidence of the impact of the innovative library service that is critical for ensuring funding from the government and mobilizing community support to continue and sustain technology enabled service\(^{19}\).

These key elements became the framework for EIFL-PLIP’s new capacity building programme, which would enable librarians, whose libraries are equipped with technology, to gain the knowledge and skills to develop new services, relevant to the communities they serve.

**Librarians skills and needs for capacity building**

In 2014 EIFL established a partnership with the newly formed Public Libraries Initiative for Development (PLIFOD) to work together to build capacity of librarians to use technologies to meet community needs. The PLIFOD initiative emerged as a result of the EIFL-PLIP supported multi-stakeholder advocacy and awareness raising project for libraries in 2011-2012. PLIFOD is a partnership between the GLA and the technology social enterprise, TechAide\(^{20}\), both based in Accra, capital of Ghana. The PLIFOD partners were keen to continue the work of narrowing the digital divide and intensify the involvement of public libraries in advancing community development through use of technology.

In order to understand level of competences and skills of public librarians in the areas identified as important for new, ICT based service development, EIFL-PLIP conducted a skills audit in libraries that had been equipped by GIFEC. The main findings were as follow:

• All the libraries selected for the programme had public access computers (ranging from 5 to 20 computers per library).

• All 70 librarians surveyed had basic ICT literacy skills, obtained through various training providers, including GIFEC, and were quite confident about basic use of ICT.

• About 50 percent of the respondents said they could perform tasks that required more advanced ICT skills, but only 5 percent had undergone advanced ICT level training.

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\(^{20}\) Note: TechAide is a technology social enterprise that aims to provide appropriate technologies and develop human capacities to unleash the potential of individuals, communities and institutions. More at: [www.techaid.net](http://www.techaid.net)
• Most of the librarians surveyed did not feel confident that they had the knowledge and skills to create and manage ICT-based library services. Respondents’ confidence level in this area fell between “somewhat confident” and “not too confident”.

Respondents believed that at the end of the training they would be able to improve their service delivery to patrons, work more effectively and efficiently, have had improved confidence level and be better placed to compete with others internationally and attract more people to use their library. They expressed an expectation to be able to train other library staff, who had no chance to take part in ICT courses, so that there would be greater numbers of competent staff to attend to the increasing number of users interested in using computers in their libraries. Respondents also believed that after the training, both library staff and users would have better ICT knowledge and better quality services.

Capacity building programme to foster new ICT-based services in public libraries

Three main criteria were applied to select librarians for the training programme: 1) Participating libraries had to be equipped with ICT; 2) Selected trainees should have at least basic ICT skills; 3) Librarians applying to participate in the training should be willing to take on the role of developing new technology-based services for their communities. Based on the skills audit forms, thirty public librarians (one per library) were selected. The programme includes over half of all Ghana public libraries to build up a critical mass of libraries that are able to introduce new services.

The training programme’s objective was build public librarians’ ICT competencies, and skills that support (1) ICT adoption in the library and (2) creation of new services using ICT. Based on baseline information obtained through the skills audit, local partners developed a capacity building curriculum for Ghana public libraries. The programme comprises a total 88 hours of training and consists of the following modules:

• Module 1: Advanced computer literacy for librarians (equivalent to ECDL levels base / advanced level ) – 40 hours
• Module 2: Internet resources and searching – 8 hours
• Module 3: New Services in public libraries – 24 hours
• Module 4: Communication, Advocacy and Awareness Raising for public libraries – 16 hours

Adapted Module 1 “Advanced computer literacy for librarians” for Ghana included how to work with MS Office programmes like MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint. Major attention in this module was also given on developing librarians ICT training skills, so that they could train colleagues and members of the community to use ICT. Training of trainer skills included the basic principles of teaching to adults, conducting training needs analyses, designing and development a training programme for a specific library user group (e.g. farmers, health workers, civil servants, etc.) and training skills.
Module 2 “Internet resources and searching” introduced trainees to strategies for searching online. Trainees were familiarized with a wide range of internet resources and learned how to introduce users to these e-resources; they practised formulating search strategies, online searches and evaluating web resources. A major emphasis was placed on identifying local online resources that are relevant to community groups served by the libraries, for example, health information websites, agricultural web portals, business, education and other resources.

