

# CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC TEMPORARILY CLOSED MWAYA COMMUNITY LIBRARY

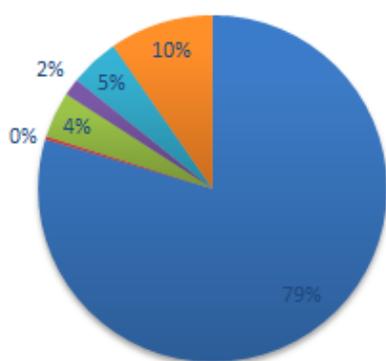


In recent years the Mwaya Community Library team has been implementing various new plans to increase their members, especially encouraging primary school students to make use of the many wonderful books available.

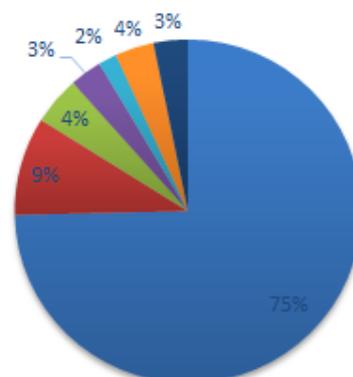
As a result of these initiatives, we have been recording a steady increase in the number of members and readers but in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and in line with other educational establishments in Malawi, we were forced to shut our community library for seven months during 2020.

During a regular year, the library can expect around 3,000 members borrowing books and more than 4,500 readers reading the newspaper and reference books at the library. In 2020 this dropped dramatically to 1,206 and 1,486 respectively, and the number of books lent out dropped from over 4,600 to 1,870. During the months the library was open though we did welcome 46 new members.

**Visitors for 2020**



**Genres of books borrowed in 2020**



- Kapanda Secondary Students
- Kapanda Secondary Teachers
- Primary Students
- Primary Teachers
- Ripple Africa staff
- Villagers

- School text books
- Non fiction
- Dictionarys
- Religion
- Native language books
- Fiction
- Children's books

Secondary school textbooks continue to be the most popular type of books to be borrowed, partly because we have added to the number available year on year and 2020 was no different. We bought eight copies of each book required for each year group at Kapanda Secondary School totalling 672 books. Half of these went to the community library and the other half to Kapanda's new school library. Their library will provide all students with the opportunity to study but especially those that live too far from Mwaya Community Library to access the books there.



During 2019 we welcomed a record number of primary students as a result of our team visiting Mwaya Primary School and encouraging students to come during their reading lesson at school. We also run a Saturday Children's Corner reading club.

However, in 2020 the numbers dropped due to the pandemic and even when primary schools did re-open, it was with a tiered approach so only the older year groups returned first to study for their final examinations. This is an area that we will continue to develop to encourage primary school students to visit the library and continue their reading journey.

Along with schools and the library, the pandemic also saw the temporary closure of our Adult Education classes. The majority of those attending Adult Education classes attend Open School at Kapanda Secondary School. After the day students have finished at 14:00, those students not selected by the government but able to afford the school fees, can go. The sessions held at the library are predominantly in English and Maths.

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Talking of the challenges facing the library team and the community when the library had to close, head librarian Burton said, "It was very difficult for us to recover the borrowed books because we were informed unexpectedly that the library should be closed. However, we managed to collect the books after some months. The community did not have access to information because they could not read the newspapers. The students' studies were affected because they could not borrow books to read at home."

When the library did re-open later in 2020, the locals did come back to read the newspapers and a higher number than usual read books at the library too. Burton said, "I think people have missed reading so when the library re-opened, they were keen to come back."

Despite the library being closed for seven months in 2020 we continued to pay our library and literacy teams – and the rest of our Ripple Africa team – as there was no government support scheme for those unable to work. Already in 2021 we have measures in place to ensure the library and Adult Education lessons can remain open and safe for the team, borrowers and learners.



In our 2019 Library Report we noted that a lot of locals would love to read more books written by African authors. We are grateful to a number of supporters who bought several copies of different books but we would love to buy more. If you would like to purchase any on the list, please email [info@rippleafrica.org](mailto:info@rippleafrica.org)  
A huge thank you to everyone who supports the community library.