Ideas Box – Empowerment Impact

Project description

In 2013, Bibliothèques Sans Frontières created the Ideas Box, a pop up media center that can be deployed in 20 minutes even in the most challenging situations, creating a 100m²-space that provides a secure access to information and education. Equipped with its own power source, the Ideas Box is completely autonomous and offers an internet connection (using satellite or 3/4G connectivity), tablets, computers, a library with physical books and e-books, games, a theatre and all the necessary furniture (chairs, tables, stage, etc.) to host up to 70 people at the same time.

In order to bypass issues related to limited bandwidth for the internet connection or the cost of data, the Ideas Box server provides access to thousands of digital in an offline manner. Curated to fit the needs of the local community and the projects’ objectives, the content of the Ideas Box covers a wide range of subjects: from educational material to vocational training, university MOOCs, health prevention, digital literacy, legal literacy, entertainment in local languages, etc.

The Ideas Box enables a great diversity of activities, with localised content, robust technology and equipment, as well as pedagogical methods adapted to local communities. Mobile and adaptable, the Ideas Box can be deployed in one location on a specific day and redeployed in another site the day after. It can also be installed in an existing space to make it more attractive and strengthen the cultural and educational offer. The Ideas Box has previously been deployed in schools, in both emergency situations and developing countries, to supplement the educational offer. The Ideas Box provides the technology, the content and the environment required to offer an individualised and stimulating educational experience to students across the world. The methodology and the content of the Ideas Box are customized to fit the needs and the constraints of the deployment context.

Bibliothèques Sans Frontières / Libraries Without Borders (BSF) has deployed more than 150 Ideas Box projects so far.
BSF has an overarching goal through the Ideas Box: the empowerment of vulnerable populations through access to knowledge. We aim at strengthening the sense of agency of individuals who are in a vulnerable situation and to enable them to create their own solutions to the problems that they face. BSF seeks the support of the POEM network to design an index indicator that would encapsulate the different components of human empowerment.

**Further reading**

The adaptation of content to the linguistic and socio-cultural context, and to the needs of populations is at the heart of BSF’s intervention strategy. Each Ideas Box is unique and offers content that meets the specific needs of the populations affected. To do so, BSF has built up a database of more than 35,000 contents in 25 languages. The “Offline Internet” environment integrates digital content of all formats: video, audio, ebook, MOOCs (videos and exercises), but also entire embedded websites for offline access.

The content curation process is divided in two phases: 1. the design of a content strategy based on data collected during the needs assessment, and 2. the selection of content according to the framework provided by the content strategy. The content strategy is the counterpart of the logical framework of the project: it describes the specific objectives of the content and guides the selection process, based on needs collected from the end users through focus groups, observations and interviews with key informants. Once the content strategy has been validated by all stakeholders, the selection of content is carried out by BSF.

This content curation work is done both centrally and locally in order to identify as many as possible locally created content items that best meet the needs of the target audiences. BSF relies on linguistic and thematic experts to enrich its catalogue of content according to the requests and needs of end users and partners. Our content offer covers the 9 themes of the organization’s intervention: education / health / literacy and the fight against illiteracy / psychosocial support and protection / information to populations / strengthening social cohesion and peace-building / welcoming and integrating people in migration / digital literacy / reinforcement of libraries.

Finally, in addition to making content available, BSF works to give local populations the means to create their own content and distribute it. End-user content production is at the heart of BSF’s theory of change: it is about giving everyone the means to be informed, to be trained, to make informed decisions, and to make their voices heard. The creation of content by local people serves a dual purpose: the creation of content that does not exist in local languages on topics that meet the needs of local communities, and the empowerment of end-users who participate in creating their own solutions to the problems they face.

**Further information**

USE CASES – Google Drive
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