Module 3 “New Services in public libraries” is the longest module. It combines a variety of subjects and kinds of sessions. The module started with a knowledge sharing session that involved EIFL-PLIP staff and library grantees from Africa sharing case studies and talking about hands on experience of developing technology-based innovative services in libraries. After the showcasing innovative services from South Africa, Kenya and Uganda, the Ghanaian public librarians engaged in discussion on how similar services could be started in their libraries. In the following session, librarians become familiar with community driven service development models and methods of researching community needs. Trainees had time to discuss the main problems faced by their communities and brainstormed ways in which the library could address these issues. Discussion served as the starting point for thinking about new services that could be planned and consequently implemented in their libraries. In the following sessions trainers walked participants through all stages of project development and planning – definition of the service goals, objectives, building of action plans and budgeting, building partnerships and managing stakeholder relationships, monitoring and reporting as well as fundraising and proposal writing. The module ended with a session on project impact evaluation, where trainees drafted plans for evaluating the impact of their service ideas.

Module 4 “Communication, Advocacy and Awareness Raising for public libraries” focused on building advocacy plans for their new services. Through interactive sessions, discussion and exercises trainees learned how to define advocacy goals for their new service ideas, to identify advocacy targets, to create stories and craft messages based on impact assessment findings, and to make effective presentations, work with media and plan advocacy campaigns.

All modules were delivered in TechAide’s training centre in Winneba, Ghana from May 2014 to February 2015. Training was performed with breaks of one month (or longer) between sessions and was led by a team of local and international experts.

The choice of trainers as well as the innovative service examples presented during the training was based on insights gained from a study conducted by EIFL in 2014 to deepen understanding about why and how public libraries innovate. One of conclusions of this study, which included surveys of more than 120 librarians from 10 countries and interviews with national level library leaders from four countries, was that a highly effective way to disseminate innovation is to mix local and international experiences of innovative services, making sure that presented experiences are relevant and can be easily
adapted in their libraries. Another finding of the study was the importance of peer-to-peer interaction\textsuperscript{21}.

**Outcomes of the capacity building programme**

Assessment of the effectiveness of the capacity building programme has been partially completed. The first phase of the assessment, based on trainee feedback during the training, has been completed and results are presented in this paper. The second phase will comprise a post-training skills audit, scheduled to take place four – five weeks after the training. The second phase will assess how the librarians are applying their skills in their libraries (training colleagues and members of the community; creating new services, etc.)

At the time of writing, the second phase assessment had not yet been completed.

At the end of the final module (February 2015), trainees filled in questionnaires. Twenty-six questionnaires were returned, and responses show significant improvements in trainees knowledge and skills.

Questionnaires asked trainees to assess their own skills before and after the training, using a scale of 1 – 5, where:

1 is the lowest rating equal to “No knowledge or skills”,

3 is equal to “Some knowledge or skills”,

5 is equal to “A lot of knowledge or skills”.

As we can see from table 1 (see below), before the training, trainees were the most uncomfortable about using MS Power Point and MS Excel, where almost 2/3 felt they had no or very little knowledge and skills. After training their confidence in using these applications increased significantly with most trainees claiming a lot of knowledge and skills. Another area where trainees had very little knowledge and skills was “Organizing basic ICT literacy training for community members”. As many as almost 70 percent of trainees claimed having no or very little knowledge and skills in this area, but great majority of them managed to improve significantly.

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Table 1.

Module 1: Self-assessment of initial and current knowledge and skills of usage of MS Office applications and organizing ICT training for users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
<th>TRAINING TOPICS</th>
<th>CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35% 38% 27%</td>
<td>Using Word</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54% 31% 15%</td>
<td>Using Excel</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58% 19% 23%</td>
<td>Using Power Point</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69% 19% 12%</td>
<td>Organizing ICT training for community members</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We find quite similar tendency in changes of librarians skills related to Module 2 “Internet resources and searching”. As shown in the table 2 (see below), before the training, more than half of trainees had no or very little knowledge and skills of subscribed and open source resources online, but after training their confidence increased and over 80 percent claimed having a lot of knowledge and skills. As far as it regards to Internet search, percentage of trainees who felt they had a lot of knowledge and skills increased to almost 90 percent.

Table 2.

