TERMS OF REFERENCE
Research Study on the Impact of Digital Technology on the Learning Outcomes of Over-age Primary School Girls in Liberia
Girls Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI)

1. Project to be researched

Project name	Girls Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI) of the Reading Liberia project
Project location	Liberia
Project budget	CDN $521,162.00
Project dates	July 1 2020 – June 30 2022
Ultimate outcome	Girls achieve accelerated advancement in grade level and demonstrate improved knowledge of Life Skills and SRHR
Work requested	Research study on the impact of digital technology on the learning outcomes of over-age primary school girls in Liberia
Timeline	9 May 2022 to 18 July 2022
Report deadline	18 July 2022
Budget	US $10,000

2. Background

CODE

CODE is a Canadian International Non-governmental Organization uniquely focused on advancing literacy and education in developing contexts. CODE has more than 60 years of experience working with partners and implementing programming designed to support literacy. CODE works with local NGO partners, multilateral organizations including the World Bank and UNICEF, government partners including Global Affairs Canada as well as Ministries of Education in the countries where programs are implemented, and with individual researchers and academic institutions including but not limited to: McGill University (Montreal, Canada), Columbia University (New York, USA), Kenyatta University (Nairobi, Kenya), and the University of Texas (Austin, USA).

Girls' Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI)

In Liberia, CODE has implemented comprehensive literacy programming in partnership with the WE-CARE Foundation (WE-CARE) since 2009. In July 2020, CODE and WE-CARE launched Reading Liberia 20/22 program, a two-year program with the ultimate objective of improving learning outcomes of 5,000 girls and boys in 40 primary schools in Bomi, Margibi, and Montserrado counties. As part of the Reading Liberia 20/22 program, GALI is implemented by CODE in partnership with its Liberian partner, the WE-CARE Foundation. It targets 375 overaged girls in grades 1 through 4 across 25 schools in Bomi,

Margibi, and Montserrado counties in Liberia. All 375 participants will receive daily after-school tutoring and life skills training over two academic years starting in February 2021 to June 2022. 165 of those participants have access to Mobile Learning Labs (MLL).

Each MLL is comprised of five tablets, a rechargeable server called a RACHEL-Plus, and a solar charging system. The server, small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, can hold up to 500 GB of open source, high quality, off-line grade-appropriate academic materials, and age- appropriate life skills content. Students access this digital material through a combination of directed and self-directed learning.

Trained teachers deliver GALI classes at a ratio of 1 teacher to 5 students. As much as possible, female teachers have been selected to serve as GALI instructors and in fact there is at least one female teacher in all the 25 participating schools. However, due to the low prevalence of female teachers in the primary education sector in Liberia some male teachers have been selected to tutor. In those cases, it is only the female teacher who delivers the life skills class.

First phase of research study

Research has already been conducted for this study comprised of literacy assessments comparing cohorts with access to MLLs and those without, Key Informant Interviews with a sample of the GALI students, and FGDs with some of the GALI students. However, the original researchers are no longer involved with the study. The successful researchers will be able to draw on existing findings but will engage in collecting data for the second phase of the research study.

3. Purpose of the research study

The purpose of the study is to better understand the impact of the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT), specifically mobile learning labs (MLLs), on academic performance and life skills of participants in the Girls' Accelerated Learning Initiative (GALI).

4. Objectives of the research study

The overall objective of the research study is to capture lessons learned and build on GALI's experiences. Doing so should help CODE understand whether to continue to invest in digital technologies in support of literacy, improved Life Skills, and awareness of SRHR.

Specifically, the research study will:

- Provide an independent assessment of the initiative, including strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify discrepancies, if any, between GALI's initial assumptions and actual occurrences.
- Establish progress on the initiative's goals.
- Indicate adjustments and changes relevant to potential future projects.
- Capture lessons learned and provide recommendations as to whether to continue to invest in digital technologies in support of literacy, improved Life Skills, and awareness of SRHR, and if yes how to enhance digital technology programming.

5. **Methodology and Research Questions**

This study will use a mixed method data collection process. Quantitative methods will be used to collect data on literacy levels, and rates of grade promotion, retention, and drop out. This data will be collected by WE-CARE and shared with the study researchers. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FDGs) will be used to collect qualitative data on knowledge of Life Skills; attitudes and perceptions towards gender parity; and levels of self-confidence, self-control, aspiration, and support from family/caregivers.

The key research questions for the study are:

1. How do gains in literacy assessment scores compare between students with MLLs and those without?
2. Are rates of grade-level promotion (mid-year and end-of-academic year), retention, and drop out of students with MLLs comparable to those without?
3. Are levels of self-confidence, self-control, and aspiration among students with MLLs comparable to those without?
4. How does knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) compare between students with MLLs and those without?
5. Are there any differences in attitudes and perceptions towards gender parity between students with access to MLLs and those without?
6. What is the difference in the level of support from parents/caregivers whose girls' have access to MLLs and those without?

