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CHILDREN in Uganda, with part of a rolling library.

EUREKA

Books on Bikes

A Cambridge teacher puts 1,000 books into the hands of Ugandan kids.

It is hard to imagine that donating a single book could help many people in a civil war-torn and AIDS ravaged country, that doesn't have an infrastructure of libraries, much less paved roads. But Racheal Adriko, a 29-year-old Cambridge teacher, returned to her native village of Arua, Uganda, last December with more than 1,000 books and an idea.

Adriko, and students from the Martin Luther King Jr. School in Cambridge had collected the volumes (written in English, the language taught in Ugandan schools), which she and her husband, Richard Spillberg, then brought to Arua. Racheal worked with village leaders to set up a network of local volunteers, each of whom delivers, via bicycle, a batch of books to a school. At intervals, each returns with another batch and takes the earlier set of books to another school. Since each school can have more than 200 students, Racheal estimates that the books have been enjoyed by thousands of kids so far. This December, the school plans to send 5,000 more books. (She is looking for space on a cargo plane.)

Born in Uganda during Idi Amin's rule, Adriko was raised in her mother's native Kenya after her professor father received death threats. In 1994, she came to the United States to study at Fisher College and, later, Suffolk University. In Lugbara, the dialect spoken in her village, the term *onita feza* describes a traditional role for women. It means "deliverer of knowledge and culture," and Adriko has taken on this role quite literally.

Another literal interpretation came as a surprise to Racheal and her husband. As pleased and honored as Arua elders were that a native daughter had returned with gifts, tradition required that her husband still pay them a dowry of 10 bulls, 5 chickens, 20 goats, and a sack of corn. Says Racheal Adriko: "I don't come cheap."

—John Budris