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# **How Better World Books is increasing literacy around the world**

'Literacy is not just about reading and writing; it is about respect, opportunity and development' - Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary General.

Established in 2002 as a socially responsible enterprise, Better World Books has developed a customer-centric philosophy that focused on a triple mission: being a great bookseller; protecting the environment through book recycling; and funding world literacy. This latter is perhaps the most important element in the company's business strategy.

According to one of the company's founders, Xavier Helgesen, literacy is the foundation of education and self-sufficiency, but at the same time is a very abstract concept and, therefore, it is hard to raise funds to support it. On the other hand, it is also a huge challenge to manage to fund literacy. This is pretty much how the founders of Better World Books decided on launching the literacy program. By organizing book drives they thought that customers would give their books if the book drive was supported by a cause. And apparently, they were right. Since its establishment, Better World Books has collected more than 20 million books, has provided its partners with over 1 million books, has saved more than 6,500 tons of books from landfills and has donated nearly \$7.4 million to literacy programs and libraries around the globe.

Capitalizing on the lifelong value of books to support literacy on a local, national and global level, Better World Books has developed numerous partnerships with highly respected organizations. In particular, some of the most important partnerships are with the following organizations:

- > Books for Africa - the largest shipper of used books to Africa having shipped more than 20 million books to over 37 countries since 1988;
- > Room to Read - the largest supporter of schools, libraries and language labs that funds long-term scholarships for young girls in South Asia & Africa;
- > Worldfund - the largest supporter of high-quality education for poor children in Latin America;
- > National Center for Family Literacy - the largest trainer of over 150,000 teachers and volunteers to create a literate nation;
- > Invisible Children - the largest supporter of war-affected children, providing access to education and learning environments and economic opportunities for the community

The three founders of Better World Books believe that literacy and poverty are strongly related. This belief drives their efforts towards the empowerment of literacy. According to them, literacy can provide new opportunities to the marginalized people of our world enabling them to lift themselves out of poverty. Literacy creates the groundwork to education, which in turn creates the groundwork to development. And Better World Books know their sustainable business better than anybody else.

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