



THE CODE READER: Your Gifts in Action

code.ngo | Winter 2025

A LOOK AT WHAT'S TO COME IN 2025 - WITH YOUR HELP

This year, CODE hopes to launch an exciting new project in Malawi that focuses on creating effective and joyful literacy learning environments in rural classrooms. Together with local communities and the Forum for African Women Educationalists Malawi (our partner), we aim to create classrooms that both students and teachers eagerly want to be a part of – classrooms that captivate and inspire, rather than discourage and disengage.

The project is urgently needed according to Katie Bryant, CODE's Senior Program Manager based in Botswana.

“Rural schools especially have been hard hit by the lack of educational resources. In these schools, you’ll find classrooms with broken furniture and children sitting on the floor. There aren’t enough blackboards, and the walls of the classrooms are often bare. It’s not unusual for a class of 100 students to have to share just four textbooks.”

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

As we look ahead to the coming year, I’m filled with optimism!

In April, CODE will launch its new Strategic Plan, which will guide our work through 2030. The Plan is the result of extensive consultations with partners, staff, allies, thought leaders, and supporters. It will prioritize community-led development, sharpen our focus to maximize impact in classrooms, and encourage cost-effective innovation. I’m eager to share more with you in the months ahead!



With the start of our new fiscal year, we’ll take another exciting step forward by moving into a dynamic hybrid workspace shared with two other prominent international development organizations, Cooperation Canada and CUSO. This modern, collaborative office, located in the heart of downtown Ottawa, will provide the perfect environment as we embark on the next chapter of CODE’s journey.

I hope you’ll find this annual newsletter an interesting read, and that you won’t hesitate to reach out to me directly with any comments or questions. I can be reached at: jciavaglia@code.ngo



Francis Chipanda, 2024

An estimated 87 percent of 10-year-old children in Malawi are unable to read with comprehension.

But perhaps the most urgent need of all is for additional teachers and for teacher support.

“There’s an extreme teacher shortage in Malawi right now,” says Katie. “In many schools, there’s just one teacher for every 100 students. The national target is to bring that down to one teacher for every 60 students.”

Given the exceptionally challenging conditions, it’s not surprising that an estimated 87 percent of 10-year-old children are unable to read. While free primary education has led to 88 percent net enrolment in primary school, the completion rate is just 33 percent.

“There’s currently a huge decrease in school enrolment for children in Standards 3 and 4 (corresponding to Grades 3 and 4 in Canada) with half of all students reportedly disappearing from the education system,” shares Katie.

This is where CODE and FAWEMA feel we have the greatest opportunity for cost-effective impact and to complement national-scale programming being undertaken by USAID focused on Standards 1 and 2.

The challenges faced by teachers and students are many and complex meaning that we need to take an adaptive and holistic approach, embedding the project within a broader understanding of teaching and learning ecosystems, including schools, communities and the education system.

“Listening is crucial when it comes to designing and implementing a project well,” says Katie. Consultation and collaboration with teachers, students and the community are presently ongoing. We hope to secure some early commitments for this important new initiative over the coming months and to be positioned to launch with confidence in the fall to coincide with the 2025-2026 academic year.

CODE’S MAILING ADDRESS IS CHANGING

To ensure smooth mail delivery, please note our new mailing address below:

CODE
PO Box 39014
RPO Bank & Heron
Ottawa, ON K1H 1A1

If you’ve recently mailed something to our old address, don’t worry. It will be forwarded to our new mailbox for the time being.

LEADERSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to Cathy Carlin, Valerie Hussey and John Bai for their dedicated service as Board Members – your contributions and leadership will be missed. We extend a warm welcome to Dr. Hellen Nasimiyuh, Dr. Nduka Otiono, Lynne Dean, Laura Jarrett, and Tim Hylton, who joined the CODE and CODE Foundation Boards in September 2024.

IMPACT REPORT 2023-2024

CODE’s annual Impact Report and Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year 2023-24 are now available online in an engaging new interactive format. Visit code.ngo/accountability



You helped support 518,060
children through literacy programs
(compared to 506,157 last year)



You helped provide 14,291
teachers with professional
development opportunities
(compared to 10,285 last year)



You helped distribute 391,827
copies of books
(compared to 550,960 last year)



YOU'RE DELIVERING REAL IMPACT

Every year, Charity Intelligence Canada looks closely at over 800 Canadian charities and independently rates them on five key metrics: transparency, results reporting, program cost coverage, demonstrated impact, and funding reserves.

CODE has been included on the "Top 100 Charities" list and named a "Top 10 International Impact Charity" several years in a row. While delighted to have our commitment to cost-effective impact affirmed in this way, we are still always looking for ways to learn and improve.

We asked Charity Intelligence Canada what more we could do to build public confidence in our work. Cory Eybergen, part of the Charity Intelligence team that evaluates charities' impact, suggested: "CODE should continue to report to donors on the change their gifts are supporting. Try to get as much evidence as possible for those changes – changes in literacy and what literacy leads to, including better educational outcomes and later life employment outcomes."

While CODE's programming – uniquely focused on school-aged children – rarely allows us to communicate the quantitative impact of our literacy initiatives in later life stages, we can provide powerful evidence of change you're making possible through the projects you fund.

