

## Parents should ensure children's access to libraries –Mrs Funmi Ilori

🕒 April 28, 2018 👤 Abdulhafeez T. Oyewole 📁 Arts & Books 💬 0



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**Mrs Funmi Ilori is a social entrepreneur, professional teacher, environmentalist, innovator, story teller and a child-lover. She is the founder of an innovative mobile library for children: "iRead mobile library." She was one of the facilitators of the recent ANA/Yusuf Ali Capacity Building Workshop in Ilorin. In this interview with ABDULHAFEEZ T. OYEWOLE, she speaks about her innovative library brand, read-aloud evening with children and her passion for inculcating good reading culture in the youngsters.**

What is the read-aloud evening all about?

The read-aloud evening is to meet up with children at the library to encourage them and inspire them to read.

These are children that have been using the library but probably haven't had opportunity to enjoy reading sessions. So, I just feel that when children come together, read together, they can learn more together, plus they needed to know about authors.

If authors don't come together to write books, children and students wouldn't have anything to read. So, I stood in the gap for the authors to read out to the children in the place, that is Mustapha Akanbi Library, so that children could feel the impact of what authors write.

How would you describe the turnout of children and their performance?

It was beautiful, because it's the first time I am coming to the library in Ilorin and we had almost thirty children together. The children participated very well. Each of them read a passage from the book especially from the Pencil Project.

First, we read the Malaria Comic book and then we read the Pencil Project book, before we read the folktale.

From the Malaria Comic book, the children could answer questions. They learnt about malaria potpourri on healthy persons. They learnt about how to prevent malaria in their communities and all of them even pledged not to litter their environment. You can see how the library is. They were all given sweets and they did not drop it on the floor.

For the Pencil Project was all about a changing the world and they were able to understand that as children, they could contribute to

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changing the world. They also learnt about the Sustainable Development Goals and they were able to make pledges to say that they would also be part of the people changing the world.

What is “iRead Mobile Library” initiative all about?

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iRead Mobile Library is the first innovative books on wheels for children in Nigeria. We have books in trucks and vans that we take around to the schools and communities. Children can borrow the books to read. They read it, they record what they have read through a review journal and they return the books when the mobile library visits again.

The mobile library is mainly in Lagos for now. We are looking out for how we can get to other communities so that their children can benefit from the initiative.

How is it funded?

It is a social venture, so, parents subscribe for their children by paying five hundred naira per month and of course that helps us to be sustainable. We get donors that also support us with books.

iRead Mobile Library started as an initiative from the You-win project. It won a grant from the Nigerian government in 2013. I was also selected as one of the Mandela-Washington fellows to meet with President Obama in 2015. There, I won 25,000 dollars from US ADF to expand. So, we bought two vehicles. Now we have a fleet of four vans that go around to communities.

What is the projection in the years ahead?

In future, we are looking at reaching more underserved communities, more importantly to leverage on technology, because our dream is to build the largest network of libraries in Africa.

With technology, we will be able to go far and the physical library can reach more communities that technology may not be able to get into.

What's your advice for parents?

I want to inspire parents to also be the model by reading. If parents read, it is likely that their children would read. But more

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importantly is that parents should give their children access to the library. If children have access to the library, they would read.

As you can see, there's still a young girl in the library. While others are playing outside, she is reading. But, if she did not have access, she would not read.

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