

Good morning.

Today is my fifth day here and each day the group grows and the conversations become richer and richer. I can't wait for today.

I have behind me a drawing that for me and many others, describes the universality of public libraries; what we do, how we impact and influence people's lives **and** the myriad development sectors we work in. If this drawing had been created after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, it would look a little different, but the message would be the same:

**Public Access to Information Improves People's Lives.**

The Global Libraries program at the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation is ending after 20 successful years and more than a billion dollars invested globally in public libraries. Our work has achieved significant impact, working through partners to focus on

**Improving lives through increased access to resources and opportunities**

**Stressing the importance of aligning library services with community needs.**

**And raising the visibility of libraries as major community assets around the world**

As we exit it is our commitment to Bill and Melinda Gates that we will leave the library field strong, resilient and connected.

This is the reason we invested in the Oceania INELI programs and along with our partner IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations, in yesterday's advocacy day and today's summit.

And for me personally, that's why I have been here this week and especially today.

For me, the initial vision and planned outcomes for these days was "spot-on" and driving toward a future for the Pacific region. This is not one of those conferences where we all sit around, listen to one another, maybe dance if we're lucky, make well-intended promises and there is no follow up, no true outcome for everyone's time and investment.

No, from the beginning it was clear that with the focus on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the participants would be

trained in the SDGs as well as their clear relevance to the work we do in libraries,

equipped with advocacy skills

and be participants in creating an actionable vision and agreement for collaborative and sustainable development of public library services in the region.

Oh, and in case you weren't there last night – there was a LOT of dancing!!

It is our belief that **in order for libraries to be known and recognized as engines of development and funded as key community assets – that librarians must work together. They must work together in an aligned and cohesive way, working toward a common goal** – and that's what yesterday was about. It was about creating unity for a group that has seldom if ever met. It was about creating this unity in a practical and doable way.

Unbelievably this **DID** happen yesterday, **in one day**, in a well-planned and led meeting. The eighty-plus leaders here came up with an agreed upon draft aspiration which is – **“to strengthen the pacific libraries to better support the needs of Pacific communities through collaboration and networking.”** I believe this was possible because of the consistent theme among everyone throughout the day was of **“unity.”**

Conversations were honest and respectful and that clarity and honesty is what I believe moved us forward.

A sub-group of 20 people, took the work of the many and refined it. I am eager to see their draft results that we will continue to refine and make actionable.

Just as we believe in Global Libraries, the Pacific participants believe that through having a united voice, there is a better opportunity for influencing the region, influencing decision makers like many of you in this room.

Another theme I heard was that now that we know each other, librarians can do more to share ideas and expertise, not reinvent the wheel through isolation. They can participate in “professional development” opportunities such as the recently completed International Network of Emerging Library Innovations also known as INELI.

Colleagues do you know that to date 34 young librarians from libraries throughout the Pacific have benefited from INELI, receiving unparalleled coaching and training helping them enhance their leadership skills as well as helping them network throughout the Pacific region.

These individuals that you have invested in will allow for the realization of the aspiration to collaboration and networking to strengthen the Pacific region countries and communities through public libraries.

These young leaders, as well as the rest of us, yesterday did a thorough deep dive into the seventeen SDGs. Thanks to some great reawakening from our colleague Ms Nisha from UNESCO as well as Christine Mackenzie, a conference organizer and the president-elect of IFLA and Elvira Lapuz a participant of the IFLA International Leaders program from the Philippines, we heard STRONGLY that libraries are NOT only about Goal 4 of the SDGs.

We all gained a greater understanding that all 17 of the SDGs are relevant to libraries. And not only relevant, but due to our core mandate to information literacy, **mandatory** to assist our governments in achieving their SDG goal targets.

Years ago I started saying that if you want community issues resolved, “the library must be at the table”. After yesterday’s training and conversations I am willing to boldly say that **it’s not possible to achieve SDG targets without the library at the table.**

As Global Libraries exits the library field, our fifth recommendation to the library field is that **progress for libraries only comes through collaboration.**

Due to the energy, enthusiasm and planning that I have seen and participated in the last five days, I have no doubt that the libraries of the Pacific will now move forward, arm-in-arm, aligned and working successfully together with the “call to action” to achieve the goals that came out of yesterday’s work.

I guarantee you, Pacific libraries will be a force to reckon with and in this glorious region of the world, **libraries will be known and recognized as engines of development and funded as the critical community assets that they are!**

Thank you and, again, thank you for inviting me to see this magic unfold.

