



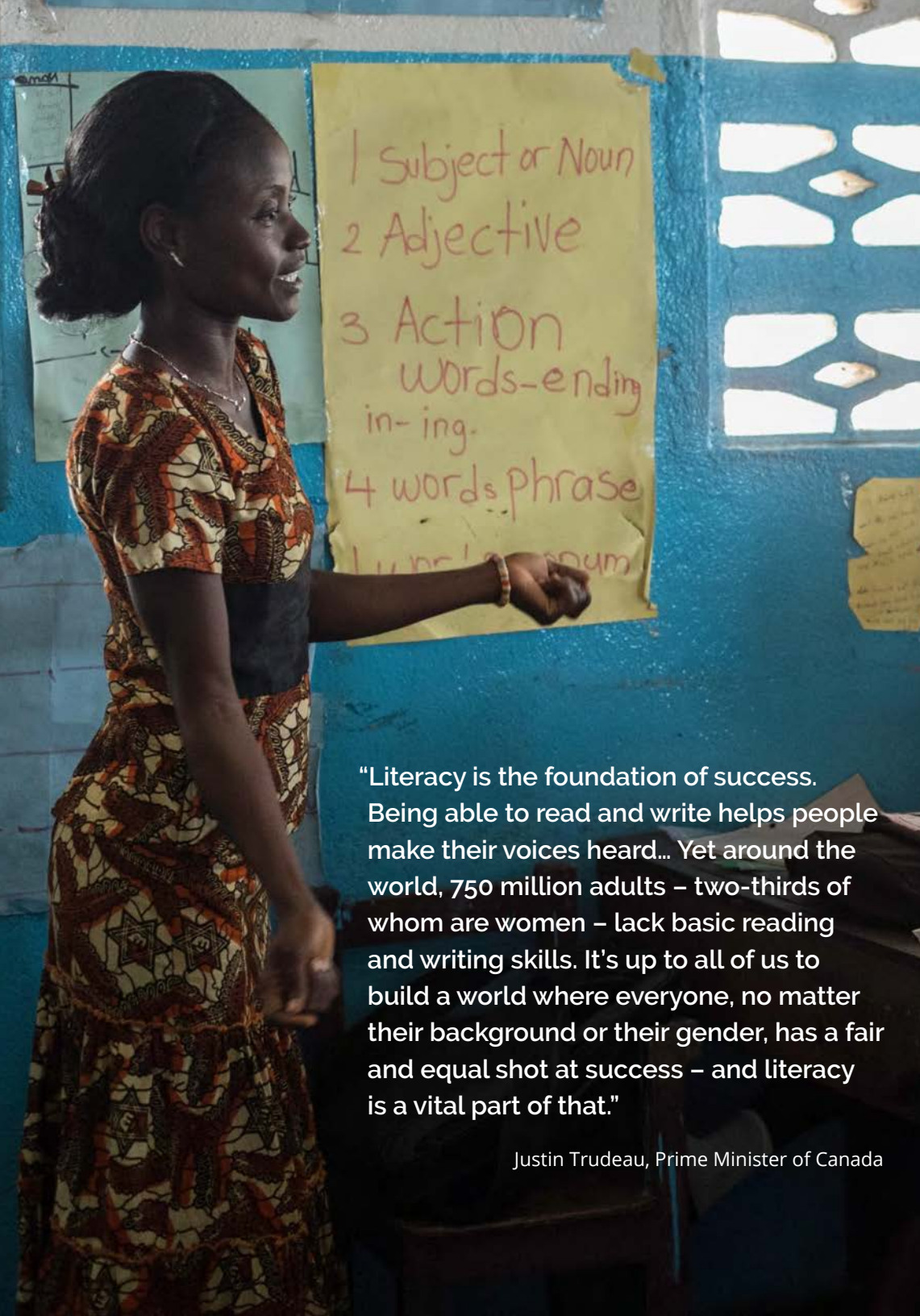
STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2025

# TEACHING MATTERS

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Promoting every  
child's right to read



"Literacy is the foundation of success. Being able to read and write helps people make their voices heard... Yet around the world, 750 million adults – two-thirds of whom are women – lack basic reading and writing skills. It's up to all of us to build a world where everyone, no matter their background or their gender, has a fair and equal shot at success – and literacy is a vital part of that."

Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada

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Registered Charitable No. 11883 4878 RR0001



Dear Friends,

When a child can read and write they can learn to be and do anything – that is the simple, yet powerful idea behind CODE's mission. Helping children realize their potential through literacy has been the driving purpose of our work since our founding in 1959 and, to this day, we remain resolutely focused on this singular objective.

Our strategic plan – “Teaching Matters: Development through Education” – serves as an inspirational and important guide toward helping achieve real and lasting change in children's lives. The plan, originally adopted by our Board of Directors for a three-year period (2019-2022) was extended to 2025. This decision reflects our belief that CODE's Theory of Change (page 13) and strategic priorities (page 7) remain as relevant today as they were in 2019, arguably more so in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

What we achieved together over the initial term of our strategic plan (2019-2022) is commendable, given the circumstances. Your confidence in CODE enabled us to respond and adapt to the pandemic and ensured continued learning for tens of thousands of students in our communities of operation. During this three-year window, despite the uncertainty, our programs helped over 1,487,345 students become more confident and capable readers through access to 984,605 books and 21,586 trained teachers.

The decision to extend the strategic plan by a further three years was not taken lightly. In reflecting on how our contextual reality has changed over the past three years, our Board of Directors and staff recognize the tremendous need for accelerated learning to compensate for prolonged school closures. We see the growing tide of global support for foundational literacy, the key measure of *Learning Poverty* as defined by the World Bank. We note the importance of our partnership model of program delivery as our collective focus on localization deepens. And we appreciate the need to engage progressively with digital and distance learning where relevant to our theory of change.

As a result of these deliberations, we have made modest changes to our strategic plan in preparation for its extended use. Notably, we have increased our reach and impact targets. You will find our renewed ambitions articulated on page 7.

I hope you will join us as we work toward a world where every young person can pursue their education and realize their potential as literate, empowered and self-reliant citizens.

Sincerely,



Scott Walter  
Executive Director, CODE



**“Education is one of the  
fundamental battles  
to wage in our society.  
It's a moral duty to the  
coming generations.”**

António Guterres  
UN Secretary General



## A GLOBAL VISION

**Improving the quality of teaching is the single most important factor in raising educational outcomes.**

Education is the foundation for economic prosperity, peace and security. It is the path to a better world.

However, sub-Saharan Africa alone needs 17 million qualified teachers to fulfill the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal of having universal primary and secondary education available for every boy and girl by 2030.

**CODE aims to help close that gap and it's all about teacher effectiveness.**

CODE wants to ensure that every child, no matter where they live, can learn from well-trained teachers who have the confidence and know-how – and the access to quality, relevant reading and learning materials they need – to deliver the learning outcomes all children deserve.

**This strategic plan outlines the steps CODE will take over a six-year period (2019-2025) as we work toward these longer-term global goals.**

UNITED NATIONS  
**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”**

SDG Goal 4



## A CHANGING WORLD

To achieve the goal of universal primary and secondary education for all girls and boys by 2030, UNESCO estimates that globally, 69 million primary and secondary school teachers will need to be recruited and trained. The problem is particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, which alone needs 17 million new teachers.

The global community has made great strides over the last decade towards improving educational opportunities for young people. Children in developing countries have better access to primary education and while they continue to face significant barriers to education, more girls are enrolled in school than ever before.

At the same time, the distressingly poor quality of education threatens to seriously diminish any real development benefits. According to the World Bank, 30% of primary school teachers in sub-Saharan Africa have no teacher training.

This in turn has a direct impact on what is known as the learning poverty rate – the proportion of children who cannot read a simple text with comprehension by age 10. UNESCO Institute of Statistics reports that even before the COVID pandemic hit, the learning poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa was 86 percent and clearly the disruption of the pandemic including prolonged school closures, has caused further set-backs to already severely under-resourced education systems in the global south.

