



Rewriting the story
for global literacy



Student reading a big book in the library at Mlali Primary School, Kongwa District, Tanzania, 2015



Reading CODE 2012-2017 Summary Report

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Contents

Acronyms	3
Executive Summary	4
Project Description	7
Project Context	12
Overall Project Performance Assessment	14
Project Management	31
Risk Management	35
Crosscutting themes and Priorities	37
Success Factors	42
Lessons Learned and Recommendations	52
I. Support to Educators and Instruction for Comprehension and Higher Order Thinking	52
II. Access to and Use of Books	52
III. Certification Process	53
IV. Gender Considerations	53
V. Monitoring and Evaluation	54
VI. Support to Partners	54

Acronyms

ALED	Association pour la lecture l'éducation et le développement
BAI	Book Aid International
CBP	Children's Book Project
C-E	CODE Ethiopia
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CL	Community Library
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFATD	Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (Canada), now GAC
EQUIP-T	Education Quality Improvement Program for Tanzania
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
GBT	Ghana Book Trust
GES	Ghanaian Education Service
GEU	Girls Education Unit
IBB	International Book Bank
LANES	Literacy and Numeracy Education Support
LEA	Language Experience Approach
LMC	Library Management Committee
KWLS	What I know. What I want to know. What I learned. What I still want to know.
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEVT	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (Tanzania)
NALAP	National Literacy Acceleration Program
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIP	Project Implementation Plan
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
REB	Regional Education Bureau
SMC	School Management Committee
TAC	Teacher Advisory Centre (Kenya)
TOT	Training of Trainers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reading CODE is a comprehensive readership initiative that improves the learning outcomes of children and youth in underserved communities in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania. Between May 2012 and December 2016, CODE and local implementing partners provided culturally-relevant and engaging books for young people; supported libraries to distribute and care for books; and shared methods of instruction to help teachers engage children meaningfully with books to build their fluency and comprehension—especially their higher order comprehension and critical thinking. The goal of Reading-CODE is not simply to teach reading skills, but to create thoughtful, life-long readers.

CODE implements *Reading CODE* in collaboration with established local NGO partners in each country: CODE – Ethiopia (C-E), Ghana Book Trust (GBT), Association pour la lecture l'éducation et le développement au Mali (ALED) and Children's Book Project for Tanzania (CBP). As an effective literacy intervention, the program applies teacher training, book provision and library support to primary schools. International experts in reading, literacy, librarianship and publishing, volunteer their time on behalf of CODE to inject internationally accepted best practices into the training of the trainers, librarians, authors, illustrators and publishers to ensure the quality of the programming. Through a 'train-the-trainer' approach with a process of certifying trainers who then train and support educators to implement the reading and literacy activities in their own classrooms and libraries, CODE reached 138 trainers, 1,742 teachers, and 793 librarians and teacher-librarians during the duration of the project. The training was complemented with a supply of 1,065,239 relevant, high quality, reading materials (both local and imported) distributed to 245 schools and libraries that educators used to implement their reading and writing activities.

In each country, *Reading CODE* worked within the framework of the national education strategy. Representatives from the district, regional and national education offices benefited from the training. Further, the government-established mechanisms of support for the teachers and librarians strengthened the intervention, ensuring improved learning outcomes far beyond the duration of the program.

Continued support for teachers and librarians is particularly important given the success of *Reading CODE*. Assessments conducted throughout the five-year program¹ indicate that students in *Reading CODE* project schools outperform their peers in control schools. In Tanzania,

¹ Programming in Ethiopia and Mali was 4 years in duration. In Ghana and Tanzania, the project was five years.

for example, results show that students in project schools outperformed their peers in control schools in all measures of literacy including, letter recognition, syllable reading, short sentence reading, word recognition, fluency and importantly, comprehension.

A key to this success is the emphasis on training teachers to provide quality instruction. Teachers' skills were developed through the select instructional methods taught during the workshops (designed by international literacy experts) and supported by the books which the students and their teachers used to practice and develop their skills.

In Ghana, the success of the program has motivated private sector donors to contribute to the program in the country (both as part of Reading CODE and beyond as part of a new iteration, *Reading Ghana*). In Tanzania, the assessment and certification of teachers ensures they are provided with a strong motivation to implement new techniques in their classrooms.

Overall the program reached 482,200 children. According to conservative estimates, CODE asserts that approximately 965,000 additional children and/or family members also benefited indirectly from the intervention.²

Assessments conducted throughout the program have demonstrated the success of Reading CODE. Results clearly indicate that students in Reading CODE project schools outperform their peers. In Tanzania, students in Reading CODE schools outperformed students in control schools in all measures of literacy, including letter recognition, syllable reading, short sentence reading, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. At the standard 2 level, the differences were especially pronounced in the areas of comprehension and fluency. The sample of 52 standard 2 children from project schools and 24 from control schools suggest that **children in the project schools understood twice as much of what they read and were three times as fluent.**

In Ghana, results indicated that at primary levels 1-3 students in project schools were stronger than students in control schools in the important measures of word recognition and paragraph reading **while Reading CODE students** at primary level 4 **scored higher in all measures of literacy.** Markedly higher scores in the crucial areas of paragraph reading and reading comprehension were evident at primary levels 5 and 6. Meanwhile, in Mali, a final evaluation showed that teachers trained and supported during the program asserted that they had benefited from the training sessions and school principals confirmed that the professional development training was effective in transforming how teachers manage their classrooms. In Ethiopia, students reported using the library to gain knowledge, improve their reading skills and to study and do homework, all of which they felt had a positive effect on their academic achievement.

² In-direct reach is calculated at 2 people for every 1 child directly involved in the project.

These results are important not only because they demonstrate that the project supports the advancement of basic literacy but because they illustrate the effectiveness of Reading CODE in supporting learning outcomes in the areas of more advanced literacy – fluency and comprehension which should be the primary goal of any literacy initiative. Raising literacy levels are typically assumed to benefit individuals and societies (and they do) but recent studies that show the relationship between literacy and social and economic benefit indicate that individuals with the highest levels of literacy derive the most benefit in terms of employment, income and political participation.³ More importantly, people need to attain fairly high levels of literacy to experience appreciable benefits in terms of quality of life indicators. Therefore, literacy initiatives that focus only on the most basic levels of literacy – for example decoding words and retrieving simple explicit messages, are not sufficiently contributing to improved development outcomes. Basic literacy is therefore a starting point, but is not sufficient. Programs must focus on supporting learners to read, make inferences, create interpretations, detect biases, negotiate between competing messages and communicate fluently in writing.⁴



School Library, Songambe Primary School, Kongwa Tanzania, 2015

³ Temple, Charles (2016). Reading Tanzania Research Brief.

⁴ Temple, Charles. (2016). Reading Tanzania, Research Brief.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Reading CODE 2012-16/7 emerged in response to the unique educational needs in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania. In the targeted countries, the insufficient quality of training for educators, including teachers and librarians, is a significant impediment to realizing high quality basic education. Relevant, meaningful training is fundamental as it provides teachers with vital skills including how to use grade level-appropriate strategies to build literacy skills and how to activate a 'love and culture of reading' among learners. Additionally, the inadequate supply of high-quality reading materials, and especially supplementary materials, available for teachers to use with students poses a challenging environment in which to foster literacy and learning. High-quality reading materials are necessary for teachers to develop reading and writing skills in their students, and create a wider community impact on literacy.

In all four countries, opportunities for educators to participate in professional development training is limited. Most teachers have not experienced any kind of professional reinforcement. Reading CODE worked with teachers to build a sense of professionalism and a pride for teaching as a profession. In-service training in the form of workshops, coupled with classroom support during ongoing regular visits, provided teachers with the opportunity to hone their skills and gain confidence using the strategies outline in the training.



Reading CODE, Norini Primary School, Kongwa Tanzania, 2015

CODE also identified a need to foster literate environments. In the four program countries, children do not often have opportunities to read books at their leisure, at an appropriate reading level and in languages they understand. Compounding the issue is a lack of books that contain positive representations of girls, boys, women and men. There was

a clear need for local writers, and illustrators as well as publishers to produce reading materials that are of interest to girls and boys.

In order to address these targeted problems, two defining outcomes were identified as project objectives: the first was to improve reading and writing performance for girls and boys in project classrooms and libraries; the second was to enhance gender-sensitive literate environments in project schools and communities. By bringing together trained teachers and appropriate materials, CODE, with its partners, designed and implemented Reading CODE to improve learning outcomes, thereby improving access to quality education and ultimately supporting Canada's goal of securing the future for children and youth.

Thus, with the support of Global Affairs Canada's (GAC)⁵ Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch, for \$4,411,200 over four years and an additional \$1,470,400 raised by CODE (\$5,881,600 total), the intended reach of Reading CODE was to directly benefit 485,240 children (including 120,000 girls) in the four countries, and to indirectly impact another 804,400 children.⁶ 145 trainers (including 50 women). CODE and local partners also sought to reach 102 trainers, 2,245 teachers (including at least 800 women) and 400 librarians (including 200 women). During the project, CODE also planned to work with 230 writers, illustrators and publishers (including 120 women).

To reach program and project goals, there were coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, including CODE, implementing partners (C-E, GBT, ALED and CBP), international literacy specialists and local beneficiaries including teachers and students, their families and communities, and the Ministries of Education in each of the four countries.

Drawing on Canadian and international expertise, the partnerships with international literacy experts who volunteered their time to support and facilitate various levels of programming was of particular importance. CODE worked with long-time volunteer Dr. Charles Temple (Hobart and William Smith Colleges) in support of the Tanzania and Ghana teams to revitalise the student assessment and teacher observation tools and procedures. Dr. Alison Preece (University of Victoria) and Dr. Charles Temple further supported programming in Tanzania, conducting training for teacher trainers through various workshops. Dr. Ray Doiron (University of Prince Edward Island) and Dr. Marlene Asselin (University of British Columbia) supported *CODE-Ethiopia* throughout the duration of the project, supporting the training of librarians and the capacity of CE to monitor the community libraries. Dr. Alan Crawford (California State University Los Angeles) supported the project in Ghana with support from Dr. Pamela Winsor (University of

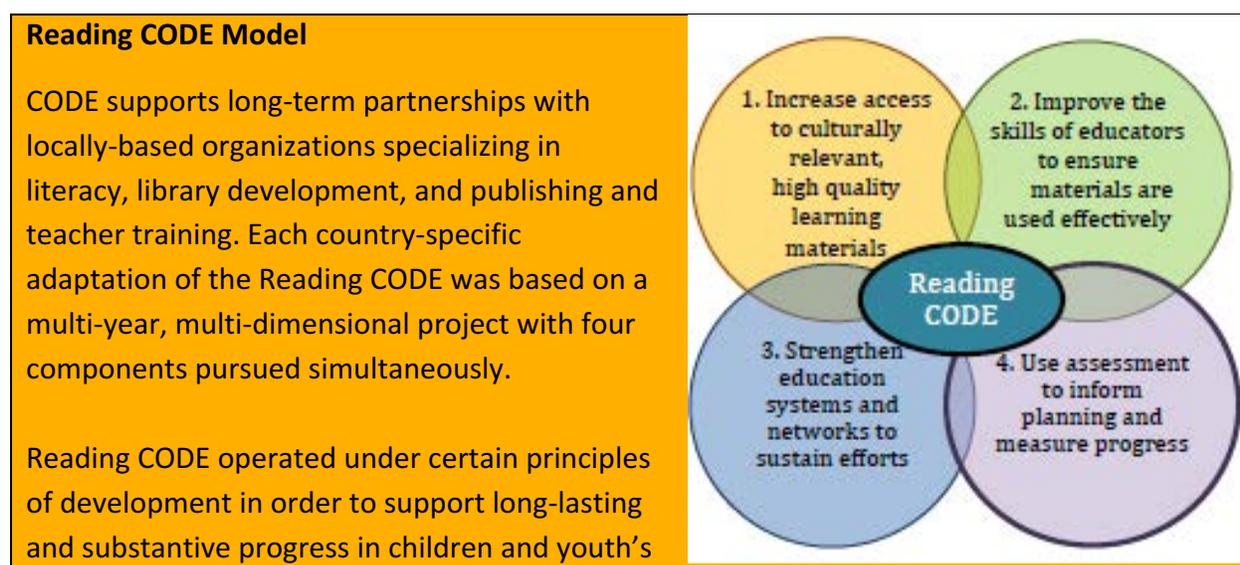
⁵ At the time of the agreement, the Contribution Agreement was between CODE and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). During the project, the government department was also known as the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD).

⁶ Reading CODE Project Implementation Plan 2012.

Lethbridge). In addition to working with Ghanaian lead trainers, they supported the development of the Reading Ghana Guidebook and the Reading Ghana Assessment tools.

