



Promoting every
child's right to read

Photo credit: Jefferson Krue, September 2020.

THE CODE READER: Your Gifts in Action

Code.ngo | Winter 2021

A MESSAGE FROM SCOTT

This past year, 2020, was one for the books. In Canada and around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a global disruption to school and learning. While many of us have been working and studying from home, according to the United Nations, remote learning remains out of reach for at least 500 million students around the world. With your steadfast support, CODE has been able to adapt its programs to help address this dire need for continued learning, and we're pleased to share some updates in the following pages. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to promoting every child's right to read, write and build a better future through education.

Executive Director

CODE RECOGNIZED FOR IMPACT AND QUALITY PROGRAMMING

We are humbled to have received significant recognitions for our work this past year. CODE was awarded a five-star charity rating by Charity Intelligence, an organization that assesses Canadian charities on a variety of financial and transparency metrics. We were also listed as one of their "Top 10 International Impact Charities" of 2020. To learn more visit code.ngo/impactcharity

The *Better Education through Teacher Training and Empowerment for Results (BETTER)* program in Mozambique was also named as one of the Top 10 Finalists for the 6th edition of the "UNESCO-Hamdani bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Prize for Outstanding Practice and Performance in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Teachers." This was out of 190 entries received from around the world.



CODE'S IMPACT REPORT

CODE's Impact Report and Audited Financial Statements for 2019-2020 are now available online at code.ngo/accountability. We welcome you to take a closer look and to celebrate with us the wonderful things we have achieved together over the past year.

CODE'S IMPACT IN 2019-2020

Reached 142,640
children through literacy programs

Received support from 2,673
caring Canadians from all walks of life

Distributed 68,438
copies of books to school and
community libraries

Provided 3,913
teachers with professional
development opportunities

Engaged 63,974
people through website visits and on social media

Spent 79%
of all donations on the development and
delivery of programs

Reached 1,497
public schools in our countries of operations

CODE RESPONDS TO COVID-19 EDUCATION CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-flung impacts, including the global disruption to school and learning. At its peak, schools were closed in 185 countries with an estimated 1.7 billion children and youth unable to attend school.

Children, especially girls in developing countries, already struggling to access quality education have been particularly hard hit by the school closures, economic hardship, and increased vulnerability to abuse and violence.

Thanks to you, our supporters, for helping us during these challenging times. It is because of your generosity since the start of the pandemic, that we've been able to provide immediate and urgently-needed help to children, families, and teachers so they can keep learning together.

We are currently undertaking COVID-related programming in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, and have adapted our program in Ghana to support the safe return of students to school in January.

KEEPING STUDENTS LEARNING IN MOZAMBIQUE

By Heloisa Modesto, Program Manager – Mozambique and Gender Specialist

COVID-19 struck Mozambique as the country was still dealing with the devastating effects of two cyclones that hit in 2019, and the insurgency that has displaced more than 500,000 people in Cabo Delgado.

I was visiting with teachers and primary students in Tete, Mozambique in March as schools across the country began to shut down. Anticipating the worst, we immediately began developing plans with our local partner organization to support continued learning during this challenging time.

With schools closed, a mobile learning platform developed through CODE's Mozambique program last year was quickly repurposed and expanded by the Ministry of Education and Human Development to support distance learning activities for primary and secondary students, as well as for pre-service teachers.

The fact of the matter, however, is that most households in Mozambique don't have access to internet. So, we also found low-tech ways to pivot our programming to respond to the learning needs of vulnerable students.

So far, we have distributed over 35,000 learning kits comprised of activity sheets and basic stationary supplies (notebooks, pencils, erasers etc.), which at the best of times can be in short supply. Students are supported in their learning by "megaphone teachers" who meet groups of students (socially distanced) at designated spots around the community to provide literacy and math instruction that builds on content provided in their learning kits. Learning is further reinforced through educational programming broadcast on community radio stations. These programs are focused on early-grade literacy in Portuguese language, as well as activities to encourage life-skills development.

This informal education programming has been well received by students and parents alike, and we expect for it to continue into February, as schools are currently slated to reopen in March.

If this pandemic has taught us anything, however, it is that plans are bound to change. No matter how the situation evolves in our communities of operation, we remain deeply committed to providing high quality and responsive programming that helps children keep learning during this time of crisis.



Photo credit: Farm Radio International.

Program undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through



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PROGRAM FOR OVER-AGE GIRLS SEES CONTINUED SUCCESS IN LIBERIA

In Liberia, it is common to find teenage girls sitting in lower-grade primary school classrooms. This signals a deep hunger for education but also presents a fundamental barrier to girls receiving quality education, or any education at all.

Over-age enrolment remains a civil war legacy in many post-conflict countries. But there are other persistent economic and social challenges that lead to high prevalence of over-age girl students, including a disproportionate burden of care for younger siblings and household chores.