Similarly, the vast majority of children are not acquiring the 21<sup>st</sup> century critical-thinking skills they need to identify problems, seek out and evaluate relevant information and resources, and then develop and carry out plans to solve these problems. These skills are crucial for young people to find jobs, improve their financial prospects and contribute to their own well-being, as well as that of their families and communities.

**We must now redouble our efforts. CODE is uniquely positioned and we are committed to addressing one of the most significant challenges standing in our way of children realizing their right to a quality education: teacher effectiveness – the single most important predictor of student learning.**





## OUR CODE

For more than 60 years, CODE and our local partners have worked toward a vision of a literate world. The groundwork was laid in 1959, when a small group of educators, librarians and publishing professionals launched the “Books for the developing world” project, packaging unused books in tea chests for shipping overseas. CODE has since grown into Canada’s leading international development organization uniquely focused on children’s literacy and quality education.

### Our vision

CODE envisions a world where every young person can pursue their education and realize their full potential as a literate, empowered, self-reliant citizen.

### Our mission

CODE’s mission is to enable student learning by increasing their access to qualified educators and locally-relevant, high quality learning materials.

### Our core values

CODE’s work is guided by five core values: human rights, accountability, transparency, fairness, and sustainability.

# READING THE WORLD OVER

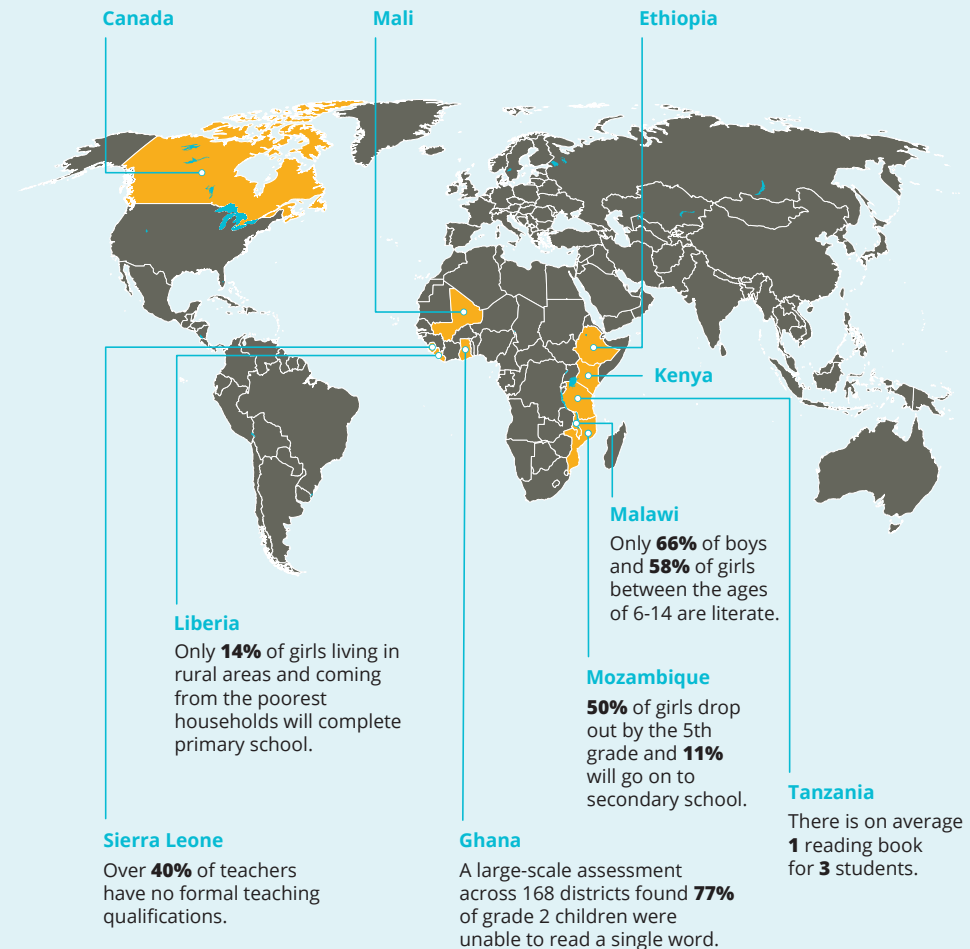
Together with our local partners, we have helped more than 11 million children become more confident and capable readers, and gain access to a better quality of education.