The expert input into the program was led by CODE. CODE spearheaded and oversaw the project as a whole. CODE supported local implementing partners to develop strong policies and processes to ensure the effectiveness of programming and to demonstrate high levels of accountability and transparency. CODE set high expectations for governance and working together with local partners developed strategies to make incremental changes in support of higher levels of good governance, given the contexts and operating environments. In all of the programs, support for good governance pertaining to schools and libraries was provided.

Ensuring the proper governance of schools and libraries including, for example, interactions with parent teacher associations, school management committees, district education offices, and, when possible, national education bodies improves the sustainability of the project and especially the results beyond the project end dates. In Mali, governance was a key aspect of training as teacher advisors (*conseillers pédagogiques*) were empowered to support teachers for the longer term. In Ghana and Tanzania, Reading CODE trainers were typically representatives from the Ministry of Education. For example, in Tanzania, Ward Education Officers were trained in the *Reading Tanzania* strategies, thus equipping them with tools to improve quality control in the schools they supervise including those outside of Reading CODE. In Ethiopia, Regional Education Bureau specialists in curriculum and educational resources edited the books produced as part of the program. These REB officials were trained to edit children’s picture books and participate in monitoring and evaluation activities to improve their understanding of best practices in children’s literature and the roles of librarians to contribute to quality education.



literacy outcomes. These principles of development were drawn from 50 years of international experience in developing and implementing readership programs, and from established literacy intervention and development best practices. The following are some of the key principles that guided the overall approach to planning, implementing and monitoring.

- Reflect on the meaning of literacy in the lives of children when planning programs
- Draw on and contribute to research that informs the collective understanding of literacy learning and effective teaching
- Design projects collaboratively with local implementing partners and literacy specialists and adapt programming according to the reflection of progress towards desired results
- Aim to keep the fidelity of the model and ensure quality control in all areas through the use of standards, well-designed monitoring systems and certification of practices
- Collect and analyze relevant data related to inform decisions and track progress towards expected results.
- Share lessons learned through the network and beyond to influence the direction of CODE-supported readership projects and other interventions

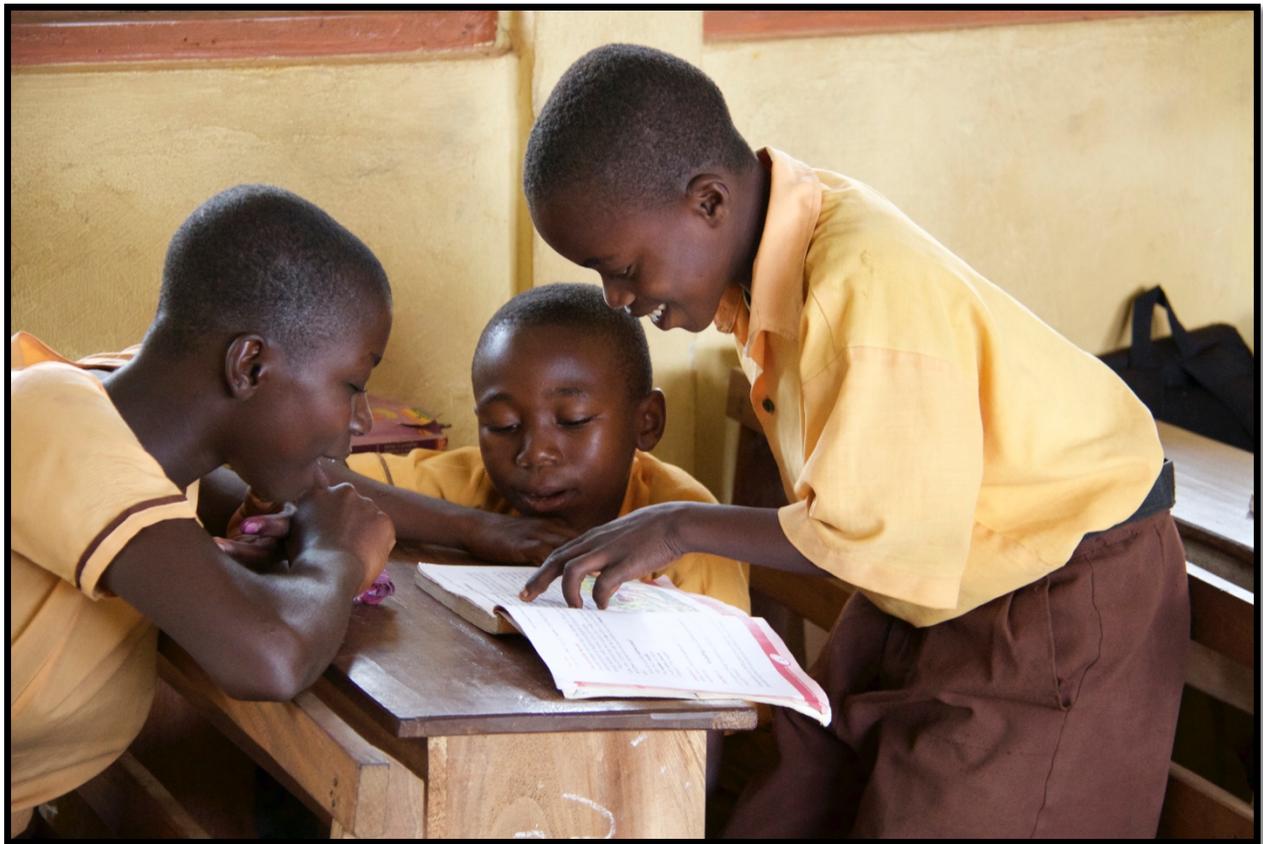
A major strength of CODE's work is its focus on literacy, at the same time, ensuring that its approach to supporting literacy continuously evolves and improves. CODE learns from the experiences in the field captured by local implementing partners and project stakeholders. CODE also learns from its network of literacy and library specialists who are grounded in the global knowledge base of effective instructional methods for reading and writing. These specialists provide technical support to the individual projects and in doing so gain a greater understanding of the adaptation of strategies in local contexts.

Mainstreamed throughout every aspect of Reading CODE is the idea that local ownership is imperative to sustainability and results. Hence CODE's partnership model. CODE and partners shared the responsibility for monitoring all aspects of the project in each country, analyzing the progress, and making adaptations as needed.

Indeed, each country program within the project was designed to meet the specific needs of that country. *Reading Ethiopia, for example*, aimed to improve accessibility to high quality, locally produced books through support of libraries, local book publishers, authors and illustrators. It strived to promote literacy in target communities by providing quality resources and training librarians to engage in activities and outreach programs. Ethiopia has long struggled to provide

basic educational services to citizens, particularly in remote areas. Community libraries provide an important space for non-formal, out of school learning, providing a space to study, exchange ideas, collaborate with others and to access relevant materials for school and leisure, which in turn help to improve the learning outcomes of students accessing these resources.

With high numbers of potential students in Ethiopia, there has been significant pressure on the education system to provide high quality learning resources both in schools and in community libraries. According to a 2011 *Electronic Information for Libraries* (EIFL) Report, 40% of Ethiopian librarians surveyed agreed there are inadequate books available, 30% agreed that they lack access to updated information, and 40% agreed that they lacked funding for recurrent improvements.⁷ It has therefore been vital to support education as a basic service and improve accessibility to literary resources in underserved communities.



Reading CODE, Ashanti Region, Ghana, 2015

⁷ www.eifl.net/system/files/resources/201408/perceptions_of_public_libraries_in_africa_-_full_report_hi.pdf

PROJECT CONTEXT

In 2012, the first year of project implementation, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania were ranked 135, 173, 182, and 152, respectively, on the Human Development Index (HDI).⁸ In that same year, it was becoming apparent that many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including MDG 2, *the achievement of universal primary education*, would not be met by 2015, and that new goals would have to compensate for missing these targets. While Mali and Tanzania were both on track to meet 100% primary school enrollment, neither country was expected to fulfill gender equality in schooling, with Tanzania actually in *decline* for this goal. Ghana was not on track to meet 100% Primary School Enrolment and Ethiopia was not expected to meet either goal. Although primary enrollment rates were improving, survival rates for primary school had remained low, especially for Ethiopia (44%) and Mali (56%). Coupled with high student-to-teacher ratios, lack of infrastructure, low access to reading materials, and high rates of children dropping out of school illiterate or finishing primary school barely able to read or write, it was clear that progress in education development had been challenging. Accordingly, *Reading CODE* sought to improve the education outcomes in the four program countries.

Reading CODE was designed to address key contributing factors to low education outcomes. The focus of the project was therefore rich interaction and meaningful engagement with text as a vehicle for thoughtful interpretation. CODE and local implementing partners produced and purchased books to be used by librarians and teachers participating in Reading CODE training. Further, by expanding the collection of informational texts and storybooks as reading materials to complement the curriculum and supply materials on subject areas of interest to readers, the programming could support the curriculum in the respective countries and could build a stronger culture of reading. These books coupled with professional development for librarians and teachers to support reading, model fluency and build comprehension could be used to strengthen learning outcomes.

Promoting reading fluency and comprehension, along with developing the habit of reading, are, or should be, the primary goals of any literacy initiative. Raising literacy levels is generally assumed to benefit individuals and societies and recent studies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)⁹ into the relation between adults' literacy and social and economic benefits have demonstrated links between levels of literacy and employment, income, political participation, and other quality indicators. Unsurprisingly, individuals with the highest levels of literacy derive the most benefits. What is surprising, though, is that people must attain

⁸ hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_complete.pdf

⁹ <http://skills.oecd.org/skillsoutlook.html>

fairly high levels of literacy to experience appreciable benefits in terms of quality of life indicators. “to put it another way, literacy initiatives that focus only on decoding words and retrieving simple explicit messages may not allow the clients of such initiatives to enjoy benefits anything like what are enjoyed by those who can apply what they read, make inferences, create interpretations, detect biases, negotiate between competing messages or communicate fluently in writing.”¹⁰ Reading CODE strives to create literate, thinking citizens who collectively form a literate culture. Toward that end, Reading CODE produces and shares books, rooted in the local culture that young people want to read again and again, and will want to think about and discuss. Reading CODE also equips teachers with the means to help students become fluent readers and deep thinkers.

This emphasis on fluency and comprehension is particularly important given the landscape of education and especially literacy-based interventions simultaneously implemented in the countries. For example, shortly after the project began, the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) began two large teacher training efforts in the country: Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) and Education Quality Improvement Program for Tanzania (EQUIP-T). Both initiatives, contrary to Reading CODE, focus on teaching very basic literacy skills. CODE and CBP therefore chose to expand *Mbinu Saba*, the Reading CODE Guidebook in Tanzania, to include methods for nurturing children’s emergent literacy, and meaningfully contextualizing phonic instruction. Similarly, in Ghana, CODE adapted the guidebook so that the strategies presented could easily follow the three-step lesson plan format introduced in the NALAP.

Important: Educational achievement results in higher employment, increased incomes, better health, more cohesive societies and heightened civic engagement. Literate students stay in school longer, are better able to learn independently and think critically and contribute more to the welfare of their families and communities. Literacy is recognized as a pillar of social development and economic prosperity.

Contextual considerations also extended to the areas of gender, environment and governance. CODE’s programming is designed with the assertion that improvements in gender equality are a prerequisite for achieving development goals¹¹. Reading CODE, advances gender equality through continuous monitoring processes which include gender analysis and working closely with local partners and communities to plan monitor and revise activities to ensure active participation of girls and boys, women and men. In all aspects of the project, CODE strives for equal participation and influence of women and men in decision-making and consultation throughout the project cycle even when this has challenged traditional hierarchies. In Ethiopia,

¹⁰ Temple, Charlies. 2015. Reading CODE Research Brief.

¹¹ As reflected in CODE’s Gender Policy.

for example, gender sensitivity, equity and equality were considered through all aspects of programming. Women were represented on every committee including local advisory committees. Addressing a need to promote the use of libraries by girls, librarians learned to set up ‘girls-only’ activities in the library and arranged appropriate safety and security. Book clubs aimed at girls were established using guidelines developed by CODE Ethiopia on how to encourage girls to participate in activities and to use all available resources from the library.

Recognizing a need to integrate environmental sustainability into Reading CODE, CODE supported local partners to select books with relevant environmental themes whenever possible. Since the strategies CODE used for supporting literacy encourage comprehension and classroom discussion – the project also supported improved understanding of environmental issues. For instance, in 2013, two key books were published: *Mariyama ka dugu* (Mariansa’s Village), an essay about environment and citizenship and *Jamana et Tèkè jèèlen* (Clean Hands), which addressed sanitation, focusing on the importance of handwashing (a topic which became of particular importance during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa).

Governance is at the core of CODE’s model of development. By working with local partners (rather than maintaining CODE staff full time in the field), CODE establishes stronger governance and independence among local organizations. CODE works with our partners to ensure their policies and practices demonstrate good governance (for example, advisory boards and accounting practices), and in turn implementing partners work with local stakeholders (especially district education offices) and school management committees to improve their governance.

