



Promoting every
child's right to read



THE CODE READER: Your Gifts in Action

Code.ngo
Winter 2022

A MESSAGE FROM SCOTT

It has been said that investment in girls' education may well have the highest return on investment available in the developing world – I'm inclined to agree.

Beyond the immediate benefits, we know that investments in girls' education creates a virtuous circle over time: the children of literate mothers are more than twice as likely to go to school themselves. By supporting this generation of girls, we are also supporting the next through compounding benefits in education, health and economic prosperity.

Great strides have been taken globally in advancing girls' education – and your support of

CODE's work has been part of building this much needed momentum.

Earlier this year at the G7 in Cornwall, world leaders defined two new global goals for girls' education, one of which is: "20 million more girls reading by age 10 or by the end of primary school by 2026."

At CODE we are solidly behind supporting this ambition, and we are grateful as always that we can count on your encouragement and heartfelt generosity.

I wish you all a safe and Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Walter".

Executive Director

ANNOUNCING OUR NEW GIRL-FOCUSED PROGRAM IN MALAWI

The *Innovations in Health, Rights and Development (iHEARD)* program in Malawi was recently approved and will be jointly funded by the Government of Canada.

The 4-year program will be implemented in partnership with local and international partners, including Farm Radio International, MSI Reproductive Choices and Forum of African Women Educationalists Malawi. It will be implemented in close consultation with the Malawi Ministry of Health to ensure harmonization with local priorities.

This is a unique collaboration that allows CODE to bring its expertise in book production and

teacher development to a national-level effort to empower young women with knowledge of their sexual and reproductive health rights, and access to health services.

The potential of young women to help build a better world cannot be ignored – but neither can the harsh realities facing many of them. These include the threats created by gender discrimination, sexual violence, early marriage, and lack of access to information and health services that allow young women to make healthy decisions for themselves. Learn more at: code.ngo/iheard

MARY'S STORY: SHIFTING THE NORM

"If you don't go to school, you will not eat...." threatens Mary's mother in a stern voice when Mary drags her heels in the morning.

This kind of parental "encouragement" for girls to attend school is often still the exception rather than the rule. As in much of the Global South, in Liberia pervasive cultural norms diminish the perceived value of educating girls. Amongst her siblings, Mary is the only one presently attending school.

While primary education in public schools is free in Liberia, the costs of uniforms, school supplies and transportation can be prohibitive and force families to make difficult choices.

Perhaps traditional cultural norms would have dictated that one of Mary's brothers be given the opportunity but seeing Mary's rapid promotion from grade 2 (where she sat until age 14) to grade 4 over the course of one academic year has Mary's mother convinced that her education is worth supporting.

Mary is a participant in CODE's *Girls' Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI)*. The program requires significant awareness-raising amongst parents and community members culminating in formal permission being granted for their daughters to participate in the after-school academic and life-skills tutoring program.

Without parental support and permission, attendance in the after-school program would be erratic or start off strong and then taper off as the year goes on. Girls are in high demand after school to help with chores and income generation, and allowing them to stay at school longer is no small commitment for these families.

An interesting and notable driver of parental interest in GALI has been the introduction of mobile learning labs into the program at select schools, which gives the girls access to a carefully curated assortment of high-quality books, videos, and games through a solar-powered RACHEL-Plus wireless server and tablets. The digital divide is significant in Liberia, and yet there is recognition amongst many parents that familiarity with technology provides a significant advantage to their girls.

For Mary's part, she required no convincing to take part in GALI. She describes herself as "happy" for having been selected and says that the program has helped her "feel good about herself."

The friendships she has struck with the other four girls in her GALI pod are the sort that are bound to last a lifetime. The girls open-up during their life-skills lessons about difficult subjects like puberty and sexual health, and turn to each other for academic support.

It's this camaraderie and the safe space that GALI creates that help the girls not only thrive in their studies but also gain a sense of empowerment that helps them challenge norms and assert their rights now and well into the future.



Mary (L) with her friend and fellow GALI participant, Blessing.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS PERSEVERE DESPITE COVID

A year and a half ago, CODE supporters rallied in support of the *Class of 2023* campaign to help us launch CODE's inaugural scholarship program.

As a result, 100 ambitious young women in Sierra Leone set off on a three-year journey toward becoming qualified primary school teachers and agents of change in their communities.

Now on the verge of beginning their third and final year of teachers' college, it's clear that nothing will get in the way of their success - not even a pandemic!