The study researchers will be provided with data already collected by WE-Care for research question 1 and 2, though they will be asked to analyze that data and consider it along with their own data pertaining to questions 3 to 6 and the overall research study.

6. **Key activities and deliverables**

Key Activities/Deliverables	Timeline
Start date of contract	9 May 2022
Inception phase • Undertake a thorough desk review, including project documentation, digital technologies, and previous literacy assessment results • Submit an inception report, work plan and sample Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussion tools • Discuss and finalize details with CODE	**Draft inception report by 23 May 2022** CODE will provide feedback on the inception report by 27 May 2022 **Inception Report finalized by 3 June 2022**
In-country data collection initiated	6 June 2022
In-country research will include: • Conduct research to assess the impact of digital technologies on the learning outcomes of over-age girls in Liberia via Key Informant Interviews	**In-country data collection will be completed by 20 June 2022**

and Focus Group Discussions with a sample of children and teachers	
Data Analysis will involve: • Compiling and analyzing existing data from phase 1 of the study • Analyzing the literacy assessment and grade-level promotion (mid-year and end-of-academic year), retention, and drop out data provided by WE-Care • Analyzing the KII and FGD findings conducted by the researcher	
Draft report • Present initial findings to CODE and We Care Foundation (*remotely)	The research team will analyze data in the last two weeks of June and present preliminary findings by 1 July 2022 **Draft of research report is due 4 July 2022**
Final report • Submit a final report to CODE	CODE will provide feedback on the draft report by 11 July 2022. **Final Report due by 18 July 2022**

a) *Inception Report*

The inception phase will begin with a thorough desk review of existing GALI documents including project proposal, digital technologies, and teacher training materials and student guides. Based on this analysis, the **inception report** will include the proposed:

- Updated research questions.
- Roles and responsibilities of team members executing the research study.
- Revised data collection tools (for Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews and staff interviews)
- Updated budget
- Detailed table of contents for the final research report

In-country data collection can only begin after CODE approves the inception report.

b) *Final Report*

The **final report** will answer the research questions through a cross-method analysis of data from the desk research, Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews, literacy assessment results, and grade-level promotion (mid-year and end-of-academic year), retention, and drop out. The final report will provide insight into the study's findings, including reasons for successes and failures, program innovations, lessons learned, and barriers to success. The final report must be copy edited and laid out in a final format.

c) Annexes to the Final Report

The final report shall also include annexes, which will provide context to the report's findings and recommendations. Suggested annexes include:

- Terms of Reference for the research study
- Research Study Framework
- Research study inception report
- Data collection tools, including questionnaires and interview guides
- List of individuals and stakeholder groups consulted
- List of supporting documentation reviewed

7. Profile of the Research Team

The consultancy can include different team members. Key competencies of the team include:

- Strong experience designing and leading research projects, particularly those focusing on literacy and digital technologies or related thematic areas.
- Ability to facilitate and relate to stakeholders at multiple levels and in diverse contexts.
- Proven ability to engage in quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
- Strong written and verbal communication and presentation skills in English.
- Sensitivity to cultural and historical contexts in the data collection and analysis process.
- Sensitivity to working with adolescent girls and with KIIs and FGDs preferably conducted by a female researcher.
- Experience working in Liberia.

8. Submission and Evaluation of Proposals

Consultants meeting the above criteria are invited to submit a proposal by email to: dsimpson@code.ngo with the subject line: "GALI Research Study". Proposals should be received no later than **25 April 2022, 5:00pm EST**. The body of the proposal should be no longer than 5 pages and should include the following:
- A cover letter outlining relevant experience in reviewing similar projects and models, including experience reviewing or working on literacy and digital technology projects, as well as experience in the relevant geographies.
- An outline of the final review approach, highlighting: any additional proposed research questions, methodological approach, data analysis plan, potential technical and operational challenges, and strategies to ensure timely, high-quality deliverables.
- A list of key activities, linked to the proposed activities, within a scheduled timeframe.
- A staffing and management plan, including details of team composition and specific qualifications of key research staff.
- A statement indicating the consultant availability for the duration of the contract.

The proposal should also include **Annexes**, which are not included in the 5-page limit, such as:

- An estimated budget, including personnel, not exceeding a maximum of US$ 10,000. Please note that all expenses related to in-country data collection are included in this amount.

- List of three (3) references who can attest to the researcher's or research team's experience and expertise as it relates to this project (including daytime phone numbers and email contacts).
- CVs of the research team, outlining previous research experience and accomplishments as it relates to demonstrating the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill the Terms of Reference.
- Preferred: Two (2) examples of research reports recently completed by the Lead Consultant(s). If possible, at least one should be relevant, or similar to, the subject of this study.

CODE will review all proposals closely against this outline. It will determine a shortlist of potential candidates and finalize a contract by 9 May 2022. The consultancy is expected to start on 9 May 2022.