In addition to factors within the education sector in each country, there were also political considerations, especially in Mali. Since January 2012, there have been periods of conflict including a coup d’état in March 2012. In 2014, “an upsurge in violent crime... by criminal bands and armed groups in the north, with little or no government response”¹² limited program implementation. International experts were not able to lead workshops in the country. However, CODE contracted local experts to support ALED and maintain high quality professional development for teachers and teacher librarians.

OVERALL PROJECT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Assessments supported by international literacy experts indicate that children in schools supported by Reading CODE programs read at a superior level to children in non-program

¹² www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/14/mali-lawlessness-abuses-imperil-population

schools. Observations and results from student tests (which measure letter recognition, syllable reading, reading short sentences, word recognition, fluency and comprehension) are clear: **children in project schools outperformed the children in control schools on all measures.** Therefore, the ultimate project goal to improve the learning outcomes of girls and boys and youth in underserved communities in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania was met.

Given that Reading CODE reached 482,200 students in 245 schools and libraries over a five-year period¹³ the impact on the learning outcomes for girls and boys in the targeted communities is significant. Moreover, these results will have prolonged results, as the 2,673 educators (trainers, teacher, librarians) that were supported over the course of the project will continue to effectively apply the learned reading promotion and instructional strategies in their classrooms and libraries well beyond the program end date. The 1,065,239 books distributed to schools and libraries will also be indeterminately available to students and their families and communities.

In Tanzania, the results were pronounced: **children in the project schools** (as compared to control schools) **understood twice as much of what they read and were three times as fluent.** In Ghana, results indicated that at primary levels 1-3 students in project schools were stronger than students in control schools in the important measures of word recognition and paragraph reading **while Reading CODE students** at primary level 4 **scored higher in all measures of literacy.** Markedly higher scores in the crucial areas of paragraph reading and reading comprehension were evident at primary levels 5 and 6. Meanwhile, in Mali, a final evaluation showed that **teachers trained and supported during the program asserted that they had benefited from the training sessions and school principals confirmed that the professional development training was effective in transforming how teachers manage their classrooms.** In Ethiopia, **students reported using the library to gain knowledge, improve their reading skills and to study and do homework, all of which they felt had a positive effect on their academic achievement.**

These results are important not only because they demonstrated that the project supports the advancement of basic literacy but because they also showed the effectiveness of Reading CODE in supporting learning outcomes in the areas of more advanced literacy – fluency and comprehension which should be the primary goal of any literacy initiative. Raising literacy levels are typically assumed to benefit individuals and societies (and they do) but recent studies that show the relationship between literacy and social and economic benefit indicate that individuals with the highest levels of literacy derive the most benefit in terms of employment, income and political participation.¹⁴ More importantly, people need to attain fairly high levels of literacy to experience appreciable benefits in terms of quality of life indicators. Therefore, literacy initiatives

¹³ Programming in Ethiopia and Mali was 4 years in duration and in Ghana and Tanzania was 5 years.

¹⁴ Temple, Charles (2016). Reading Tanzania Research Brief.

that focus only on the most basic levels of literacy – for example decoding words and retrieving simple explicit messages, are not sufficiently contributing to improved development outcomes. Basic literacy is therefore a starting point, but is not sufficient. Programs must focus on supporting learners to read, make inferences, create interpretations, detect biases, negotiate between competing messages and communicate fluently in writing.¹⁵

In the field of literacy work, promoting basic skills is important, but it is essential to aim high. Reading-CODE strives to create literate, thinking citizens who collectively form a literate culture. To that end, Reading-CODE produces and shares books, rooted in the local culture, that young people will want to read again and again and will want to talk about. It also equips teachers with the means to help students become fluent readers and deep thinkers. The data from the project suggests that the Reading-CODE approach is working.¹⁶

Outputs

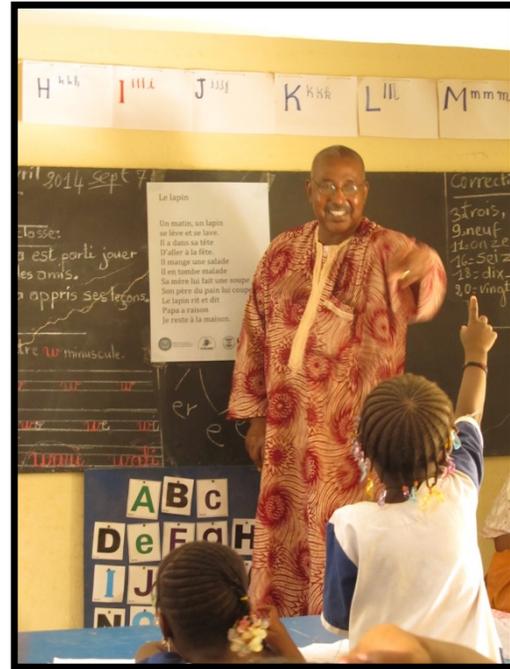
An analysis of the project outputs indicates that CODE and local implementing partners implemented the planned project activities in all four countries such that immediate and intermediate outcomes could be met.

The table of outputs indicates the outputs as per each immediate outcome. It additionally shows the targets as stipulated in the Contribution Agreement and Project Implementation Plan as well as the actual data. There are some variances between the actual activities and targets. These variances have consistently been reported in mid-year and annual reports.

¹⁵ Temple, Charles. (2016). Reading Tanzania, Research Brief.

¹⁶ Ibid.

With regard to the training of trainers, CODE successfully trained 138 (3 more than planned) in Ghana, Mali and Tanzania, including 72 men and 66 women. In accordance with Reading CODE's cascade model, these trainers in turn trained the teachers in the project schools. Despite training all trainers as planned, CODE and local implementing partners certified only 49 percent of trainers. This lower than expected certification rate does not indicate that trainers were unable to achieve the standards laid out by the project (see annex Training Standards), rather it is demonstrative of a change to the certification method. Trainers were not fully certified until they had been observed training teachers in a workshop setting. (Rather than on completion of training). To ensure the highest quality of training



Participatory learning, Reading CODE, Mali 2014

for teachers and support the fidelity of the Reading CODE model, CODE and local implementing partners selected only the strongest trainers from their workshops to train teachers. Therefore, in Tanzania, the 27 strongest trainers were certified and then worked with the teachers from the 75 project schools and, in Ghana, 22 trainers were selected to train teachers from the 85 schools. In Mali, despite having trained trainers, CODE did not certify trainers since an international literacy expert was not able to travel to the country on account of the unstable political situation. In all three countries, local implementing partners reported that participants in the training of training benefitted significantly from the workshops.

A particular success of the training of trainers was that 48% of the individuals trained were women - no small feat given the predominance of men in leadership roles in the countries of implementation. Women are under-represented in senior management positions, on school boards, and in education ministries.¹⁷

CODE and local implementing partners planned to train 2,245 teachers and librarians in reading and writing instruction. Over the course of the project 1,742 teachers (945 men and 797 women) and 793 librarians (410 men and 383 women) were trained for a total of 2,535 educators. Of the teachers trained, 94 percent were successfully certified (higher than the target of 90 percent).¹⁸

¹⁷ UNESCO (2016) Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review

¹⁸ Librarians were not certified according to classroom observations.

Trainer and project officers from CODE's local implementing partners completed the certification of teachers. In order for a teacher to receive certification, they were observed using the strategies from the training in their classrooms and their use of strategies was measured against a set of standards developed by CODE's expert volunteers (see annex: Training Standards). Visits by the trainers and project officers were not limited to the certification process. Rather trainers and project officers would provide feedback and support to teachers during the visits.

As with the trainers, CODE and local implementing partners included as many women as possible in the training of teachers and librarians. More importantly, gender sensitivity was included as a module when training the teachers and librarians, (this was most successful in Ethiopia and Ghana).

Including gender sensitivity in teacher training is key to reducing violence, and questioning and challenging gendered norms.¹⁹

Additionally, in order to support increased access to culturally relevant and equally engaging materials for girls and boys, among the 1,065,239 books selected CODE and local implementing partners chose specific books that addressed gender issues. Local implementing partner also vetted all books to ensure that as much as possible they included positive messages for girls and boys, and did not perpetuate any negative stereotypes.

CODE reached 96% of the target or book procurement. Slightly fewer books were procured for two reasons: 1) CODE limited the number of schools in Ghana from 150 to 75. (This was approved in 2015). CODE trained twice as many teachers at each school involved in the program rather than reaching out to additional schools. Accordingly, not as many books were needed due to the reduced number of schools. 2) Additionally, CODE and local implementing partners chose to publish and purchase high quality local books as often as possible. These books were sometimes more expensive than large shipments from North America and Europe.

Though 415,168 books were resourced locally, fewer authors, illustrators and publishers were trained than was planned. CODE and CODE expert volunteers (from the publishing sector) provided training in Ethiopia and in Tanzania²⁰. In Tanzania, training focused on non-fiction writing

¹⁹ UNESCO (2016) Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review

²⁰ CODE was not able to send experts to Mali but instead worked with Malian publishers to translate locally produced books from Sierra Leone that captured West Africa.

(as per the needs in the country) and creating connections to the national curriculum -²¹ which is important both as supplementary information and also to enable publishers to sell their books to the education market.

The Reading CODE model puts an emphasis on local ownership and sustainability. Increasing the capacity of project partners to model best practices and inform national policy dialogue was a goal of the project. Accordingly, CODE worked with local implementing partners not only to manage the activities in the respective countries of implementation but also to collect data, report on findings and make connections with government (local, district, national). While communication with local stakeholders was an ongoing process in all four countries, completing specific reports and participating in specific initiatives were quantifiable means of identifying progress in respect to capacity growth. From April 2012 to December 2016, CODE and local partners, often with support from literacy experts, produced nine reports that were used to inform ongoing program implementation, and build support for the project in each country. In Ghana, Mali and Tanzania, these reports included student assessments that showed improvement to student learning outcomes (see outcomes for further details). In Ethiopia, CODE and CODE Ethiopia conducted a final library evaluation that included focus groups and data collection.

In addition to working with local implementing partners and their monitoring officers (specifically to build their capacity to collect accurate and meaningful data, store it, and used it for reporting purposes), CODE worked with local implementing partners to build their capacity in areas of financial management, program implementation, area expertise (training officers as teacher trainers and ensuring ongoing professional development in the area of library management). CODE's Controller traveled to Ethiopia and to Tanzania to work on accounting practices with the local partners. Program Managers traveled to all four countries to develop work plans and review implementation as a collaborative process with local partners. Literacy and librarian experts traveled to Ethiopia, Ghana and Tanzania to lead workshops and work with partners. CODE Ethiopia's Library Expert in Ethiopia also had the opportunity to attend the Comparative International Education Studies Conference (CIES) in Vancouver in 2016, where he presented Reading CODE alongside CODE's experts, Dr. Marlene Asselin (UBC) and Dr. Ray Doiron (UPEI). CODE also organized meetings between partners where they could share experiences and build on each other's knowledge. Partners met formally in Ghana in 2015. The focus of the meeting was monitoring and evaluation but it also included sessions on building partner organizations. Overall Reading CODE included ten specific initiatives to build capacity and all four country implementing partners were included.

²¹ Many of the trainees were initially confused about the difference between nonfiction and fictional stories which contain factual information (historical fiction, narrative non-fiction, etc.).

Finally, to address and improve gender-responsive programming, CODE worked with all local implementing partners to ensure they had in place a complete set of strategies and tools to address gender inequality. In addition to planning, organizing and implementing targeted gender initiatives, for example, girls' library clubs in Ethiopia, Reading Clubs in Tanzania, selecting books to address puberty in Ghana, all partners worked with head teachers and government bodies to ensure the inclusion of women when training trainers, teachers and librarians. The training itself then included modules on the promotion of gender equality. Local partners also vetted all books selected (both published and purchased) with the promotion of gender equality (in addition to messages about the environment and governance) in mind.

