Project overview

The ability to read and write is the single most important indicator in a child's ability to effectively learn. The ability to read and write inspires curiosity, increases knowledge, and helps build brighter futures. When you invest in quality education you improve health, increase employment opportunities, advance human rights, and alleviate poverty.

In Liberia, gross enrollment in primary school is 96 percent, but in reality 57 percent of children of primary school age are not in school. For those who do attend, the quality of education varies greatly, and in many cases children leave primary school without having mastered basic literacy and numeracy skills. This is not surprising given that only 56 percent of primary school teachers are trained to teach. This contributes to a secondary school enrollment of only 38 percent and an adult illiteracy rate of 52 percent. Keeping children in school longer and ensuring that they are receiving a quality education must be a priority in order to help communities in Liberia break the pervasive cycle of poverty.

Building on our 60 years of experience, and drawing from the most up-to-date evidence, CODE's Reading Liberia 20/20 Program is designed to increase the skills of local teachers through participation in training programs; improve the quality of reading and learning materials available at schools and libraries; and, empower women and girls to learn and succeed.

By the year 2020, the Program will have nurtured the development of literate environments in 60 schools in the impoverished Bomi, Grand Bassa, and Margibi counties of Liberia, where the gross national per capita income is a startling $380 per year!

An estimated 25,000 Liberian children will be directly impacted; more than 400 teachers and 60 vice principals will have upgraded their qualifications in the teaching of literacy skills; and, a cohort of highly trained, local teacher educators will be developed to sustain programming well into the future. In addition, up to 24 high-quality book titles that support the national curriculum will be published along with materials to guide teachers in their use.

The Program was designed in consultation with many local stakeholders, including schools, communities, teacher education institutions and local authorities. CODE is implementing the Reading Liberia 20/20 Program in close collaboration with our local implementing partner WE-CARE, a Liberian NGO with whom CODE has been partnered for more than 10 years.

With this brief report, we wish to share with you the progress and impact that you've helped to deliver during the 2018-2019 program year - between April 2018 and January 2019.
The change you've created

After successfully implementing Reading Liberia in 31 schools in Bomi and Margibi counties in previous years of the program, the 2018-2019 program year saw us expand once more, this time into 15 new schools in the community of Buchanan in Grand Bassa county.

Here we are in the process of training 95 teachers and 15 vice principals in order to build their capacity to teach reading and writing. The result will be 3,093 students (1537 boys and 1556 girls) benefiting from improved teaching quality in these schools.

We are also working on implementing the Girls’ Accelerated Learning Initiative to 5 of the new program schools in Buchanan. As in previous years, this initiative will provide additional support to approximately 375 overage girls, helping them to advance more quickly through their schooling so that they can re-join their peers at an appropriate grade level.

To prepare to work in these new schools, we conducted baseline assessments of 100 students to assess their performance and determine the level of need in these communities. Our analysis of these assessments is ongoing and will be complete by the end of this fiscal year. We also recruited four new Buchanan-based school monitors, recruited from the Teacher College of Grand Bassa Community College (GBCC) after attending an intensive three-day workshop.

These monitors (coaches) play a key role supporting the program's implementation and evaluation, as well as providing crucial support to schools and the teachers throughout the duration of the program.

We also conducted the first of three five-day workshops for teachers in Buchanan. The workshop brought together 110 participants from the 15 newly recruited project schools and focused on introducing teachers to the new instructional strategies they will use to build the reading, comprehension, and critical thinking of their students.

The provision of culturally relevant learning materials, including children’s books that help to inspire the love of reading, are a crucial part of Reading Liberia 20/20. And work on the seven manuscripts selected for publication continues. Editors and illustrators trained through the project worked with our partner WE-CARE to complete the illustrations and begin the process of designing the new Reading Liberia titles.

As part of our ongoing support to program schools in Bomi and Margib counties, we also hosted a vacation reading program called Story Hour for Kids for 203 boys and girls in the Old Road Community during July and August. Six women from the local high school and community college served as the teachers for the duration of the program, helping them gain rewarding work experience. Program like this play an important role encouraging students to continue reading during the school break which prevents learning loss over the summer months when the children aren’t in school.
Spotlight on new books

With support from the International Book Bank's Dr. Wendy Saul and Professor Emeritus Dr. Alison Preece, We-Care Foundation and CODE are developing seven new books. The books will be available to students and teachers in Reading Liberia 20/20 schools very soon. The books will also be made available to other interested stakeholders, including Liberia's Ministry of Education.

Here is a sneak peak of the exciting new titles, authored and illustrated by Liberians and designed by We-Care Foundation with support from CODE.

**Train Track Troubles** by Yvonne C. Weah, illustrated by Morton M. Mason.

Leamu and her dog, Poor-no-friend, start out on a journey to her Uncle Kona's house across the train track in Ben Town. As they are about to cross, the train speeds by. Now Leamu can't find her dog. How do Leamu and her friends prevent this from happening again?

**The Pangolins in Our Forest** by Gii-Hne S. Russell, illustrated by Morton M. Mason.

In the forests of Liberia lives a unique animal called the pangolin. Join Ranger Mona and look inside the wonderful world of pangolins. This interactive story also reveals how conservation organizations are trying to save these pangolins from extinction.

**Surprises in Sapo Forest** by Gii-Hne S. Russell, illustrated by Morton M. Mason.

Join us on the journey through Sapo National Park, Liberia's largest forest reserve. Learn more about the amazing creatures who live there and the surprising story behind the elusive pygmy hippo.

**Our New House** by Monica J. Williams, illustrated by Molu F. Jorgbor.

Begin with an empty piece of land and end with a beautiful new house. How does that happen? Join two anxious children, their parents and the builders to find out.

The four stories in this anthology celebrate all that you can do as you grow bigger, stronger, older—and how sometimes it feels that growing big and strong goes s-l-o-w!


Have you ever been given a gift you didn't expect? Or taken something that brought nothing but trouble? In these four lively stories, giving and taking isn't always as straightforward as you'd think.

Commander Miatta by David S. Johnson, illustrated by Georah M. Zorbah.

Mama and Papa are out of the house and “Commander Miatta” is in charge. Join three active children as they act out the adventures of Commander Miatta, Foday and Pundu the dog.
Summer reading!

During the long summer break, many children are left alone at home with nothing to do as their parents head off to work. This often leads to summer learning loss, which sees even the best students lose some of gains they made in the previous school term.

This year we hosted a summer vacation program called Story Hour for Kids. The program brought 203 boys and girls from the Old Road Community together for daily activities throughout July and August. Six women from the local high school and community college served as their teachers.

The children looked up to their young teachers, circling them and engaging their new “sisters” and “aunties” in conversation. For the girls serving as teachers, this represented a wonderful opportunity to gain valuable experience, preparing them for their own future teaching careers. They also spoke very highly of the program. When they were asked, “What was the best thing about being a part of Story Hour for Kids?” One of the student-teachers, Rebecca, said, “My first grade class had seven children who had just graduated from kindergarten but could not spell their names correctly. One of them even had difficulty remembering the letters in her name. So, after reading time every Saturday, I worked with her. We played games and danced using the letters in her name; at the closing program when she stood up and spelled her full name I felt like I had won a medal at the Olympics.”

This successful program was even covered by state TV as a way to encourage other community members and organizations to support children during the long break.