Module 2: Self-assessment of initial and current knowledge and skills of use of e-resources and internet search.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
<th>TRAINING TOPICS</th>
<th>CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54% 38% 8%</td>
<td>Subscribed and open resources online</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35% 42% 23%</td>
<td>Internet searching</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from table 3, for module 3 “New Services in public libraries” we discovered that least known areas for trainees were proposal writing and impact assessment, where as many as 85 percent and 73 percent of trainees before training had no or very little knowledge and skills (see below). However, after training less than 1/5 of
them managed to obtain some and majority - a lot of knowledge and skills in these areas. Community needs assessment and project management were at little bit more known topics, but even there more then 2/3 of trainees felt they had no or very little knowledge and managed to improve a lot after training.

Table 3.
Module 3: Self-assessment of initial and current skills of knowledge and skills related to development of new services in public libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
<th>TRAINING TOPICS</th>
<th>CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community needs assessment</td>
<td>65% 27% 8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project management</td>
<td>69% 19% 12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal writing</td>
<td>85% 15% 0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact assessment</td>
<td>73% 27% 0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from table 4, most trainees were neither well familiar with communication nor with advocacy (see below). However, after the training they assessed their current knowledge much better with over 90 percent of trainees claiming to have a lot of knowledge and skills in both areas.

Table 4.
Module 4: Self-assessment of initial and current knowledge and skills of communicating with different audiences and advocating for new services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
<th>TRAINING TOPICS</th>
<th>CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 or 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with different</td>
<td>69% 19% 12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for new services</td>
<td>73% 23% 4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that after the training 1 participant felt “somewhat prepared” to implement new services in their library, 13 participants – “well prepared” and 12 participants – “very well prepared”. From qualitative informal feedback sessions we have learned that some have already started conducting ICT training for their colleagues and community members, or have started working on specific initiatives like reducing drop-
out rates among schoolchildren involved in illegal mining, initiating new services for farmers, empowering girls with ICT, supporting children’s school performance, etc. Trainees reported that training has broadened their knowledge of ICT and project management, has helped them in terms of relationships with their communities and the media, has raised their self-confidence in communication, changed their attitudes and helped to attract new library users.

Taking into account that self-assessment exercise took place right after the module 4 training, it is quite possible that trainees were too optimistic about their gains from the training. This makes the second phase of the evaluation, in which we will see how they are applying their new knowledge in their libraries, all the more important.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Through various initiatives, Ghana public libraries’ potential to become agents of digital inclusion among disadvantaged groups like women, rural inhabitants, less educated citizens and others is increasing. With a relatively widespread and large network (compared to many other countries in Africa), public libraries in Ghana can help addressing issues of physical access to ICT’s and technology skills, helping to increase numbers of internet users in their regions.

However, to perform their role effectively, librarians must be prepared. Early results of the EIFL-PLIFOD capacity building programme suggest it is a successful initiative that has significantly improved librarians’ knowledge and skills and boosted their confidence to be proactive players in local development, using ICT. Ideally, this programme should be expanded to include all public librarians in Ghana who use ICT in their work. The newly trained librarians need encouragement within the library sector to start new ICT-based services and to become leaders in engaging other librarians and stakeholders to develop services that change lives in their communities.

Meanwhile similar programmes could be implemented in other countries in Africa, which are looking for ways of strengthening public libraries’ potential to bridge digital divide. EIFL-PLIP has funded similar programmes in Kenya and Uganda, and is also currently working in Ethiopia. But Africa is a continent of many countries – and there is much to be done.

**Bios**

**Guy Amarteifio** is Regional Librarian at Greater Accra Regional Library, Ghana Library Authority. He is also a coordinator of the Library Connectivity Project, run by the Ghana Library Authority and the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications. Guy holds a masters degree in Library Studies from University of Ghana, and has over 25 years’ experience working in libraries. His professional interests include organizing reading clinics and reader clubs, children’s activities in libraries, training of librarians and running mobile library services.
**Ugne Lipeikaite** is the Impact Manager for EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme (PLIP). For the last several years, Ugne has built the impact evaluation framework and tools that are now being used by EIFL-PLIP grantees. She is also supporting the development of the librarians’ capacity building programme in Africa. Before joining EIFL in 2011, Ugne has worked on various large scale ICT diffusion and adoption projects and served as a consultant to several international research projects. Ugne holds a Ph.D in Communication and Information from Vilnius University.