Outputs

Immediate outcome 1110	Increased educators' ability to effectively apply reading promotion and instruction strategies in their classrooms			
	Output statement from the Logic Model	Indicator (s) in the PMF	Target at end of project	Actual Data
Output 1111	Lead trainers certified to train teachers/librarians	# of lead trainers certified to train teachers / librarians	135 trained 90% certified	138 trained (72 m; 66 f) 49 certified
Output 1112	Teachers certified in teaching reading, writing instruction	# of teachers/librarians certified	2,245 trained 90% certified	1,742 teachers trained (945 m 797 f) 793 librarians trained (410 m, 383 f) 94% of teachers certified
Immediate outcome 1120	Increased access to culturally relevant and equally engaging materials for girls and boys and youth in targeted primary schools			
Output 1121	Librarians certified in management and reading promotion	# librarians trained	400 trained	793 librarians trained (410 m, 383 f)
Output 1122	Books in circulation by teachers, pupils and the community	# books in circulation by teachers, pupils and the community	1,109,860 books in circulation	1,065,239 books

Immediate outcome 1210	Increased capacity of local publishing sector to produce and distribute books to meet local needs			
Output 1211	Local publishers, writers and illustrators trained on how to produce and distribute culturally relevant reading materials	# writers/illustrators trained	230 trained	137 trained (93 m, 44 f)
Immediate outcome 1220	Increased capacity of project partners to model best practices and inform national policy dialogue			
Output 1221	Focused assessments and evaluation reports on best practices of literacy promotion disseminated	# reports disseminated	8 reports 4 countries involved in assessments	9 reports 3 countries (student assessment) 1 country (library evaluation)
Output 1222	Institutional capacity of project Partners strengthened in the areas of governance and project planning	# capacity building initiatives for partners	8 initiatives 4 countries involved in capacity building	10 initiatives 4 countries involved in capacity building
Immediate outcome 1230	Improved gender-responsive programming by project partners and by project organizations			
Output 1231	Gender diagnostic tools and strategies developed by each Partner with community participation	# partners with complete set of strategies/tools/skills to address gender inequality	All partners have gender strategies and implement them	All partners have gender strategies and implement them

Outcomes

To improve the learning outcomes of girls and boys and youth in underserved communities in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania, the ultimate goal of the project, CODE and local implementing partners focused on two intermediate outcomes: 1) improving the reading and writing performance in project classrooms and community libraries; and 2) enhancing the gender-sensitive literate environment in project schools and community libraries. Each of these expected outcomes were further broken into immediate outcomes including: increasing educators' ability to effectively apply reading promotion and instructional strategies in their classrooms, increasing access to culturally relevant and equally engaging materials for girls and boys and youth, increasing the capacity of the local publishing sector to produce and distribute books to meet local needs, increasing the capacity of project partners to model best practices and inform national policy dialogue, and improving programming to be more gender-responsive. The analysis that follows demonstrates how CODE and local implementing partners in each of the four programming countries achieved these outcomes.

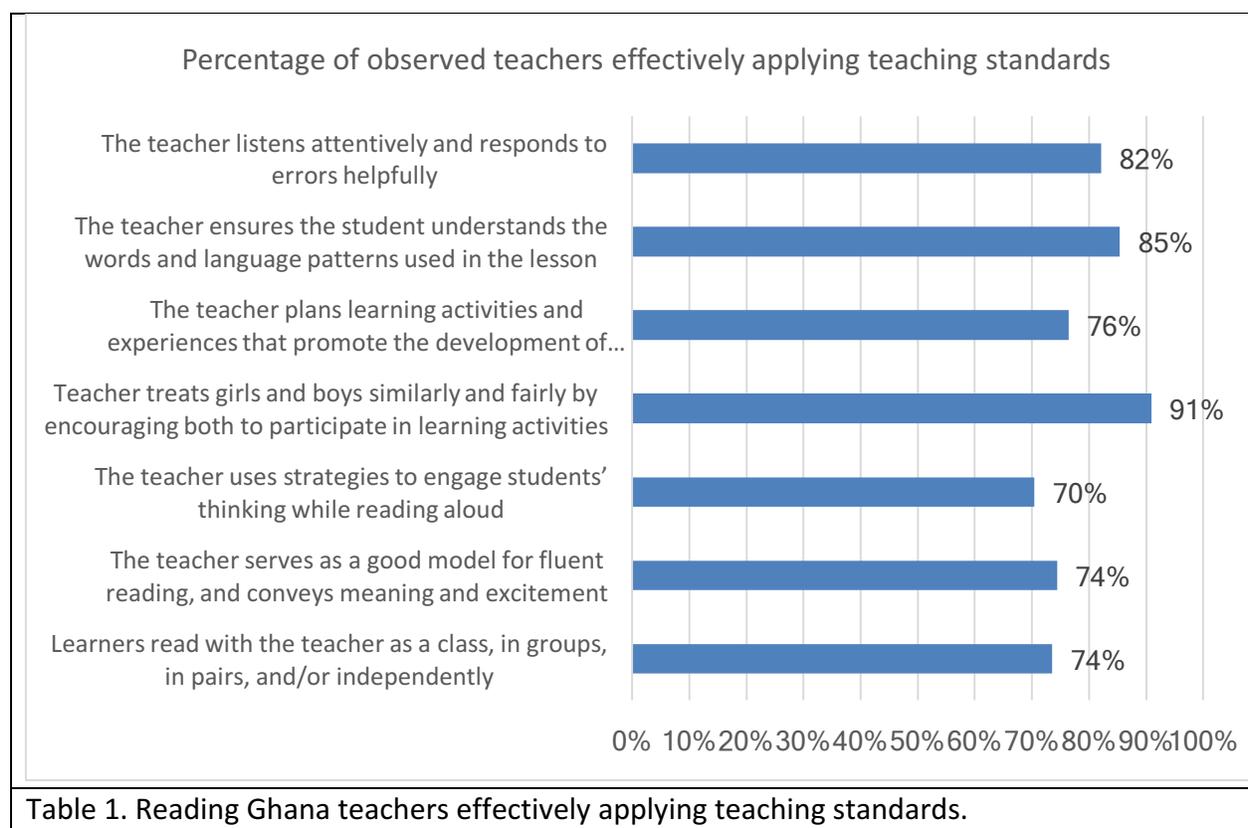
Improved reading and writing performance for girls and boys in project classrooms and community libraries

The baseline assessments found that educators in project sites are untrained, ill-equipped and did not receive the necessary support to help students to succeed in reading, writing, nor high order thinking. In Tanzania, for example, teachers typically used rote learning approaches and their students were disengaged from the learning process. Educators that did attempt to use child-centered instructional approaches were largely ineffective. The results confirmed that educators' pedagogy, materials and other instructional practices did not stand on strong professional foundations.

On an assessment that tested letter identification, reading connected text and comprehension, students identified an average of 8.17 of 50 letters with a median of 0 letters. Similarly, in Ghana, 80 percent of students could not correctly identify letters of the alphabet, read connected text or comprehend at grade level. In Mali, students could not write common words. In grade 3, the average score for six common words in French was 0.044 (results were generally the same for girls and boys). In Ethiopia, the baseline assessment showed that there was no training for librarians in any community libraries in either library management or reading promotion.²²

²² CODE (2013) Reading CODE Baseline Report.

Over the course of the project, and after teachers had been trained through the Reading CODE professional development workshops, they were observed by trainers to provide feedback and gather results. Observations showed the improvement in teachers’ abilities. For example, in Ghana, 85 percent of the teachers were found to be consistently taking care to teach word meaning and language patterns. Additionally, 82 percent of the teachers applied effective learner-centered teaching strategies; the teachers spoke with and listened to the students in ways that promoted learning, monitoring their comprehension and adjusting instruction as necessary. (See table 1).



Results also extended to the area of gender equality. Ninety-one percent of the teachers observed were encouraging to both girls and boys and treated students in their class similarly, and fairly. The teachers also used a wide range of strategies indicating that they had mastered multiple approaches that could be used to address the needs of various learners (see table 2).

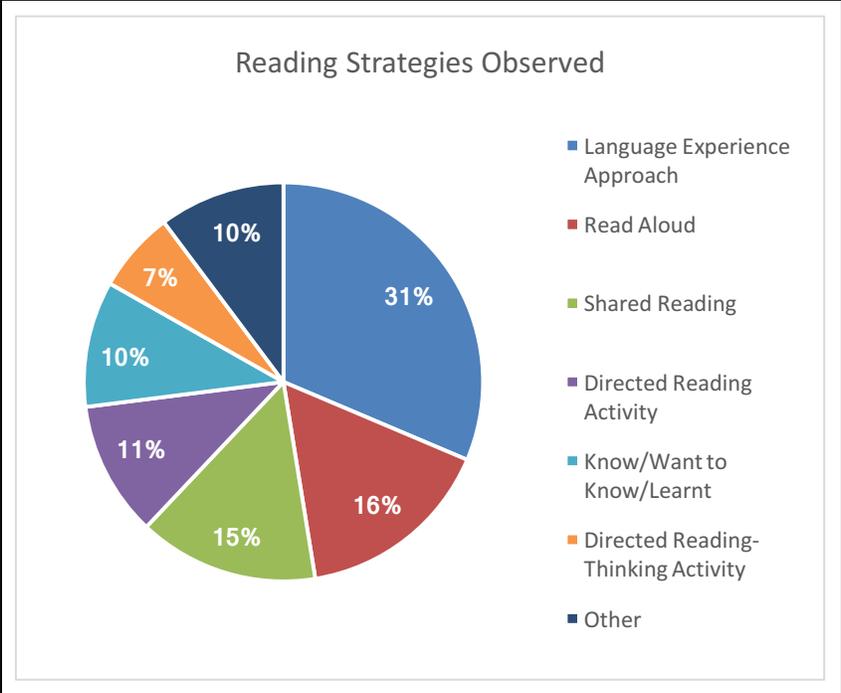


Table 2. Strategies used by teachers in Reading Ghana schools

reading comprehension were also evident at primary levels 5 and 6.

In Tanzania, students at both standards 2 and 4 outperformed the students in the control schools on all measures. The differences were especially pronounced in the areas of comprehension and

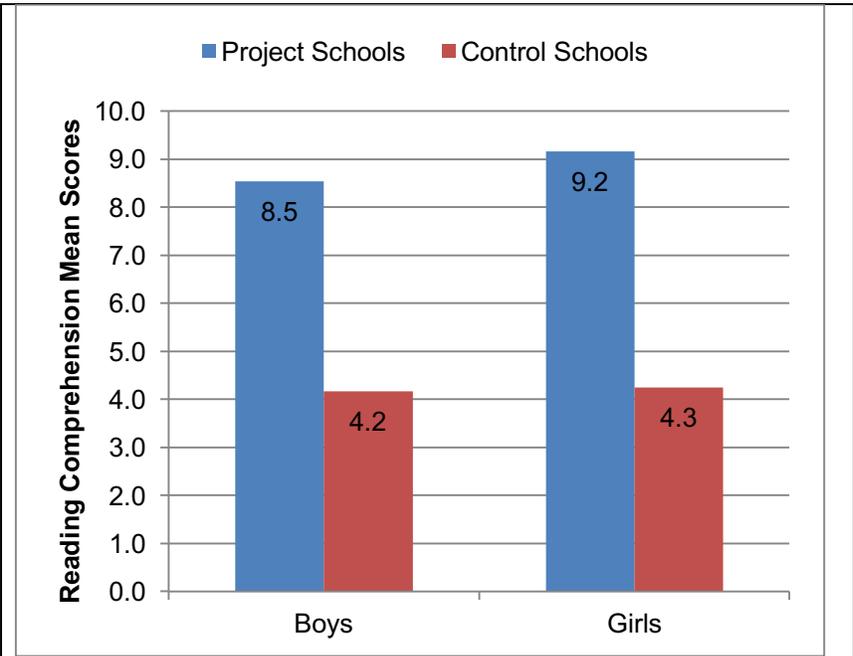


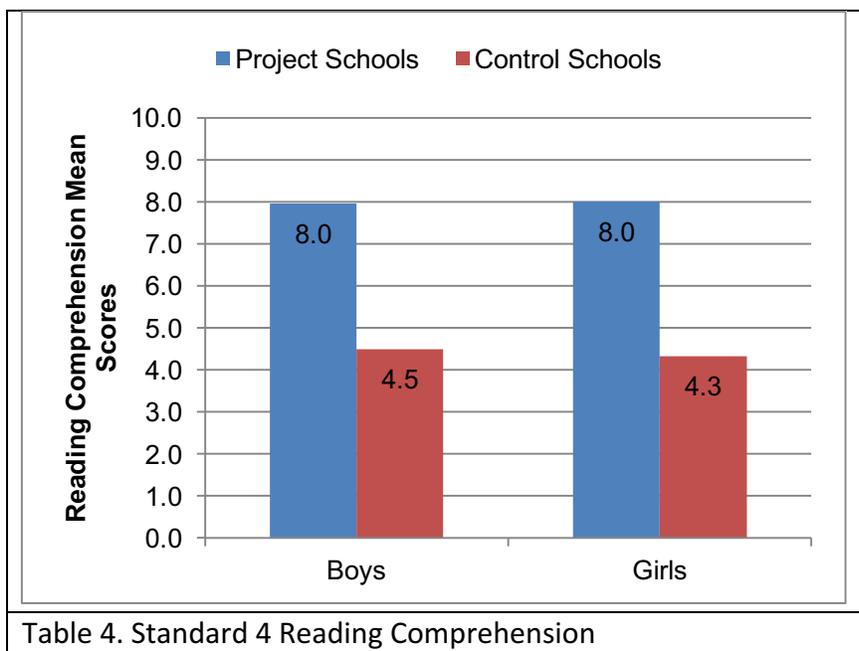
Table 3. Standard 2 Reading Comprehension

Students were also assessed. The results showed an improvement in the reading performance of girls and boys in project classrooms, especially when compared to students from non-project schools. In Ghana, students at levels 1-3 in the project schools were stronger than non-project students in both word recognition and paragraph reading. At primary level 4, students scored higher on all measures of literacy. Markedly higher scores in paragraph reading and

fluency. It should also be noted that while girls performed better than boys in both Reading CODE and control schools, they performed significantly better in the Reading CODE schools.