## Our work

CODE improves learning outcomes and educational opportunities for all girls and boys by working with like-minded organizations to:

- Advance the instructional skills of teachers
- Enhance the quality, local relevance and accessibility of teaching and learning materials
- Grow the system-wide capacity within the education sector
- Pursue program monitoring and assessment to capture results and inform practice
- Invest in local academic research to support local policy and program solutions

CODE works primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, expanding our programming both regionally and within the countries we work. CODE has additionally worked in Canada supporting indigenous literature and learning.



“Children whom societies fail the most are the ones who are most in need of a good education to succeed in life.”

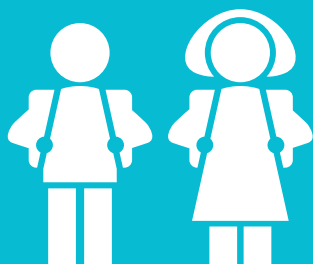
Past World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim

## RECENT SUCCESSES

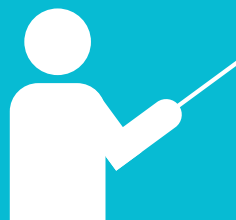
These are but a few examples of how we are delivering meaningful impact.

In 2021-22 alone, **300,615 students** at **1,615 schools** benefited from our literacy programs. This included students in our *Reading Ghana* program. When we consolidated results of reading assessments administered between 2016 and 2021, we found that **73% of students** in *Reading Ghana* program schools had demonstrated improvement in all three reading sub-tests compared to **38% of students** in comparison schools.

300,615  
students



3,370  
teachers



In 2022, CODE, in partnership with the Association of Language and Literacy Educators of Sierra Leone and the Ministry of Education, provided technical and implementation support to UNICEF for a program funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to improve early-grade literacy and numeracy in Sierra Leone. The year-long program provided professional development to **3,370 pre-service and in-service teachers** to build competencies in early-grade primary reading instruction.

In December 2020, CODE developed eight new anthologies comprising 43 stories, poems and non-fiction pieces as well as 200 illustrations focused on girls' empowerment themes. Developed in partnership with local authors and illustrators in Sierra Leone, the books were developed as part of CODE's *Transforming Girls' Education Program*. **211,500 copies were distributed to 260 schools**, benefiting an estimated **39,000 students**.



211,550  
books

## A TEACHER SUCCESS STORY

Evidence shows that improved teaching has the greatest potential to improve learning outcomes – and what bright optimistic futures we would be creating if every child could begin their school day with teachers such as Ms. Emily Kadiatu Gogra of Sierra Leone. Mentor, role model and

inspiration to so many, Emily Gogra has long believed in the power of teaching to enable children to strive for and accomplish any goals they set for themselves. Crediting a female teacher when she was a girl as inspiring her to take up the profession, Emily has worked tirelessly to

increase teachers' access to professional development, be it in the orphanage she runs in the Port Loko District, as a member of CODE's national partner, the Association of Language Arts and Literacy Educators, or in her current role, that of Sierra Leone's Deputy Minister of Education.



# OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR IMPACT 2019–2025

## Priority 1

### DELIVER SUSTAINED IMPACT THROUGH HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Through partnerships that provides local voice and expertise to program design and delivery, CODE strives to maximize its impact on the learning outcomes of children and youth reached through our programs. We view this as the single most important measure of our success, and it drives our purpose as an organization. To impact the most learners, we work directly with teachers, building their skills and providing the books and learning resources they require to use those skills effectively. CODE additionally places a high priority on enhancing the capacity of partners to benefit from appropriate technology to improve their digital access and delivery of distance learning.

## Priority 2

### DRIVE SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH DIVERSIFIED FUNDING

Diversifying the sources of our income is critical to helping CODE make strategic choices and ensure our programs are as innovative and responsive as possible. Engaging strategically with a broad spectrum of funding partners – ranging from multilateral institutions to a growing community of individual supporters across Canada – will allow us to collectively maximize our contributions toward a world where every child is literate. We are committed to streamlined and efficient operations to save unnecessary costs and enhance effectiveness.

