

# THE CODE READER:

## YOUR GIFTS IN ACTION

### OUR APPROACH

Reading and writing are two of the most important milestones in a child's life and their passport to future success. Thanks to our generous donors, CODE is able to support the teachers, librarians, authors, illustrators, editors, publishers, and local country partners needed to ensure that children around the world have access to quality books and effective instruction that reflect their culture, surroundings and identity. Investing in literacy improves the lives of children today and improves their prospects for tomorrow.

### LOOKING FORWARD: CODE'S WORK IN 2016

Dear friends,

Thanks to your support, we look back on 2015 as a year of great achievement for the girls and boys benefitting from CODE's programs. I know that together – with resolve, innovation and investment where it matters most – we will help even more children realize their human right to education in 2016.

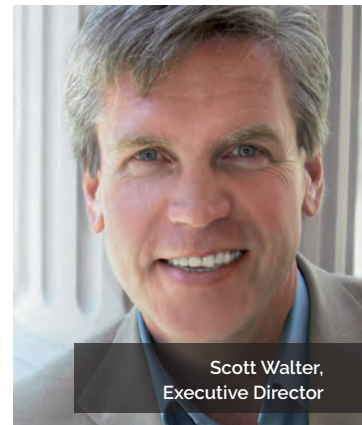
With education key to the achievement of every one of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015, CODE's programming, partnerships and proven approach to fostering learning and literacy skills remains as important as ever.

The results of a recent assessment of our *Reading CODE* program in Tanzania not only confirmed its effectiveness at developing children's reading and writing abilities –they surpassed our expectations! We are pleased to share some of the key findings with you in this edition of *The CODE Reader* and on [codecan.org](http://codecan.org).

With a new monitoring and evaluation specialist on our team, we will be placing an even greater emphasis on measuring our impact in 2016. You can expect to learn more about further assessments taking place in Ghana and Kenya in the months to come.

We will also continue to invest in partnerships and the capacities of our partner organizations. What you may not know is that all of CODE's international projects

are implemented and delivered by local partners. This results in a better understanding of the relevant challenges and opportunities and helps to ensure that reform and development efforts are sustained, as our partners are prepared to support and empower children in the long term.



Scott Walter,  
Executive Director

Mohammed Sheriff is the President of one such valued partner – PEN Sierra Leone, CODE's partner organization in one of the countries worst hit by the Ebola crisis. While visiting Canada with PEN International last October, he sat down with us for a brief interview. We are pleased to share his thoughts with you in this newsletter.

Last, but certainly not least, we look forward to deepening our relationship with you, our donors, allies and friends. By volunteering, donating and offering your ideas, you are making us better at what we do.

So please enjoy this second edition of *The CODE Reader* and let us know what you think. Together, we're rewriting the story for global literacy.



## A TANZANIAN SUCCESS STORY

### Study confirms the effectiveness of CODE's approach to developing reading skills and habits

A recent study shows that the Reading CODE project is succeeding in its mission of creating capable young readers and writers in Tanzania. The assessment shows students from project schools outperforming their peers in non-project schools by leaps and bounds.

#### Reading CODE

Reading CODE is a comprehensive initiative that seeks to create thoughtful, life-long readers. Reading CODE programs are active in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Tanzania, and are adapted to each country's context.

In Tanzania, the core components are:

- The production of locally written and illustrated children's fiction and non-fiction books
- Support for libraries in stocking, distributing and promoting books
- Training for teachers on successfully engaging students to build their comprehension and understanding

75 out of 105 primary schools in the Kongwa District of Tanzania are participating.

#### The Assessment

In November 2015, a team of researchers led by Dr. Charles Temple, of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, tested 104 students from thirteen randomly chosen schools participating in the project. The District Education Officer granted them permission to also test 48 children from six randomly chosen non-project schools.

Children from the non-project schools were matched to their project-school counterparts in terms of ethnic group, grade of study and rurality (in town, near a town or far from a town).

#### The Results

On average, in grade two, **children in the project schools understood twice as much of what they read** and were almost **three times more fluent** than their non-project peers! In grade four, students in project schools were **considerably more advanced in comprehension and writing scores**.