These skills are developed through the select instructional methods taught during the workshops and supported by the books which the students and their teachers

could use to practice and develop their skills. The magnitude of the differences between the Reading CODE schools and the control schools was significant at times. Standard 2 students in the project schools in Tanzania on average understood twice as much of what they read and were almost three times more fluent.



Meanwhile, in Mali, a final evaluation showed that teachers trained and supported during the program asserted that they had benefited from the training sessions and school principals confirmed that the professional development training was effective in transforming how teachers manage their classrooms.

Teachers and project monitors also reported evidence of students applying literacy skills in their classrooms. In Tanzania, 95% of the teachers reported that the literacy skills of the students (both girls and boys) in their classes improved since the start of the Reading CODE project. Additionally, 87% of the teachers estimated that at least 50% of students in their class have read books from the library (a huge improvement given that at the start of the project students were unable to recognize letters). Seventy-one percent of teachers in Ghana also reported that the literacy skills of the students (both girls and boys) in their classes improved since the start of the project and 73% of the teachers estimated that at least 50% of their class have read books from the library. In Ethiopia, students benefiting from the community libraries stated that they use the library regularly because there are books to read that are not available in their schools. Students mostly agreed that they used the library to gain knowledge, to improve their reading skills, and to do homework which a positive effect on their academic achievement. Students appreciated the readiness and helpfulness of the library attendants. School teachers affirmed that the presence of the community libraries helped them in their teaching; by allowing them access to more information and supplementary materials.

Enhanced gender-sensitive literate environment in project schools and communities

Access to reading books and other written materials is especially important for learning in low resource and print-poor settings. Books are vital for strengthening the literacy environment, especially for poor children without access to books at home.²³

Accordingly, the findings in the initial baseline assessment were alarming. Project schools were without reading rooms, reading corners or libraries. For the most part, students did not have access to libraries in schools or within their communities. Where libraries did exist, they were generally empty or extremely outdated in terms of their collection of reading materials. Classrooms were largely devoid of print.²⁴ In Tanzania for example, the assessment of classrooms found a ratio of one textbook for every twelve students in grade 1 and one textbook for every four students in grade 7. No other materials were available in the classrooms.

Through Reading CODE, teachers have integrated the books supplied into their teaching and made good use of them to support reading and writing lessons. Progress has also been made with librarians and head teachers who have put into place ways to secure books borrowed by students and their teachers to read outside of school time. CODE and local implementing partners, working with local stakeholders have been able to create environments with increased access to culturally relevant, engaging and level appropriate books.

In order to inspire school and community librarians to transform their libraries into hubs for literacy and learning, the training CODE's literacy experts facilitated, emphasized the potential of libraries to be more than a place to store books. It encouraged librarians to actively engage with library users. (Community members, teachers, children). Librarians were trained to create inclusive spaces, tailoring activities according to local needs.

For example, as part of the strategy to encourage girls' use of the library and participated in library activities, 'Girls Reading Clubs' were established in 8 of the community libraries in Ethiopia. A special guide was created by CODE Ethiopia to support librarians to run the clubs and to create a welcoming space for girls. These clubs provided a concrete way for librarians to engage in gender focused activities and provided an opportunity to promote the library to girls in order to increase their use of the library. They also served to encourage girls to read books to support both their literacy and their access to up-to-date relevant information, allowing them to benefit from the available resources in the library.

²³ UNESCO (2016) Global Education Monitoring Report.

²⁴ CODE (2013). Reading CODE Baseline Report.

To meet the schools' and communities' needs, CODE and local implementing partners made a specific effort to include (and develop) indigenous language materials for teaching and learning. In Ethiopia, this included publishing books in six local languages (Tigrigna, Oromiffa, Siltegrna, Sidamigna, Somali, and Harari), in the official national language Amharic, and in English. In Ghana, books in both Twi and English were selected. The books in Mali included French and Bambara titles while in Tanzania, CODE's local implementing partner the Children's Book Project developed, published and distributed titles in Swahili and in English.

Not only were books developed to meet language needs. CODE and local implanting partners also selected books according to content. All books were considered on the basis of gender, environment and governance. They were also chosen to support the teaching and reading strategies that were part of the teachers and librarian training. Children need engaging, relevant, and varied reading materials that will develop the habit of reading, and grow their language capacity and knowledge of the world even as they inspire their imagination and curiosity. There was a specific need for books that were created by local writers and artists -- books that allow children to recognize themselves and their surroundings and feel at home with the practice of reading.

Quality education requires quality learning materials coupled with quality instruction. A quality book program includes:

- local authors, local illustrators, local issues
- gender-balance
- content that is relevant and worth thinking about
- design to support pedagogy for fluency and comprehension
- considerate of children's actual reading levels
- high standards of production

CODE and local partners were always careful to select good books. They are designed on sound pedagogical principles, taking into account reading levels, vocabulary and language and they need to be integrated into an instructional strategy wherein the teacher or librarian has the skills to get the most out of them.

To gain in depth feedback on the library aspect of the project, CODE and CODE Ethiopia conducted a series of 24 focus group discussions in Ethiopia. Students, teachers, local management committees and library attendants participated (for more details see Ethiopia). Participants agree that the project had a positive impact on the communities and users. Students reported that they use the library to gain knowledge, to improve their reading skills, to study and do their homework, all of which they felt had a positive effect on their academic achievement. With the increase in the number of relevant books in libraries as part of the project, they also

said that they use the library regularly because there are now many books available that they could not find in their schools or in the library prior to the project. Students also found the library staff helpful and appreciated their support and assistance.



CODE Senior Program Manager, Willy Rangira visits Fiche Community Library, Ethiopia 2015

Teachers also felt that community libraries had a positive impact on their communities, with the majority of those participating in the focus groups agreeing that the presence of the CL helped with their teaching, providing a valuable resource for additional information and supplementary materials. Teachers also reported that they have witnessed an improvement in the grades of students who frequented the library.

Library management committee (LMC) members and the library attendants felt that the main impact of the CLs was the successful promotion of a reading culture in communities, noting a higher awareness among the community to send their children to the library. Library attendants were particularly satisfied with the reading promotion and library activities based on the number of library users, especially girls.

Low skills in-country to write and illustrate high quality books was one of the key challenges of supporting a local publishing industry in the Reading CODE project countries. The baseline assessment found out that most of the limited books in the classrooms and libraries in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania, were written and published in other countries. The books did not reflect the context and did not have sufficient appeal to young readers.

The Children's Book Project conducted a focus group with Tanzanian publishers to establish capacities and needs in the industry. Books were found to have a limited market. Tanzanian publishers (similar to publishers throughout Africa) were focused on textbooks which are typically purchased by Ministries of Education or schools rather than individuals. In Ghana, NALAP books were the main source of reading material. These books were not appropriate for the project as they did not support effective reading strategies. CODE Ethiopia was found to be the single biggest publisher of local language books in Ethiopia (despite not being a formal publishing house). The books were written to meet the demands in the country by officers at the Regional Education Bureaus, but most of the writers had no training or experience in writing children books. The design, illustration and editing of the books required much improvement.

CODE nor its local partners (including CODE Ethiopia) are publishers but did support local publishing industries through the project. In Tanzania, for example, the Children’s Book Project set out specifications for illustrated books in Swahili at each grade level. Private publishers competed to supply the books, motivated by the guaranteed purchase for successful manuscripts. CBP additionally conducted professional development workshops, often using international volunteer experts (publishers and authors from Canada), to update the skills of local publishers, editors, writers, and illustrators. The books selected included: concept books for emergent readers, patterned books for learners, story books, and informational books.

Training the writers and illustrators, however, required more time and resources than anticipated. For example, training in Tanzania was to focus on non-fiction writing (as per the needs in the country) and creating connections to the national curriculum. However, initial training showed that many writers were confused about the difference between nonfiction and fictional stories that contain factual information (historical fiction, narrative non-fiction, etc.). Therefore, more in depth support was provided to fewer participants.

At the end of the project, CODE sought feedback from students and teachers on the books that were provided. Through a series of surveys, students reported that they now find books that meet their needs at their schools and community libraries. In Tanzania, 86 percent of students reported that they could relate to the books. In Ghana, 95 percent (98% of the boys and 91% of the girls) found reading materials that met their needs in the school. In Ethiopia, students agreed that the reading materials at the community library meet their needs very much and that there are a variety of books that are not found at their schools.

Bringing it all together.

A Reading CODE guidebook was written in each country with support from international literacy experts. The guidebooks provide the framework for Reading CODE. In Tanzania, *Mbinu Saba* (Seven Strategies) outlines the core methods for teaching reading and writing for meaning in classrooms. In Ghana, two guidebooks - one for lower primary teachers and one for upper primary teachers - provide guidance regarding the most appropriate strategies at each grade level. In Ethiopia, guidebooks for librarians include information both on how to manage a library and how to promote reading and organize activities. (More information: <https://codelibraries.wordpress.com/>). In Mali, *Mali en lecture: Guide Pédagogique pour un enseignement efficace de la lecture et de l’écriture* provides support to teachers regarding the teaching of reading and writing.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

CODE and CODE's local implementing partners typically deliver programs in communities with low literacy rates and a weak reading culture. This requires a particular approach to project management and to community engagement to motivate and encourage community leaders to participate meaningfully in governance and feel ownership of activities and achievements. Throughout Reading CODE, CODE's local partners worked openly and transparently with communities to assess needs, plan activities and monitor results.

Implementation during the project largely focused on the provision of interesting, contextually relevant books to underserved children and training teachers through high quality professional development throughout the duration of the project. In order to maintain consistency with these core elements, CODE has worked to ensure proper management in all areas of *Reading CODE*.

Governance

Supporting changes in governance and management for both CODE and its local implementing partner organizations was fundamental to the success of *Reading CODE*.

Overall, CODE and CODE's Board of Directors had the ultimate responsibility for the project. In Canada, the management, administration and technical support was provided by CODE who implemented a results-based management approach. At the specific country level, each local partner managed and implemented the project in collaboration with CODE. The roles and responsibilities were detailed in Partnership Agreements that were signed at the beginning of the project (by executive officers and board chairpersons), ensuring accountability for the terms and conditions of the project. Partners then developed relationships with government, community and private enterprises to implement various components of Reading CODE.

Several important governance-based milestones were reached during the project:

In January 2013, Ghana Book Trust hired a new Executive Director committed to open dialogue between CODE and GBT. To assist in this change in leadership, CODE supported GBT's Board in the hiring and orientation process. Also in 2013, CODE Ethiopia underwent a significant review of its governance and management structure, making changes to pre-existing job descriptions as well as creating new job descriptions. This review was necessary to build CODE-Ethiopia's institutional capacity.

In 2014, CODE initiated a review of its partnership agreements and partnership assessment tools with each of the four program countries. These revisions were aimed at strengthening accountability and clarifying roles, rules and expectations on both sides.

In 2015, CODE-Ethiopia faced a leadership transition. Cofounders, Tesfaye Dubale and Efrem Abera retired from C-E, and Yalew Zeleke was successfully recruited and hired in their place. Shortly thereafter, CE also revised its Governance and Human Resource Management Manual with support from CODE.

Workplanning

Program and annual work planning was done on a country by country basis together with local implementing partners. CODE was then responsible for the overall four-country plan. This included results-based planning to ensure that all project outcomes, outputs, activities, components and milestones were completed.

In February 2015, CODE held a partners' meeting in Ghana to address two program priorities that required further attention: enhancing sustainability and developing an exit strategy and; strengthening monitoring and evaluation. CODE focused on how to ensure new teaching strategies were being internalized by trainers and teachers, and that local teacher support personnel were also mastering these skills. CODE also focused on disseminating good practices and lessons learned from all partners. There was a renewed emphasis on Monitoring and Evaluation, which involved a review of all existing tools,

Baseline Assessment

All activities for the duration of the project were planned according to the results of the baseline assessment. The assessment, which took place during the preparation of the Project Implementation Plan, included consultations with reading specialists to define a common approach to formative and summative assessment.

Capturing evidence on the impact of the project in each country is a major component of the Reading CODE model. The design of the instruments, the timing of data collection, and the management and reporting of results are important to a successful readership program.