## Priority 3

### BE A HIGH-PERFORMING LEARNING ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

CODE is committed to prioritizing learning, growth, and innovation through every facet of our work and culture. We achieve this by investing in knowledge creation and transfer; developing a high-performing team; and striving for continuous improvement. As a singularly focused organization, we are committed to advancing and sharing evidence-based best practice for the realization of children's literacy.



**1.6 million**  
students reached

Students in CODE programs are significantly outperforming control schools

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

Our impact targets were updated in 2023 to reflect the extension of our strategic plan until 2025.



**1.6 million**  
copies of culturally-relevant hardcopy books are distributed



**25,000**  
individual educators trained

**75% of teachers**  
who participated in CODE professional development training are CODE certified



A photograph of four young children, three boys and one girl, sitting on a patterned rug in front of a wooden bookshelf. They are all looking down at a book or paper on the floor. The child in the center is smiling broadly at the camera. The bookshelf behind them is filled with various children's books. The overall scene is warm and educational.

## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

### Development Through Education

VIEW: Theory of Change diagram [page 13](#)

CODE effects change by working in partnership with locally-based organizations who ensure the sustainability of programs and who provide a local voice and local expertise. We facilitate community participation, including stakeholders such as Ministries of Education, Parent Teacher Associations and Girls' Clubs. **CODE finds locally appropriate solutions and then works with governments and institutional funders to scale-up change to a national level.**

**When we take the actions described on the next four pages, we work toward achieving our ultimate goal of a world where every young person can pursue their education and realize their full potential as literate, empowered, self-reliant citizens.**



## We believe the greatest change happens when:

### We address the severe shortage of qualified educators

There are many ways to improve educational quality, but education systems are only as good as the teachers who provide the hands-on instruction. Improved teaching has the greatest potential to improve education quality and learning outcomes, which is why the Sustainable Development Goals call for a major increase in the supply of qualified teachers and greater support for teacher training in developing countries. CODE helps deliver on this by supporting the capacity of countries' teacher development institutions to increase the proportion of educators coming into the workforce who meet minimum, formal performance standards and for those already in the workforce, we support ongoing skill acquisition as part of career development.

CODE connects classrooms, schools and education institutions together in communities of practice that motivate teachers as professionals through autonomy, mastery and purpose. CODE develops modular professional development courses that capture local success, focus on the practice of teaching and support replication and scalability. Career-oriented in-service professional development is connected to national standards and related teacher certification.



**“Access [to education] is not the only crisis – poor quality education is holding back learning even for those who make it to school.”**

UNESCO Director-General  
Irina Bokova (2009-2017)



**"The evidence shows that when girls develop literacy skills they improve not only their own economic prospects, health, and well-being, but also those of their families, communities and countries."**

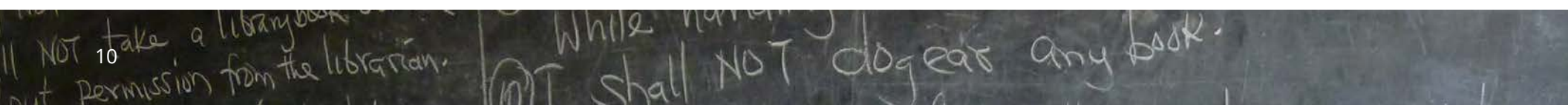
Scott Walter, Executive Director, CODE

## **We believe the greatest change happens when:**

 **We put the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our approach**

CODE emphasizes the positive difference that female educators make to girls' education, and the importance of recruiting and promoting female teachers. We use an evidenced-based approach to inform girls' education and strive to remove barriers that contribute to the marginalization of girls. We make it our priority to empower girls to learn and succeed as we know the dramatic benefits that result when they complete basic education and develop literacy skills.

The impact is felt throughout the community: girls marry later and have fewer children; infant mortality rates and maternal deaths decrease; rates of HIV/ AIDS infection are lowered; family health improves; and the chance that the next generation will be educated – both boys and girls – increases significantly.







“The importance of empowerment for girls in Africa can never be over-emphasized.”