While the performance of boys and girls was tracked separately, no appreciable difference was found in their performance.

#### A Brighter Future

Studies have shown that literacy as a whole is linked with better income, political involvement, and other quality of life indicators when kids become adults. But they also show that **it takes a fairly high level of literacy to experience appreciable improvements in quality of life**.

**We're delighted to report that the children in Tanzanian project schools are well on their way to these high levels of literacy and – thanks to your support – are on the path to a brighter future!**

More information on this assessment can be found on our website: [codecan.org](http://codecan.org).

Reading CODE students scored

2 ×

better on reading comprehension

3 ×

better on fluency



## AND THE WINNER IS...

### CODE recognizes excellence in First Nations, Inuit and Métis young adult literature

On October 22<sup>nd</sup>, we gathered with high school students, educators, and authors at the UBC First Nations House of Learning to honour the 2015 winners of the *Burt Award for First Nations, Métis and Inuit Literature*.

The event was co-hosted by CODE and the UBC Faculty of Education's Indigenous Education Institute of Canada. It was emceed by Shelagh Rogers, host of CBC Radio 1's *The Next Chapter*, and author and 2014 *Burt Award* Winner Monique Gray Smith.

The award ceremony was preceded and followed by a tour of schools and aboriginal friendship centers in Vancouver and surrounding reserves. The week's activities directly engaged over 300 students and educators.

This year the top three prizes went to:

1. *Skraeling* by **Rachel & Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley** (published by Inhabit Media)
2. *Grey Eyes* by **Frank Christopher Busch** (published by Roseway Publishing)
3. *Lightfinder* by **Aaron Paquette** (published by Kegeponce Press)

The publishers of these winning titles are each guaranteed a minimum purchase of 2,500 books to be distributed to young people around the country. The winning authors were also awarded a cash prize in celebration of their engaging, culturally-relevant books that develop a love of reading among First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth.

CODE's Burt Award is a unique literary prize and readership initiative active in Africa, Canada and the Caribbean. Visit [www.codecan.org/burt-award](http://www.codecan.org/burt-award) for more information.



## THE LIBRARY IN MANCOURANI C

Mancourani C is a primary school in Sikasso, Mali. The school and the library it houses are supported by *Reading CODE*, which is implemented in Mali by our partner ALED (*Association pour la Lecture l'Éducation et le Développement*).

Mancourani C takes great pride in having had all of its teachers trained by the program. In addition, the school librarian Mrs. Koyaté has received librarianship training and is highly appreciated for her organizational skills and availability. She has made it possible for community members and students from several neighbouring schools to use the library after school hours and on weekends.

The library at Mancourani C was built thanks to a local funding drive, in which each student's family was asked to make a contribution

(about 12 CAD cents). Though limited in their resources, students not only brought in money, but – to the principal's surprise – they also returned with a brick on each of their heads. The community finished building the library in 2014, and is already thinking of expanding it to serve at least four other schools, including a high school nearby.

When CODE's Senior Program Manager Willy Rangira last visited Mancourani C, the principal and sixth grade teacher could not stop talking about how the school had two out of the five finalists amongst hundreds of children competing in a reading contest organized by ALED in 2015. In fact, it was two girls from Mancourani C who took the first and fourth prizes.



## MEET MOHAMMED SHERIFF

*Mohammed Sheriff is a writer and the president of PEN Sierra Leone. PEN was established in Sierra Leone to reinvigorate the country's community of writers and encourage them to play an active role in society. It now has a large school clubs program, which focuses on encouraging reading and writing amongst young people, and is nationally recognized as a leader in education and freedom of expression.*

*Our Amie Gibson, Manager of Fund Development, interviewed Mohammed in October 2015 about his work, inspiration to write, leadership of a CODE partner and his message to CODE's donors. Here is a short excerpt:*

### Tell me about your work.

– PEN is voluntary work that takes a great deal of my time but I earn my living through writing, but in a different way. I write plays for radio, TV, and for community theater. [...] Presently, I'm engaged in a radio drama series program with BBC Media Action on access to justice for women and guys in Sierra Leone. We've done two parts of the series and we are working towards the third.