Accordingly, three baseline assessment instruments were developed:

- **Literate environment:** to assess availability of reading materials in the library, school and classroom environments, as well as the in-kind support of community members towards the creation and support of a reading culture.
- **Teacher and librarian practices:** to assess the practices and performance of project teachers and librarians.
- **Student Literacy:** to assess the reading and writing abilities of individual students.

In addition to developing these assessment instruments, CODE worked with each local partner to plan the collection, analysis and aggregation of data.

ensuring that partners fully understood them and could respond to the data collection needs. Participants' feedback indicated that they left the workshop with a greater understanding of the concepts covered and a new set of tools to help strengthen their reporting capacity on programme results.

Monitoring

Reading CODE was developed with a comprehensive framework for reporting progress towards qualitative and quantitative results. Local implementing partners submitted regular program narrative reports on specific activities and contextual considerations every six months for the duration of the program. They also submitted financial reports to CODE on a quarterly basis. CODE's Ottawa-based team would then review the progress against planned activities and budget and would also discuss the progress against expected results with the local partners.

The reports themselves were based on continuous monitoring at the district level where activities were implemented. Project officers and trainers monitored teachers trained during the projects on a regular basis. The monitoring served not only to collect results but also as in-service support to the teachers. Trainers and officers would reflect with the teachers on the teaching strategies being used and the challenges they encountered. These observations were also used to modify the subsequent training sessions where challenging issues would be addressed and difficult strategies would be reviewed.

In 2013-14, CODE revisited the Performance Measurement Framework (PMF), examining the indicators and targets given the monitoring to date. CODE Programme Managers visited Ghana, Ethiopia and Tanzania in order to review the PMF with local implementing partners. CODE also met with an International Development Officer from DFATD to revise the indicators in the PMF and Logic Model. This was done to ensure there was a common understanding of the indicators and coherence in reporting.

In 2015, CODE hired a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to support *Reading CODE*. He worked directly with partners in Ethiopia and Tanzania supporting C-E and CBP to improve monitoring, data recording and data analysis. He also provided remote technical support to GBT and ALED.

Logistics

Overall planning was the responsibility of CODE while in-country logistics was the responsibility of CODE's partners. CODE Ethiopia planned the training of librarians and the distribution of books in Ethiopia. Ghana Book Trust organized the logistics around teacher training and book purchases

in Ghana. Association pour la lecture, l'éducation, et le développement organized training and book publishing in Mali. Children's Book Project planned the logistics of training, book publishing and distribution in Tanzania.

Public Relations

CODE, whenever possible highlighted the success of the Reading CODE project. CODE's website codecan.org included up-to-date information about the project with the inclusion of a program overview as well as blog posts and news articles featuring CODE's expert volunteers and their experience working with teachers in the four countries of program implementation. CODE additionally promoted Reading CODE through social media channels: Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Beyond the web presence, CODE's newsletters and Annual Reports (both digital and paper) featured the Reading CODE project prominently, drawing the attention of Canadians and international stakeholders.

Reading CODE was also an opportunity for CODE to develop comprehensive research briefs which could be shared with academics and the development community in order to build on the success of the project. CODE Volunteer Expert, Dr. Charles Temple and CODE's Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator will share the results of the research at the Comparative International Education Society (CIES) Conference in 2017.

CODE's local implementing partners handle the public relations in the respective countries including taking the lead on government relations. CODE's partners met regularly with education offices and Ministries of Education as a means to disseminate the results of the project and garner increased support. In Tanzania, CBP hosted a short conference where the results of the project were shared broadly with the government, and other NGO stakeholders. Representatives for the Canadian High Commission were invited to attend.

Finance

CODE had the ultimate responsibility for financial accountability. Accordingly, CODE added additional staff members in the finance and administration department to support the partners in their financial reporting and accounting. This addition to CODE's team improved the level of oversight. Working with local partners can be challenging, but in the interest of local capacity building, CODE works with all partners to ensure that there is strong and accurate reporting.

Local implementing partners were required to report quarterly to CODE. Reports were then reviewed to verify expenses. CODE retained copies of all supporting documentation while partners maintained original copies. Programs in each country were audited on an annual basis.

RISK MANAGEMENT

In *Reading CODE's* Project Implementation Plan, the risk register outlined potential risks, including country stability, funding, educational constraints, socio-cultural and reputational risks. As part of the management of the program, CODE reviewed these risks on a regular basis (biannually at minimum), and adjusted plans and strategies as necessary. Below are more detailed narratives concerning the risks.

Operational Risks

Operational risks were generally low or very low throughout the duration of the project. CODE works with an established team of volunteer literacy experts and local implementing partners which ensures that the program can be implemented as envisioned. Operational risk 4, Country Stability, was the exception to the risk level. Due to political instability in Mali, there were some challenges to implementing programming in the country. Six months into the project, there was a deterioration of the security situation, as rebels began to occupy the northern part of the country, following the aftermath of a military coup against a democratically elected president. As a result, it was difficult to enlist volunteer reading specialists to join the *Mali en Lecture* team and both the specialists and the CODE Program Manager experienced travel delays. CODE mitigated the situation by working with previously trained trainers in Mali rather than bringing in international trainers. To further prepare the Malian trainers and support their skills development, CODE brought the Malian trainers to Ghana in 2012 to attend a *Reading Ghana* workshop.

Despite the mitigation strategy, CODE and ALED were unable to reach, train and certify as many new trainers as had been planned. Nevertheless, CODE and ALED remained committed to developing teachers' skills, developing libraries and reading corners, and activating community support for developing a culture of reading.

In 2013, the situation in Mali improved. CODE's Program Manager then traveled to Mali to work with ALED and monitor the program. Unfortunately, several cases of Ebola were later discovered in Bamako, which forced CODE and ALED to again halt all travel by the Program Manager and

literacy experts until the risk had been downgraded. (CODE also monitored the risk in Ghana but the project was not effected).

In 2014-15, Mali's security risk was upgraded due to both the Ebola outbreak and terrorism-related events targeting international visitors. These circumstances effectively stopped all travel by CODE and literacy experts. CODE continued to monitor the situation, and developed an exit strategy that involved using a consultant based in West Africa to work with ALED.

The project in Mali was largely implemented as planned but not without challenges.

Financial Risks

The financial risks to Reading CODE remained low throughout the project. CODE and local implementing partners were particularly careful to mitigate these risks as the impact of relating to finances would have been high.

Prior to undertaking the project, CODE had (and continues to have in place) a fundraising plan to ensure that all matching obligations are met. Though the global economy was not strong during the period of the project, CODE was able to consistently meet its fundraising targets. Further ensuring that CODE's fundraising commitments are met, CODE is affiliated with the CODE Foundation (codecan.org/our-affiliates). The CODE Foundation, established in 1992, is an endowment fund that manages and invests bequests and other planned gifts. The CODE Foundation donates its investment income to CODE on an annual basis.

More challenging were the financial risks related to ensuring local stakeholders were able to sustain financial, physical and human resources to sustain achievements and to ensure that funds were used for their intended purposes and were properly accounted for. Both risks were mitigated with increased oversight from CODE. This included trips by CODE's finance staff to partner offices as well as the collection of all receipts and supporting documentation for verification by CODE staff.

Development Risks

Development risks relating to Reading CODE remained low or very low throughout the project. Still, CODE and local implementing partners regularly evaluated the risks and took steps to address any concerns. For example, to address development risk 2 – that unmitigated gender-based inequalities would impact the access to and benefit from the intervention and lead to missed opportunities for girls, CODE and the local implementing partner in each country planned

to include specific targeted initiatives in the project. These activities included girls' reading clubs in Ethiopia and girl-led afterschool reading activities in Tanzania as well as the selection of specific books to support girls' knowledge of themselves, their rights and their bodies in Ghana and Mali.

To further mitigate the risk that girls and women would not have equal access to the *Reading CODE* program, baseline assessments and interviews with project level stakeholders were completed to better understand the challenges, inequalities, and in some cases, abuse that girls face in regards to accessing education. As a result, CODE and partners created training, book provision, community engagement, data collection and analysis that considered girls' needs and sought to improve girls' access to education.

Reputational Risks

Reputational risks were very low for Reading CODE. While there is always an ongoing concern that negative views due to corruption or nepotism or public officials and others associated with project will arise, CODE has clear policies and procedures that demonstrate transparency and consistency with regard to the selection of project schools, monitoring, reporting of expenses, and communicating with stakeholders. CODE works with long-term partners who also have reputations for implementing fair and transparent practices.

CROSSCUTTING THEMES AND PRIORITIES

Gender equality, environmental sustainability and good governance are inextricably linked to education and literacy. Improved education leads to greater prosperity, improved agriculture, better health outcomes, less violence, more gender equality, higher social capital and improved natural environments.²⁵ Education carries an essential role in achieving gender equality. It can be a “catalyst of transformation providing individuals with opportunity and capability to challenge and change discriminatory attitudes and practices.”²⁶ Education, and literacy in particular, can also raise awareness and strengthen efforts to improve the way people care for the environment. “Society’s most vulnerable youth and adults [must] acquire basic literacy skills that equip them with the knowledge and confidence to improve their own lives and build more resilient communities.”²⁷

²⁵ UNESCO. 2016 Gender Review: Global Education Monitoring Report
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002460/246045e.pdf>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ UNESCO 2015 Transforming Our World: Literacy for Sustainable Development.
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002342/234253e.pdf>

Gender Equality Strategy

CODE has a firm belief that improvements to gender equality are a prerequisite for achieving development goals, as reflected in CODE's gender policy. CODE supports projects to improve the quality of education while advancing gender equality. This is through a continuous monitoring process using gender analysis and working closely with communities to plan, monitor and revise targeted activities when necessary to meet targets.

As part of CODE's gender equality strategy, CODE and local implementing partners strive for equal participation and influence of women and men in decision-making and consultation throughout the project cycle, even when these challenges identified traditional hierarchies. Community consultation involves sensitization on gender issues and promotes a vision for gender equality.



Reading CODE, Ashanto Region, Ghana 2015

Importantly, the Reading CODE teacher training curriculum included a focus on the role of teachers as positive female and male role models who can help to challenge negative gender practices and stereotypes. Workshops for trainers and teachers encourage and prepare teachers to be more gender-sensitive in and out of the classroom. This requires teachers being sensitized on barriers to participation, and addressing these barriers, (that mostly affect girls), through gender-friendly practices, community consultation, sound planning, close monitoring and review.

In Kongwa, Tanzania, CODE and CBP introduced literacy clubs in 20 Reading CODE schools. The intent was to empower female facilitators, through gender training, to prepare them for adulthood, and enable them to become literacy coaches and role models for pupils (girls and boys).

Literacy club coaches have increased children's interaction with reading materials through club activities including reading, writing, poetic recitation, debate, dramatization and discussion.

CODE and local implementing partners also strive to achieve gender equality through the careful selection and purposeful creation of books and other reading materials. By procuring materials that appeal to both girls and boys and which demonstrate strong and positive female and male characters that in some cases challenge traditional gender roles, CODE and local implementing partners work to achieve gender equality. Furthermore, not only are the books produced and purchased by CODE and local implementing partners gender sensitive, but Reading CODE workshops demonstrate to trainers and teachers how the materials can be used to engage students and bring gender-sensitivity into the classroom.

Reading CODE also integrates gender equality and governance. With support from CODE, local implementing partners strive for equal representation of women and men on committees, boards and other decision-making bodies. This challenges traditional gender divisions since men typically occupy the majority of decision-making positions. Including women in equal measure advances women's participation, features women as role models, and includes their perspectives on the specific needs and interests of girls and boys, women and men. According to the 2016 Global Education Monitoring Report, "understanding gender issues and gaining skills to address them are necessary not only for leadership but also for participation in political processes in daily life, such as voting, obtaining access to services and claiming social and legal rights."

Environmental Sustainability

As a teacher-training and book procurement initiative that neither constructs nor alters education infrastructure, the Reading CODE project had no discernible negative impact on the environment. Indirectly, though, by including learning materials related to environmental degradation, natural disaster risk, climate change, and environment-related health issues (like diarrhea, malaria, respiratory infections, etc.), the project encouraged stronger environmental practices and stewardship among its various stakeholders and participants.

The project does not have targeted environmental outcomes but efforts are made to ensure environmental impact is minimised in the program implementation. Specific efforts regarding environmental sustainability include:

- Minimising transport by combining the distribution of program books and equipment with other Ministry of Education transport.
- Seeking environmentally sustainable suppliers of the paper when printing books.
- Encouraging topics in the development of the books that promote environmental sustainability. (For example, *Jamana et Tèkè jèèlen* (Clean Hands) addresses sanitation,

focusing on the importance of handwashing, a topic of particular importance in Mali during the Ebola outbreak).

- Reusing boxes from book distribution by turning them into useful teaching aids such as word cards, letter cards etc., as well as using old calendars to prepare charts and posters.