Watchen Johnson Babalola  
(Liberian Author, Shoes That Fit)

## We believe the greatest change happens when:

### We ensure availability of high-quality, locally-relevant reading and learning materials

CODE supports sustained access to relevant, quality reading and learning materials. We work across the book chain – with authors, publishers, distributors – to support the development of print and digital materials by local industry. These are designed to support learning and to reference meaningful contexts in which girls and boys, women and men are depicted in ways that stress equality, empowerment and problem solving.

CODE additionally supports the development of guidebooks and other resources that complement training provided to educators and reinforce strategies for teaching across the curriculum. Educators can reference these materials as they work together within communities of practice – school-based clusters of teachers who come together to learn from each other and are supported in their professional development.

We recognize the critical role of local publishing industries in ensuring reliable and sustained access to culturally-relevant reading and learning materials aligned with national curricula. CODE is committed to strengthening capacity across all segments of the book chain, while maintaining a focus on our core mission and the clear and critical role that quality reading materials play in a nation's ability to advance literacy for all.

## We believe the greatest change happens when:

 We drive sustained change through systems-level strengthening

Sustained change requires effective, relevant institutional capacity that can address key drivers of low learning levels. Responsibility for sector strengthening lies with local and national actors, an understanding reflected in CODE's choice to deliver programming through a partnership model. Our approach is based in supporting the development of standards and competencies linked to Teacher Service Commissions and teacher licensing. This requires direct links with Ministries of Education, and system building to improve the quality of the training institutions and to establish an organized classification of career-oriented professional development.



### SPOTLIGHT ON OUR RESEARCH PROGRAM

## CONTEXT MATTERS

So much of what we know about best practices in education is based on research conducted in high-income countries. But how do we know whether a plan that worked well in Canada or the United States is applicable to Ghana or Sierra Leone? CODE's innovative *Context Matters* supports work by African scholars and educators to build research capacity, knowledge analysis, and mentorship, while benefiting from international partnerships and alliances that improve Africa's ability to develop meaningful solutions to contemporary problems. The program is designed to initiate a conversation and work collaboratively and in consort with African scholars and researchers to develop, prioritize and deliver a meaningful African research agenda around language and literacy. By supporting relevant research, CODE hopes to be an engaged thought leader with the capacity and knowledge to inform our programming as well as the education sector more broadly.



**CODE works within low income populations that lack qualified and properly resourced educators by:**

1

Working with like-minded organizations who are trusted policy partners with Ministries of Education

2

Placing the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our approach

3

Ensuring program sustainability by securing predictable, diversified funding sources

**To accomplish our goals, we partner with:**

- Ministries of Education & Teacher Training Institutions
- Civil Society Education Organizations
- Researchers and Scholars
- Publishers and Actors within the book chain
- Education Practitioners

## Actions

We address the severe shortage of qualified educators through:

- Modular professional development courses that capture local success/ focus on teaching practice
- Connecting career oriented in-service professional development to official certification



We put the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our approach through:

- Supporting the professional development of female teachers to facilitate promotion and improve recruitment



We ensure availability of high-quality, locally-relevant reading and learning materials by:

- Strengthening capacity of every aspect of the 'book chain'



We drive sustainable change through the systems-level by:

- Strengthening local research capacity that informs best practice
- Introducing educational technology



## Intended outcomes

### Short term

- Accredited standards for teacher development
- Career-oriented in-service programming
- Access to locally relevant and gender-sensitive learning materials
- Localized evidence base derived from theory and practice together

Qualified educators



Literate empowered learners



## Ultimate Goal

A world where every young person can pursue their education and realize their full potential as literate, empowered, self-reliant citizens



**None of our work would be possible without the support of our incredible partners, volunteers, and donors.**

Thank you for believing in what we do, and in sharing our vision of a world where all children, no matter where they live, are able to access the quality education they deserve. We look forward to sharing their stories with you as we work towards achieving the goals outlined in this plan.

SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS

CHARITY INTELLIGENCE 2021  
**TOP 10 INTERNATIONAL  
IMPACT CHARITY**

in partnership with  
**Canada**

2022  
MoneySense  
**TOP  
CHARITY**

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