Knowing that literacy is so much more than just reading and given the substantial body of evidence about the long-term social and economic benefits of literacy, we are confident that the solid foundations we're investing in continue to benefit children throughout their lives.

Because of you, more girls are writing primary exams!



2019: 4569

2022: 6251

Number of girls in 260 TGEP schools who wrote the primary leaving exam

TGEP girls saw both a greater increase in those sitting for the exam than national increase (37% vs 22%, respectively) and a greater increase in pass rate (10% vs 7%) over this period.

[Lots more results at code.ngo/impact2024](https://code.ngo/impact2024)

WHAT'S YOUR "TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE"?

When you hear the word "Will," what comes to mind? For many, it conjures up thoughts of legal language, dividing assets, and pondering the uncertainties of the future. But today, Wills are about so much more than that.

Most people aren't using their Wills to their full potential. They miss out on the chance to make a lasting impact on their family, finances, and the world at large. That's why we've partnered with the Will Power campaign to help CODE supporters understand how they can change the world through their Wills.

Wondering what your Will can do? Take a fun, 5-minute quiz to find out at code.ngo/legacy

Over 3 million Canadians have joined the movement to create "ethical Wills" – Wills that not only pass down your assets but also your values, by supporting the causes that matter most to you. Think of ethical Wills as a way to protect your people, your property, and the planet – your personal "triple bottom line."

By leaving a charitable gift in your Will, you can care for your loved ones, make a meaningful contribution to CODE's work, and even save on taxes. It's a win-win.

Chuck and Darlene Gould from Surrey, British Columbia, did just that. Chuck spent a month carefully researching and consulting with experts from Charity Intelligence Canada. After narrowing down a long list, they chose seven charities to include in their Will.

"Find a charity that aligns with your values," Chuck advises. "You worked hard your whole life, and whether your estate is \$10,000 or \$1,000,000, you deserve to be in control of decisions that ensure your legacy lives on."

When asked why they chose CODE, Chuck explains, "You're not a bureaucracy, and you're focused enough to make a real difference day-to-day. I can see the good CODE is doing, and that gives me confidence that my contribution will truly matter."

To learn more about the power of legacy giving, visit code.ngo/legacy

YOU'RE SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN LITERACY EDUCATION

When it comes to how well a child learns to read and write, nothing is more important than the quality of teaching. This is why CODE is so deeply committed to helping teachers get access to the best possible training and the most effective literacy learning techniques. However, the way we achieve this is always evolving.

While large-scale literacy programs funded by global agencies often promote prescriptive, one-size-fits-all teacher training solutions, CODE's experiences suggest that a more adaptable, responsive approach is essential.

The evolution in CODE's approach is reflected in our new Quality Teaching and Learning (QTL) Framework. Rather than a rigid model, the QTL Framework is a guiding philosophy that shapes every aspect of our work, from project development to delivery, all aimed at enhancing children's literacy. Through this Framework, CODE reaffirms its commitment to sustainable and empowering projects that are deeply informed by local contexts and built upon the strengths already present in classrooms and communities.

The QTL Framework, which lies at the heart of CODE's soon-to-be launched Strategic Plan (2025-2030), is characterized by three interconnected elements:

1. Knowledge-Skills-Praxis, 2. Responsiveness, and 3. Agency.

What do each of these mean in the context of creating effective and joyful literacy classrooms?

Knowledge-Skills-Praxis: This focuses on equipping teachers with the deep understanding and tools they need to support young readers and learners. It emphasizes continuous professional development and connecting educators with the most effective strategies for fostering literacy in their local context.

Responsiveness: This is about recognizing the unique needs of every student. Every child brings different strengths, challenges, and backgrounds to the classroom. Teachers must be empowered to adjust their teaching methods to ensure that every child is meaningfully included.

Agency: Agency is vital for both students and teachers. For children, it means being able to use literacy to express themselves, ask questions, problem-solve, and explore their interests. For teachers, agency refers to professional empowerment – the ability to adapt their instruction to meet the specific needs of their students and classroom environment and seek support for the areas they identify for ongoing professional learning.

A recent teacher-training workshop at Freetown Polytechnic in Sierra Leone illustrates how CODE's QTL Framework is being implemented. Julie Donohue-Kpolugbo, CODE's Literacy Education and Gender Specialist shares, "The workshop focused on three key areas: building teachers' knowledge and skills to address current challenges in improving student literacy, helping them apply new techniques in real classroom settings, and encouraging reflective practices to refine and enhance their teaching. We are moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach to promote tailored teaching methods and to cultivate a culture of continuous growth and improvement."

Guided by our new Quality Teaching and Learning Framework, CODE is working to advance effective literacy education by combining excellence with adaptability and empowerment. We know that teachers are the key to helping children become confident readers and writers. Our aim is to ensure that they have the resources, skills, motivation, and infrastructure they need to succeed – one classroom at a time. The promising early results in Sierra Leone show the potential of this more adaptable approach – and we're just getting started.



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Thank you for believing in the power of literacy.
Visit our website at code.ngo