EARLY GRADE READING IN LIBERIA: Building a Culture of Reading
## THE CONTEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>58 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official language and language of instruction</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of official languages</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median years of education</td>
<td>Female: 1.6 years, Male: 5.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL 2010-2011
84% of students enrolled are in pre-primary or primary school.
LITERACY TIMELINE: 1989-2003

During the conflict there were few opportunities for education.

70% of schools were damaged or destroyed.

Many children did not learn to read.

This affected the literacy rate of the whole population.
LITERACY TIMELINE: 2004-2008

Education resumed after the conflict. MoE officials attended an International Reading Conference in the US and requested assessment of reading. World Bank/USAID assessment in 2008 found that:

- The average correct words per minute in grades 2 and 3 was 15.5.
- 34% of 2-3 grade students in a representative sample could not read ONE word.
LITERACY TIMELINE: 2008-2015

• USAID Early Grade Reading Assessment Plus project implemented in 180 schools, 2008-2010.

• Liberia Teacher Training Program provides broad educational support services, including Reading First, 2007-2010 and 2010-2015.

• Reading First project expands to 816 schools in 2012.
LITERACY TIMELINE: 2008-2015

• Development of Alternative Basic Education, which includes focus on literacy, 2011.

• Reading integrated into pre-service primary school teacher training, 2012.

• Development of primary level standards for Reading (a separate subject in the Primary Curriculum), 2012.


• Reading First expands to 800 additional schools in 2014.
PARTNERS SUPPORTING READING

• **USAID** – teacher training, materials development, assessment
• **WE-CARE/Reading Liberia** – development and publication of books, training for teachers
• **UNICEF** – support for the development of reading materials.
• **LIBTRALO** – development of mother tongue materials, teacher training in 16 languages.
• **Concern Worldwide** – teacher training, materials distribution.
BASELINE DATA: PASSAGE READING FLUENCY

EGRA + - 2008
Average fluency score grades 2-3: 15.5 cwpm

LTTP - 2011
Average fluency score grades 1-3: 13.4 cwpm

No significant difference in student reading achievement over 3 years.
The Approach

- Cascade model - coaches train teachers
- Coaches support teachers and track results
- Highly scripted materials support teachers.
- Continuous assessment - report cards for learners and schools
- Social Marketing - Radio Shows, Reading Competitions
- Management visits to check progress
There are reading report cards for the community. Reading competitions are twice a year: each coach organizes reading competitions with prizes. PTA members, parents, and community members attend.
KEY SUPPORT MATERIALS

Teaching-Learning Materials
- Scripted teacher’s manual.
- Student book
- Decodable readers

Assessment tools
- Student report cards for parents.
- School report card for communities/PTAs.
- Oral reading assessment

Process Monitoring “Trackers”
- Coach visits to school tracker.
- Classroom observation checklist.
- Home reading tracker.
Ten hens in the pen
GRADE 2 REPORT CARD FOR PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Period 2</th>
<th>Period 4</th>
<th>Period 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your child</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-reading (letters per minute)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story-reading (words per minute)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story understanding (5/5, 4/5, 3/5 and so on)</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School average</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-reading (letters per minute)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 5/5 means that the child was able to answer 5 questions out of five correctly, 4/5 that the child answered 4 questions correctly and so on.
# Grade 2 Report Card for Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>School average</td>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>School average</td>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>School average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-reading (letters per minute)</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story understanding (5/5, 4/5, 3/5)</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>5/5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period 1</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>School average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>School average</td>
<td>Period 4</td>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>School average</td>
<td>Period 6</td>
<td>School average</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter-reading (letters per minute)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Liberian authored and illustrated books from Reading Liberia/ CODE

"This is my story. My father was a big man in the army when the war came. He was sent to fight the people who were bringing the war."

"I remember the morning before he left. He called me into the room and told me that I should grow up to be a man. He told me to take care of my mother and little sister when he was gone."

"I will come back. I will come back soon, my father promised."

"The boys had not said a word to each other all week. But tonight was different. It was Yiaquim who finally broke the silence. He was the first to arrive. After taking in a long pull of fresh air, he sat on a mound of dirt and waited for the others."
Mother tongue literacy story books, charts and readers from LIBTRALO
The JAWS (Junior African Writers Series) from Longman Pearson with HIV/AIDS, and gender content
MOTIVATING PRINCIPLES

Reading lessons are based on “speech to print” approach with scope and sequence of instruction.

- Children learn sounds, then map the sounds to letters.

Simple, evidence-based routines used in the basic level of instruction

- Daily 45 minute reading-focused lessons.
- Teachers read story aloud to students in addition to lesson.

Homework every day

- Students read to parents at home and parents sign a “tracker.”
RESOURCES TO ENHANCE LITERACY GAINS

• **Self-learning materials** to upgrade teacher literacy and numeracy.

• **School management training** for principals to improve administration of schools.

• **Training for PTAs** to build community support for schools.
EGRA + READING FLUENCY RESULTS

After 1.5 years of intervention

Baseline | Mid-term | Final
---|---|---
Control | Light treatment | Full treatment
12.5 | 14.4 | 15.5
15.9 | 21.7 | 23.9
19.6 | 22.6 | 43.7
CONCERN WORLDWIDE READING FLUENCY RESULTS

Average correct words per minute

Grade 1: Intervention (38) vs. Non-intervention (20)
Grade 2: Intervention (53) vs. Non-intervention (39)
Grade 3: Intervention (53) vs. Non-intervention (39)
Grade 4: Intervention (54) vs. Non-intervention (48)
Grade 5: Intervention (61) vs. Non-intervention (41)
Grade 6: Intervention (60) vs. Non-intervention (55)
CHALLENGES

Developing reading instruction with untrained stakeholders.

Institutionalizing and nationalizing the program:

• Funding and delivery of teaching-learning materials for every grade and every school.
• Funding and training for coaches to support teachers.
• New national continuous professional development model for teacher training.
LESSONS LEARNED: BEGINNING

- Designing and preparing for implementation of a large scale reading program takes time.
- Continuous data collection is necessary for decision-making.
- Strong data on reading – achievement motivates stakeholders and institutions to accept a new approach.
- A reading program cannot succeed without the support and advocacy of key Ministry of Education personnel.
LESSONS LEARNED: INSTITUTIONALIZING

An effective reading program is expensive.

Approach must be included in national education system:

- National primary school curriculum.
- Pre-service training.
- Assessment of students.

Flexible tools and materials can be adapted by different users – and the reading program can use tools and materials developed by partners.
LESSONS LEARNED: BUILDING CAPACITY

Additional services can enhance literacy gains:

• School management training to improve administrative processes.
• PTA training to improve community support for schools.
• General pedagogy training to improve teaching of all subjects.
WHAT’S NEXT?

Emphasis on writing skills to match reading gains.

Teacher training at the university includes reading pedagogy courses that are aligned with curriculum standards.

Using mass media to promote reading.

Reading resource centers in every school.

Development and publishing of materials to support literacy.

Adaptation of career ladder:

- incorporate coaches into existing system.
- Continuous professional development to build capacity of coaches and teachers.
THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?