### What is your inspiration to write?

– My mother, she was a wonderful story teller of folk stories. In the evenings we would sit around and she would tell us stories –and she was a very good actress, so we loved those moments. And I loved them so much that even at that early age I said that when I grow up I will be like my mother. I'm going to tell stories. Then I started school and started reading and I discovered that those stories she told were also in books, and other stories different from the ones she told. I said this is what I will

do, because I will never be as good in the way my mother tells stories, but I think I can write stories.

### Why should someone care about our cause?

– Donors are people who have succeeded in achieving great things. Some of them went through a whole lot of struggle to achieve that thing. Others were fortunate to be where they could achieve that. In our own part of the world it is difficult to break through all the challenges and be able to make it. It's not for want of determination, it's not for want of intelligence or ability. It's because the odds are stacked against a whole lot of people. So donors providing funds to help get people to overcome such obstacles is a wonderful thing.

### If you were to speak to a donor, what would you say?

– You're not only helping an individual you're helping an entire community. Because if the individuals who benefit are able to make something out of their lives – in Africa it's an extended family, community system – they are going to be able to help more people to also break away from the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that surrounds most people in Africa. I can't think of a better way to give back to society.

[...] You don't have to be a millionaire to give. It's the amount you are able to sacrifice which is actually the real value. Sometimes those small donors, if you take their contributions collectively, it's not small.



## CODE'S 2014–2015 GRATITUDE REPORT

In our 2014–2015 Gratitude Report you'll find the true story of Dr. Mélissa Langevin, an Ottawa pediatrician who travelled to Sierra Leone and treated her young Ebola patients with the help of CODE books. It's bound to be one of the most original and touching annual reports you've ever seen. **Read it now on [codecan.org](http://codecan.org)**

Education is the  
**code** to my future

## HILA OLYAN TO HEAD CODE'S INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

In November 2015, Hila Olyan became CODE's new Director of International Programs. With experience working for Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and the World Food Programme, and 4 years as a CODE Program Manager for Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, Hila is perfectly poised to lead CODE's dedicated team of Program Managers and Specialists to have an even greater impact on the boys and girls CODE supports.



### IN YOUR OWN WORDS

We are honored to be chosen by so many thoughtful and compassionate people as their charity of choice. So when we received a message as heartwarming as this one, we just had to share it. Thank you Mary Lou!

*"My husband is a retired teacher; I am a music teacher. Our children, both grown, are teachers, and our son is married to a teacher. Our daughter is a teacher-librarian, and her husband is an avid reader. We have one grandchild, who has been reading since before she went to Kindergarten. We will always support CODE and other good humanitarian organizations. The more people who are educated (and fed) the better this world will be!"*

– Mrs. Mary Lou Solomon

### MORE OF YOUR VOICES

Last year we received so many good responses to "What book changed your life?" that we had to publish another.

*One of the first books I read as a child was Charles Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake". It had been read to my brother and me by our Dad who, though not formally highly educated, was an avid reader, and almost every evening would sit and read aloud to his family. In this manner we were introduced to many good books and as soon as I was able, I started reading myself, and have continued to do so all my life (I am now 91). This particular book stirred my interest in history, which has never left me." (abridged response)*

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

So many of you shared your feedback on our inaugural issue of *The Code Reader*. Thank you for your ideas and encouragement! The topics you most wanted to read about were:

- Schools and Community Libraries
- Book Distribution and
- CODE's unique approach to literacy and international development

We hope this issue fit the bill and want to hear more about what you'd like to see in future issues.

Please send us your ideas by email to [codehq@codecan.org](mailto:codehq@codecan.org) or by mail to CODE, Attention: Manager, Integrated Marketing Communications, 321 Chapel St, Ottawa, Ontario K1N7Z2

We look forward to your correspondence and cherish your support. Thank you!

**code**

Rewriting the story  
for global literacy

[codecan.org](http://codecan.org)