Over-age girls are at greater risk of dropping out because they get discouraged, contend with teenage pregnancy and early marriage, or are approached for transactional sex in return for grades.

Without an education, girls have fewer job opportunities, less control over household resources and they are more susceptible to domestic violence. Girls need to advance quickly if they are to have a fighting chance at completing primary school and successfully transitioning into secondary education. This is where CODE's *Girls' Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI)* comes in.

First piloted at five schools in 2017, the program helps over-age girl students accelerate their learning and gain valuable life-skills so that they can be advanced to an age-appropriate grade. Girls meet daily in small groups with a specially trained teacher to improve their reading, writing and math, as well as to discuss sensitive life-skills topics that will help empower them with the knowledge and confidence to make healthy choices.

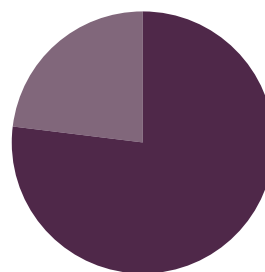
While *GALI* was disrupted by the COVID pandemic, we ensured that the girls were supported in their continued learning through the distribution of "at home learning kits" that included academic workbooks, supplementary readers, and sanitary products, as well as access to academic support by phone. With schools expected to be back in session this month (January 2020), we will be pleased to see the afterschool program up and running again in its usual format.



Photo credit: Jefferson Krua, September 2020.

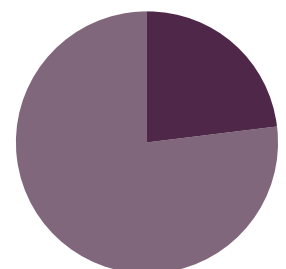
The *GALI* program model has been proven to address an urgent need and to deliver measurable impact on the learning outcomes of over-age girls. It has shown that remedial lessons and life-skills training need not be expensive or difficult in order to deliver sustained learning outcomes.

GRADE PROMOTION IN ONE YEAR



77%
Promoted 2
grade levels

22%
Promoted 1
grade level



Results based on 375 participants.

CLASS OF 2023 CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS

This past fall, CODE launched its first ever scholarship campaign. The ambitious goal was to raise \$182,000 – enough to cover three-year scholarships for 100 young women in Sierra Leone determined to become teachers. Our incredible supporters went above and beyond our expectations and the goal was met in record time! We look forward to keeping you apprised of their progress with biannual updates to be posted at code.ngo/scholarships

The scholarship initiative addresses an urgent, and oftentimes overlooked, need to increase the number of young women pursuing careers in education. In Sierra Leone, less than half of primary school teachers have any formal teaching qualification and only 29% are women.

In a country that just last year declared a state of emergency over rape and sexual assault, the presence of women teachers in schools is tremendously important in creating safe environments, promoting gender equality, and providing mentorship to girl students. The lack of qualified women teachers negatively impacts learning outcomes for all children – but especially for girls.

In another first for CODE, we launched a series of podcasts featuring Dr. Johanna Kuyvenhoven – reading specialist and CODE's Sierra Leone country lead based in Freetown. To listen visit code.ngo/podcasts

Our scholarship recipients have started their journey and every gift received has helped and contributed in a meaningful way – thank you!

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

We wish to extend our deep gratitude to Lynne Dean for her exceptional leadership as Chair of CODE's Board of Directors (2019-2020) and for her continued service to CODE. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks also to Carolyn Berardino for her five years of service on our Board.

We extend a warm welcome to Judy Hauserman who once again joined the CODE Board of Directors in June 2020, as well as Aliou Sow, who joined in November 2020. We also welcome Wade Burton and Lorena Gepreags who joined the CODE Foundation's Board of Directors in November 2020.

BOOKS, BOOKS AND MORE BOOKS

Stacking library and school shelves with colourful and engaging children's books – that are appropriate for different reading levels, written in languages that children understand, and that reflect local realities and cultures – is key to all of CODE's literacy and education programs. When children can see themselves in the books they read, it can make all the difference.

And that's why even with the challenges, disruptions, and school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we're proud to announce that in 2020:

- Three new anthologies, containing over 70 stories and poems by local authors, were published and distributed as part of the World Bank-funded *REACH* program in Sierra Leone.
- A new anthology and activity book was created as part of our COVID-19 pandemic response in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Titled *Reading on the Waves*, the book is filled with stories and learning activities designed to support family literacy and accompany our innovative radio programming. A total of 70,000 families will receive a copy of this anthology as part of larger "family literacy kit."
- Eight new children's books developed with the support of local authors and illustrators are quickly approaching their publication date. They will be distributed in Sierra Leone, as part of CODE's *Transforming Girls Education Program (TGE)*.

Thank you for helping us reach even more children and their families with great books during this challenging year. We look forward to reaching even more next year!



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