Most importantly, Reading CODE supports teachers, students and communities to think critically about the world around them. In turn, these thinkers understand, support and create solutions that ensure the development of sustainable cities and communities. They are also more likely to use energy and water efficiently and to recycle household waste.²⁸ People with higher levels of education, with the skills to think critically – a focus of Reading CODE - show greater concern for the protection of the environment.

Governance

Reading CODE is designed to support national government education plans in each of the four countries. The capacity building of the education system at different levels serves to improve the delivery of education services well beyond the life of the program. Improving the confidence and competence of the local education officers, teacher educators and teachers themselves enables them to be more responsive to the needs of the students and their families in the management of education institutions. This includes awareness of the particular challenges that some individuals and groups may face and inclusive activities to ensure maximum participation of all. It also contributes to strengthening sustainability and ensuring ownership of the Reading CODE strategy and sets of standards. In all 4 countries, participatory planning and monitoring is done jointly, by CODE and local implementing partners and whenever possible with local stakeholders including district education officers and head teachers.

CODE also involved various levels of government, community, district and national in different program activities. For example, in Ethiopia the community involvement in the management of the libraries empowers the community and develops a sense of ownership of the library that ensures the local investment and management of the libraries for the longer term.

In Mali, ALED shared their activity reports with the regions' regional directors, specifically the ones regarding teachers' workshops. This improved the government's involvement in monitoring and support to teachers, as well as their sense of ownership regarding *Reading Mali*. Local education administrators demonstrated high levels of ownership for the program by assigning a supervisor for libraries and reading corners that regularly monitors how those resources are

²⁸ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002342/234253e.pdf>

being used by the schools, giving advice on how to make better use of those books to support students' reading and writing skills; organizing reading competitions for all schools in Sikasso to support the pleasure and habit of reading among students and teachers; and attending *Reading Mali* events like library inauguration ceremonies.

In Ghana and Tanzania, CODE trained representatives from the Ministry of Education as trainers. Ward Education Officers were trained in the *Reading Tanzania* strategies in Tanzania, thus equipping them with tools to improve quality control both in Reading CODE schools and beyond the scope of the program.

Ultimately Reading CODE was designed to improve the quality of education in program countries. By strengthening student-centered and gender sensitive teaching, Reading CODE produces young citizens capable of participating in local and national affairs, or protecting themselves from abuse and exploitation, and of valuing difference and diversity. Such citizens are key to building vibrant economies and equitable, transparent institutions. Furthermore, “the symbiotic connection between children’s education and participation (values promoted by Reading CODE) have significant implications for child rights activism and for the gradual transformation of systems of governance (...) If children learn by doing the principles and practices of participation in a democratic sense, it is reasonable to assume that [children] will have gained the skills of critical thinking and dialogue, and will more readily adopt the principles and practices of good governance in their adult lives.”²⁹

²⁹ Maclure, Richard. 2016. Classroom Safety and the Pedagogy of Participation: Re-thinking “Education for All” and Children’s Rights in Africa and Latin America).

SUCCESS FACTORS

CODE asserts that the success of Reading CODE as a comprehensive literacy program is ultimately based on three core elements:

1. Providing interesting books, relevant to the readers, and written in languages the readers understand.

CODE enlisted the support of experienced writers, illustrators, and editors who volunteered to facilitate workshops and to mentor local authors and artists on the production of appropriate materials for children. The results were: books that reflect the realities and possibilities of children’s own lives and the values of their cultures; and children’s increased interest in and desire to read books.

2. Supporting meaningful engagement with these books through high quality teaching.

In order to help children understand and thrive in the world around them, the good books were brought to life by excellent teachers. Drawing from evidence-based best practices in child-centered learning, CODE and international literacy experts, together with local implementing partners, provided teachers and librarians with professional development to develop strategies and techniques aimed to make the student an active participant in his or her own learning. The most qualified teachers were then further prepared to become trainers of other teachers in their region.



Teacher Training, Ashanti Region, Ghana 2015

3. Effective partnerships that build the capacity of local partners and government stakeholders to advance sustainability.

CODE worked with four long-term local implementing partners. CODE worked to build the capacity of the partners with regard to organizational capacity, data collection and evaluation processes and thought leadership at the local, regional and national levels. In doing so, Reading CODE supported the use of best practices and informed policy in the individual countries.

The following analysis provides an assessment of success factors in the areas of relevance, design, sustainability, partnership, innovation, resource utilization and informed and timely action.

Relevance

The notion that reading can change lives is one that continues to inspire CODE programming in some of the most impoverished communities around the world including in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania. According to the UN, “one extra year of schooling increases a person’s earnings by up to 10%. 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills.”³⁰ Reading CODE was developed because learning to read not only supports better economic opportunities for people, but also promotes gender equality, helps to diminish conflict, develops engaged citizens who care about the environment and support civil engagement (including democracy and improves overall global development.

At the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, one of the eight goals focused on accessibility to education. MDG 2, ‘achieving universal primary education for all’, used measures of success indicated by net enrolment ratios in primary education, proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5, and literacy rates of 15-24 year olds.³¹ This concentration on accessibility resulted in immense progress towards improvements in education. For example, from 2000-2010, “the number of out-of-school primary-aged children dropped by almost 37 million worldwide,”³² and “more girls enrolled in school than ever before, from primary to tertiary education.”³³ However, while this major effort towards more accessible education has been largely successful in terms of quantity of children served, there was still work to be done towards improved *quality* of education. The recognition that higher quality of teaching literacy is

³⁰ <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/>

³¹ <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/gti.htm#goal2>

³² <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/vitalstats.shtml>

³³ <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/efa/vitalstats.shtml>

needed to achieve education goals resonates strongly with CODE, and Reading CODE. In particular, the UN states that, “teachers are the key agents to improve the quality of education.” With this in mind, the Reading CODE model focused on improving training for teachers so that they have the skills, resources and confidence in their instructional strategies to succeed in teaching reading and writing to children.

Literacy experts (Canadian and international teacher trainers) facilitate professional development training - Teacher-Education Workshops. The number, timing and content of sessions are developed with local partners to meet local needs, typically offering a series of at least 3 week-long intensive workshops. Led by the international expert volunteers, and organized so that participants directly experience the various strategies by doing them (rather than simply learning about them), participants then work in small groups to review and apply the strategy, so that the procedures and points are fully understood. Participants then engage in designing demonstration lessons for use in their own classrooms that they first present to their workshop colleagues, for comments and constructive suggestions. Between workshops, participants implement the strategies and techniques learned in their own contexts (classrooms and libraries), and meet with other colleagues to share successes, offer encouragement and problem solve. *Reading CODE* trainers and project officers regularly visit the participating schools and teachers and conduct classroom observations, offering input and suggestions. In this way, the *quality* of the instruction is protected and the motivation to sustain implementation is supported.

At the core of success

The guiding principles of Reading CODE are key to the success of the program. They are included in each Reading CODE Guidebook. The guide is developed by international literacy experts, and provided to trainers, teachers and librarians in each country of program implementation. Below is an excerpt from the Reading Tanzania Guidebook:

A print-rich environment. Children and young people are surrounded with interesting things to read—texts on wall charts, books, and original student writing.

Everyone participates. The students are constantly invited to read, talk, listen, ask questions, investigate, make plans, solve problems, and share ideas through lively and creative discussion and writing.

Learning makes sense because a context is provided for new concepts and skills. Teachers explain the reasons for lessons, and show students how the lessons are valuable for them and how their learning is progressing. Skills are introduced in a ***whole-part-whole format***: beginning with meaningful reading, writing, or discussion, focusing on smaller concepts or

skills, and returning to apply the concepts or skills in meaningful reading, writing, or discussion.

Learning takes the students' prior knowledge and actively expands it to encompass new knowledge. Teachers are careful to relate new knowledge and skills to what students already know or are curious about. They show students ways to inquire. And they encourage students to apply their new knowledge and skills through the model of *anticipation, building knowledge, and consolidation*.

Students are challenged to think deeply. Teachers ask questions that not only build factual knowledge but challenge students to make interpretations and support them with evidence, solve problems, and invent solutions.

All lessons teach language. Teachers are careful to develop students' vocabulary and control over more and more sophisticated language patterns in every lesson.

All children and young people are treated with care and respect. Classrooms and schools are environments that are physically and emotionally safe for all children, both boys and girls and those who are different in any way. Children are encouraged in every way to grow into confident, capable, cooperative, and successful human beings.

Design

The *Reading CODE* program design is based on the relevant and contextual needs of Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Tanzania. The program was designed around several agreed-upon principles to inform CODE's approach.

Reading CODE provided expert facilitated professional education and ongoing support to local authors, illustrators, and publishers. This support developed the skills needed to create *engaging, culturally relevant* books for children. CODE and local implementing partners working with publishers produced books that introduce children to the pleasures and possibilities of reading, that supplement and expand topics addressed by the national curriculum, and that supported the use of the instructional strategies featured in the project workshops for teachers, librarians, administrators, and teacher educators. CODE ensured that teachers, students, families and communities could access books through the development of school and community libraries.

CODE and local implementing partners also provided teachers with resources that are informed, current, relevant and practical, so they can more effectively teach children to read, write, and think. Through the program, teachers learned strategies that maximize the participation and

meaningful involvement of *all* of their students, *all* of the time despite overcrowded classrooms and challenging conditions. Teachers learned to implement a carefully selected set of adaptable and proven literacy strategies designed to build their students' abilities to read fluently with understanding, to interpret and respond thoughtfully to what they read, to expand their vocabularies, and to build their writing skills.

The program is also designed to provide opportunities for professional development for those seeking to become trainers, enhancing their skills as leaders within their respective international education systems. *Reading CODE* offered scaffolded and collegially supervised opportunities to build skills in workshop presentation, modeling, and role-play demonstrations. The program supported the practice of the attitudes and skills needed to become an effective mentor, participate in a peer-support network and provide on-going 'expert' input to ensure effective implementation, and quality control.

The program included carefully designed monitoring and focused assessment to help capture results from the *Reading CODE* intervention and to inform practice and programming. Within the *Reading CODE* approach, on-going monitoring and assessment is cross-cut in all areas of the program to capture outputs and outcomes. Furthermore, the use of assessment:

- Equipped teachers to be responsive to learners as they teach, using data to adapt teaching and inform future instruction;
- Equipped librarians to be responsive to library users and community needs;
- Provided systematic evidence on the effectiveness of the *Reading CODE*'s school-based intervention;
- Provided systematic evidence on the effectiveness of libraries and the value and impact of the collection; and
- Guided both on-going and long-term decision-making.

Sustainability

Reading CODE prioritized sustainability, providing educators with high-quality training that not only promotes more successful teaching methods, but also supports professional development that will affect long-term change. This strategy is specifically addressed through *Reading CODE*'s Teacher-Education Workshop Model.

The design, duration and sequencing of the workshops make it possible for participants to develop a solid, long-term understanding of the instructional strategies, how they contribute to learning, and support opportunities to implement and refine them in their own classrooms.

While the number, timing, and content of sessions vary slightly according to the input of local partners to meet local needs, typically a series of at least 3, week-long intensive workshops (12 - 15 days in total) are offered over the course of a year.

Workshops are initially led by the international volunteers, and organized so that participants **directly experience** the various strategies by doing them (rather than simply learning about them). They next work in small groups to review and **apply the strategy**, so that the procedures and points are fully understood. Then participants engage in **designing demonstration lessons** for use in their own classrooms that they first present to their workshop colleagues, for comments and constructive suggestions.

Between workshops, participants are expected to implement the strategies and techniques learned in their own contexts, and to meet with other project colleagues to share successes, offer encouragement, and problem solve.

Reading CODE trainers regularly visit the participating schools and teachers and libraries and librarians, conducting classroom observations, and offering input and suggestions. In this way, the quality of the instruction is protected and the motivation to sustain implementation supported.

Participants are provided with *Reading CODE* Guidebooks in which the steps of each strategy are clearly described, along with model lessons using books featured in the workshops and distributed to the project schools.

Teachers who demonstrate that they have mastered the strategies of the workshop, are certified. These teachers may later become trainers or are expected to be leaders in their school, mentoring their peers and new teachers. In this sense, the program continues to grow well beyond the end date of the project.

Also, key to sustainability is CODE's model of working in partnership with local implementing partners. This is further explained below.

Partnership

To implement Reading CODE, CODE developed three types of partnership: 1) Local implementing partners; 2) Knowledge partners; and 3) Local education sector partners. CODE, as outlined in CODE's partnership charter, 'believes that there is strength in unity and that the total which can

be achieved by working in partnership is greater than the sum of that which could be achieved by independent initiatives carried out by the same parties individually.³⁴

CODE values working with local organizations because they are integral to creating change and sustaining change. *CODE* works with strong local organizations to plan, coordinate, deliver and monitor activities that ensure the quality of the initiative and the sustainability of efforts. These organizations carefully plan, implement and monitor programs with appropriate tools and systems, manage for clearly defined results, partner strategically to maximize impact and leverage support and respond to their communities' needs and interests to strengthen education networks and systems.