We are delighted to share that 99 of the 100 scholarship participants passed their first year of teachers' college earlier in 2021 and have since completed their second year of study. In December 2021 they wrote their second-year exams and the results received to date look very promising.

The Class of 2023 scholarships support an urgent, and oftentimes overlooked, need to increase the number of young women pursuing careers in education. In Sierra Leone 39% of teachers have no teaching qualifications and only 29% of primary school teachers are women.

In a country that in recent years declared a state of emergency over sexual assault, the presence of women teachers in schools is tremendously important and perhaps the single most effective way to create safe environments, promote gender equality and provide mentorship to girl students. Thank you for making this project possible!

**CLASS OF
2023**

A Scholarship
Campaign to
Support Women
in Teaching



In partnership with

Canada

"The scholarship has impacted my life greatly. I never thought that I would get the opportunity to further my education after the death of my mother. I rushed into marriage and I am now a widow with three kids to care for. The scholarship has not only impacted my life positively but has also provided my children with a stable future." - Zainab

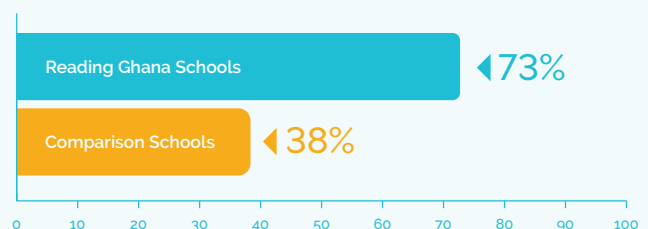


Photo credit: Twamefoto Studios, November 2021

POSITIVE RESULTS IN GHANA

In 2021, CODE consolidated the results of reading assessments of students who had participated in the *Reading Ghana* program between 2016 and 2021. We found that 73% of *Reading Ghana* students demonstrated improvement in all three reading sub-tests (word recognition, oral reading accuracy and reading comprehension) compared to 38% of students in comparison schools. We are grateful to the many donors who have supported CODE's efforts in Ghana over the past six years.

OVERALL LITERACY SCORE IMPROVEMENT



SPARKING THE IMAGINATION: GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT THROUGH LITERATURE

"It is easy to pretend that nobody can change anything, that we are in a world in which society is huge and the individual is less than nothing: an atom in a wall, a grain of rice in a rice field. But the truth is, individuals change their world over and over, individuals make the future, and they do it by imagining that things can be different." – Neil Gaiman, Author

The stories we tell are powerful and they matter. A good story can spark the imagination of a young reader and illuminate a path toward a more gender-equal future. A good story that is entertaining – humorous, dramatic, or fantastical – can, at the same time, challenge norms, confront harmful stereotypes, and inspire social change.

In many countries where CODE works, the principles of gender equality are starting to take hold. Supported by UN resolutions, international funding, and global partnerships we can see the efforts being made to improve education, promote gender-responsive pedagogy, along with other policy changes that advance the "empowerment of girls".

Unfortunately, most books that are available in these countries still contain content that reinforces gender inequality. For example, boys

are the active characters driving the story forward, girls are usually serving males, and the vocabulary still favors men.

When CODE and our partners set about to create content for new children's books, we take a careful look through a gender lens. Having gender equality baked into a story does not mean it needs to be a dull, well-meaning lecture. Rather, a good story is a place where readers can find themselves in humor, adventure, and fantasy. It can be a place to daydream and to imagine... what equal partnerships look like; what might happen if a social norm was challenged; and a future where both boys and girls are empowered equally.

Teachers and parents can also be inspired by a good story to rethink their own bias'. Drawing on the actions of fictional characters they may shift their expectations and encourage girls and boys to act differently in the home or classroom. The potential for literature to spark conversations and inspire social change is far reaching. We are so grateful to you for helping make this work possible.

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

We wish to extend our deepest gratitude to Lynne Dean, Dr. Wendy Saul, Robert Bracey, William Forward and Jeremy Miller for their years of service on CODE's Board of Directors. We extend a warm welcome to Cathy Carlin, Valerie Hussey, Dr. Asheer Sharman and Dr. Rob Tierney who joined the CODE Board of Directors in June 2021. We also welcome Priya Radha, who joined the CODE Foundation's Board of Directors in June 2021.



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [CODE.NGO](https://code.ngo)

Registered Charity

#11883 4878 RR0001



@codecan.org



@codengo



@code.ngo



@codengo



@codengo