More specifically, the role of local implementing partners – **CODE-Ethiopia (C-E)**, the **Ghana Book Trust (GBT)**, the **Association pour la lecture l'éducation et le développement (ALED)**, and the **Children's Book Project for Tanzania (CBP)** - within *Reading CODE* has consisted of co-designing and planning the project and leading the implementation of project activities. Some of these activities include the procurement of reading materials, organizing training, and assessment and promotional activities. Partners also took the lead role in guiding and supporting local education officials to institutionalize teaching practices and use of reading materials in schools and libraries. Partners documented and disseminated information to stakeholders, addressed challenges, reflected on activities and made adjustments as necessary, seeking opportunities and alliances to further project goals.

CODE also worked with knowledge partners, representatives from international academic institutions, to design and implement the training. Drawing on Canadian and international expertise, the partnerships with international literacy experts who volunteered their time to support and facilitate various levels of programming ensured the high quality of training. *CODE* worked with long-time volunteer Dr. Charles Temple (Hobart and William Smith Colleges) in support of the Tanzania and Ghana teams to revitalise the student assessment and teacher observation tools and procedures. Dr. Alison Preece (University of Victoria) and Dr. Charles Temple further supported programming in Tanzania, conducting training for teacher trainers through various workshops. Dr. Ray Doiron (University of Prince Edward Island) and Dr. Marlene Asselin (University of British Columbia) supported *CODE-Ethiopia* throughout the duration of the project, supporting the training of librarians and the capacity of CE to monitor the community libraries. Dr. Alan Crawford (California State University Los Angeles) supported the project in Ghana with support from Dr. Pamela Winsor (University of Lethbridge). In addition to working

³⁴ *CODE* (2003). *CODE's Partnership Charter*.

with Ghanaian lead trainers, they supported the development of the Reading Ghana Guidebook and the Reading Ghana Assessment tools.

Reading CODE also included partnerships with national and local education bodies. All training was coordinated with approval from the Ministries of Education and/or District Education Offices in the respective countries. Officers typically participated in the training as well, and were supported by CODE and local implementing partners to become trainers. By including these representatives, CODE was able to establish support for the project and also ensure sustainability. CODE's local implementing partners were also regularly asked by the ministries of education to contribute to ongoing policy consultations regarding education and especially support for literacy in the country.

Innovation

Reading-CODE is innovative on multiple fronts. The comprehensive model brings together high quality training with books that support the methodologies from the training to support children to be better readers, writers, and **thinkers**.

Putting the focus on thinking is at the core of the program and is what sets reading CODE apart from other early literacy projects. Basic literacy is important but the capacity to understand and think about information is the driver of poverty reduction, peace, economic growth, gender equality, improved governance, environmental sustainability and social development as a whole.

Building on success

Opportunities for innovation are both a part of ongoing project and come as a result of ongoing projects. CODE and CODE Ethiopia turned the success of Reading CODE into several innovative opportunities during and after the project:

- CODE and CE successfully built on the *Reading Ethiopia* project with an additional grant in 2014 from Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) to pilot the use of ebooks in family literacy programs in three community libraries. CODE and CE together with IREX further built on Reading CODE with a new 16-month *Beyond Access Reading Ethiopia* project launched in April 2016 in 23 community libraries. The project includes the use of tablets and local language apps for children.
- CE participated in national reading and literacy promotion events. For example, CE helped organize major International Literacy Day activities in 2013 in Ethiopia.
- CODE and CE presented on the *Reading Ethiopia* project at international events such as the *International Federation of Library Associations* (IFLA) in 2014 in Lyon and at the *Comparative and International Education Society* (CIES) conference in Vancouver in 2016.

Through *Reading CODE*, classrooms become thinking spaces and libraries become hubs for resources.

Teachers were supported throughout the duration of the project in training and directly in their classrooms. Librarians were similarly provided with hands-on support. This ongoing mentoring and support is innovative to the communities where Reading CODE is active. Educators are typically trained as new teachers and are not provided with classroom in-service nor classroom support.

The books found in classrooms are generally textbooks and there are often not enough for all students. Through Reading CODE, teachers and librarians are provided with supplementary books, interesting engaging texts that can be used in support of reading and in support of the national curriculum. They are tools to make reading and learning fun and innovative.

Resource Utilization

Simply put, Reading CODE is a cost-effective program which yields big results. With \$5,881,600 CODE was able to reach 482,200 children in 245 schools and libraries, by training 138 trainers, 1,742 teachers, 793 librarians and providing 1,065,239 books.

While it cannot be calculated in such simple terms, for \$12.20 CODE improved the learning outcomes of a child – improving their ability to read, write and think and, most importantly, improving their knowledge and skills so that they can face daily challenges and take advantage of economic and lifelong learning opportunities.

CODE is able to keep costs to a minimum for several reasons. First, CODE worked through a volunteer system. International literacy experts volunteered their time to facilitate workshops and write guidebooks. Rather than the high daily costs of consultants, CODE worked with educators who offered their services as global citizens. Second, by working in partnership with local implementing partners, CODE reduced the high costs associated with maintaining personnel overseas (while also building local capacity).

There are additional measures that CODE took to ensure the efficient use of resources. For example, CODE encouraged cost effective print runs of books and accordingly looked to coordinate purchases with other NGOs to lower unit costs. CODE also took care to secure the

lowest possible airfare on all travel and staff stay in modest accommodation when visiting programs.

Informed Timely Action

To ensure CODE's responsiveness to information from the field, and developments in education, CODE and local implementing partners practised informed timely action through reporting, monitoring, and communication strategies. CODE used a results-based management framework for monitoring and reporting.

CODE and local implementing partners shared responsibility for monitoring country projects and analyzing project progress. Project officers collected ongoing information from the project schools and libraries and implemented the assessments (as designed collaboratively with CODE and international literacy experts) and reported quarterly to CODE. CODE, in turn, prepared semi-annual narrative reports to capture the progress towards results and to ensure communication of any changes to the project. CODE program managers also communicated regularly with local implementing partners and travel to the field multiple times per year to collect first-hand information and to discuss important issues. (For example, reviewing work plans and making necessary adjustments).

CODE and its local implementing partners developed communications plans, which take into account internal communications amongst stakeholders and external plans for communicating results to a wider audience. The most significant was the communication among project stakeholders on the vision of the project and the direction to get there. *Reading CODE* presents an articulation of a comprehensive approach to supporting literacy in schools and communities that can be communicated in a variety of ways. Standards for performance articulate high levels of achievement, which is imparted during the training, and therefore achievable during the project cycle.

One of the most significant communications tools for Reading CODE were the reports on student literacy outcomes. CODE, together with international literacy experts and local implementing partners, designed assessment instruments to capture relevant data and to make data analysis and reporting possible. Based on the results of the assessments, CODE, international literacy experts, and local implementing partners were able to see which areas required further support and which areas were successful. Similarly, teacher observations were used to inform the teachers themselves but also trainers as to which strategies teachers fully understood and were able to implement following the training, and which areas required further review and practice.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CODE together with local implementing partners has identified lessons learned from the past five years of *Reading CODE, to support CODE* and GAC's future planning.

The recommendations have been broken down by key areas:

I. SUPPORT TO EDUCATORS AND INSTRUCTION FOR COMPREHENSION AND HIGHER ORDER THINKING³⁵

Many of the techniques and strategies that were introduced to the librarians and teachers were completely new to the workshop participants. This means that there needs to be sufficient classroom support by officers and trainers following the training.

When faced with the challenges of reading academic texts with technical language, students can be supported with direct instruction via close reading strategies, to provide them with the linguistic and conceptual tools they need to navigate technical presentations and make sense of them. Incorporating close reading strategies for understanding academic language is important to successful literacy programming. Doing so will not only produce more engaged and independent thinkers, but also helps students transition from primary to secondary school and thrive amidst the challenges of secondary school. Attention to academic language with appropriate strategies, along with an emphasis on comprehension, critical thinking, discovery learning, and problem-solving, distinguishes *Reading-CODE's* approach from those of other literacy initiatives in the world, so many of which focus on low-level literacy skills.

II. ACCESS TO AND USE OF BOOKS

There can be a challenge when maintaining books and also simultaneously encouraging their use by teachers and students. Ongoing monitoring is needed to ensure that all libraries are maintaining sufficient hours of operation so that books are fully accessible to teachers and students (and community members when possible). It is also important to encourage librarians to fully accept the practice of loaning books. Students should be allowed to take books home at their leisure. In this way, a love of reading is also developed within families and the community.

With regard to books, providing materials in local and national languages is fundamental to building literacy skills. Comprehension becomes the center of literacy and critical thinking and meaningful reading is possible.

³⁵ Based on literacy expert feedback during an evaluation in Ghana.

III. CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Early in the project partners faced challenges with the certification process of educators. To improve certification, CODE recommends the following:

- Trainers and teachers need to be observed in practice implementing the strategies learned during the workshop to demonstrate their understanding;
- The certification process is more meaningful if Ministry of Education recognises the certification. Local Ministry of Education officials should be invited to play an integrated role in the monitoring and the certification process;
- Rubrics for assessing the capacity of teachers and their use of strategies needs to be as straightforward as possible. Rubrics should not however be over-simplified.

IV. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

CODE and local implementing partners developed and implemented targeted activities to promote gender equality. Gender equality was also integrated into teacher training and gender was considered in the publication of all books. Nevertheless, CODE could further strengthen the pedagogy of Reading CODE to ensure that primary schools inspire and prepare girls even more and the books selected could further challenge gender norms and traditional practices.

According to the Girls' Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), the lack of adequate sex education prevents girls (and boys) from safely accessing necessary information and leaves them with mixed messages. This makes them more vulnerable to negative peer influences. In a step towards addressing this issue, CODE and the Ghana Book Trust distributed *Red Letter Day*, a book which addresses puberty and menstruation. Adolescent girls in the Reading Ghana supported schools expressed great interest in reading the book. CODE further recommends the provision of appropriate age materials, addressing sexual and reproductive health especially in societies where menstruation is taboo and girls rarely learn about their bodies. Children's books are some of the most powerful tools to frame one's early understanding in these important areas and CODE can further capitalise on the opportunity to promote gender equality and address specific gender related issues.

Also in regards to gender, CODE and local implementing partners across Ghana, Mali and Tanzania note (through assessment) that girls typically outperformed boys in literacy in the early primary grades (1-3) but were then surpassed in terms of literacy and academic achievement around grade 4. (These findings are consistent with those in other studies).³⁶ This is worth noting

³⁶ UNESCO. (2016) Global Education Monitoring Report.

as it raises several important questions, namely: 1) why are girls out performing boys in the earliest grades and what can we do to support boys? 2) Why is girls' relative advantage declining and how can we prevent it? Research indicates that girls and boys can perform equally well in reading, mathematics or science under the right conditions and that there is no inherent difference in their capacities.³⁷ Therefore, as a starting point, literacy projects must support parents, teachers and policy-makers to entice boys to read more. Projects should also focus on the transitions from lower to upper primary and from primary to secondary school (where many girls drop out. Again, Projects need to incorporate families and communities as a way of building support around education for girls at all levels.

V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Throughout the program, CODE and local implementing partners prioritized reliable, accurate and verifiable data in order to properly document and support results. A challenge was differing interpretations of indicators in the different country programs. To address these issues, CODE recommends the following:

- Reviewing the specific needs for each partner and provided targeted support by a single monitoring and evaluation coordinator;
- Including field-based officers (i.e. Local program officers in Kumasi, Ghana), allowing for more frequent monitoring and support of teachers.
- Organizing more regular field trips from CODE staff (both program and finance);
- Develop activity report templates to structure information for GAC's reporting requirements;
- Providing additional monitoring and evaluation support from CODE's team of international literacy experts, especially in the gathering of final data to ensure that the information collected is of a high quality.
- Holding a workshop with partners regarding monitoring and evaluation protocols at the start of project to ensure a mutual understanding of indicators and expectations.

VI. SUPPORT TO PARTNERS

Ongoing and clear communication is important to build stronger linkages between organizations. To improve support to partners, CODE recommends the following:

³⁷ Ibid.

- A minimum of two trips per year by the CODE Program Manager to each of the partner programs to enable a minimum of two weeks of contact time with partner organizations over the course of each year.
- An initial (and when needed interim and final) visit from a member of CODE's finance team is recommended to ensure all financial systems are properly set up.
- Work planning should be a collaborative annual process and the work plan should be continuously reviewed throughout the year.
- It should be standard practice to hold at least one pre-planned phone meeting with the whole project team on a monthly basis.
- Support to partners should also include support for and involvement of government officers in training and monitoring. It builds trust and understanding, and develops ownership and sustainability.





Students reading a big book in the library at Mlali Primary School, Kongwa District, Tanzania, 2015

