

## Literacy Breakthrough: Global Ripples from our Programs

As a global movement working to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, Save the Children's literacy programs have grown in influence beyond their initial implementation sites. Around the world, Save the Children education teams are leveraging the experience they have gained through program implementation to engage public, private and civil society actors in the common cause to strengthen reading programs and the culture of reading in their countries. We call these "ripples." These efforts have not followed any pre-determined plan, but rather have allowed for a broad range of potential partners and have engaged them opportunistically, based on the particular local contexts. In total, they have expanded the reach of our literacy work to more than 50 million children.

In June 2015, Save the Children conducted a survey of its reading programs to better understand and document these areas of influence. This brief document is just a sample of the ripples that our literacy programs are making. In total, we surveyed 21 country programs and identified more than 43 different ripples. Some were fully realized, whereas others were more nascent. In coming years, we will continue to monitor these ripples and support them with additional program resources. In particular, we are developing a *Literacy Readiness to Scale* tool that will help program teams analyze the local policy and partnership context in order to identify opportunities to leverage their vast implementation experience across a wide range of actors and to create stronger national and local cultures of reading.

### Prioritizing Literacy: Influencing Governments

Of the various ripples identified in our research, an impressive 20 countries documented **government-level uptake** of core concepts and strategies of our literacy programs. This institutionalization will result in longer-term and systemic change for early grade reading outcomes for tens of millions of children. Specific systems changes have included: improved teacher training methods, the introduction of supplementary reading materials into the government curriculum, greater interest in and commitment to community action and engagement around literacy, and adoption of mother tongue instruction and materials.

Notable government-level impacts include:

- In the Tigray region of **Ethiopia**, home to 4.5 million people, the Regional Education Board has scaled up the Literacy Boost teacher training approach to all its primary school teachers. Initially piloted through Save the Children's Child Sponsorship program, Save the Children has now **trained 80 master trainers** from across the regional education system. These master trainers are in turn rolling the training out to all the regions teachers, which will support the national ministry's new USAID-sponsored reading program.
- In **Bhutan**, the Government's five-year development plan now includes Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), based on a 5-year collaboration with Save the Children. Together, Save the Children and the Ministry of Education developed the ECCD curriculum – which includes a focus on early literacy and language skills, training manuals and monitoring tools for the ECCD center program. The program is being scaled up to cover children ages 3-5 and parents in all centers.
- In **Rwanda**, Save the Children was requested by the Rwanda Education Board to **train the country's school inspectors on early literacy**, focusing specifically on how inspectors should assess quality pre-primary education, primary literacy instruction, and the creation of a rich literate environment in classrooms. Following this training, Save the Children continued to support the inspectorate to develop

relevant tools to enable them to effectively assess and provide qualitative feedback to schools on improving literacy-related indicators.

- Also in **Rwanda**, the Ministry of Health reached out to Save the Children to provide technical inputs on emergent literacy and the importance of books for very young children so that they can incorporate this learning into a new pilot training for Community Health Workers on Early Childhood Development.
- In **Malawi**, Save the Children was named to a national task force, funded by USAID, to develop a national reading strategy because of our Literacy Boost program experience and results. Save the Children was one of two NGOs that reviewed and provided input into this national strategy. In 2013, Save the Children and World Vision co-hosted a national reading event with the Ministry of Education, USAID, and DFID that was nationally broadcasted.
- In **Mozambique**, five government teacher training institutes have incorporated Save the Children's Literacy Boost teacher training materials into their pedagogical supervision program.
- In **Bangladesh**, Save the Children's experience improving the quality, quantity and availability of supplementary reading materials for children led us to partner with the national Ministry of Education to create a **national book-leveling process**. This work began with the review of more than 5,000 potential texts and resulted in government approval of more than 160 books for use in primary schools. These books are already available in the local book market and are now being deployed to schools nationwide, where they will benefit up to **16 million enrolled primary-school aged children**.

### Leading By Example: Influencing Donors and International Organizations

Save the Children has documented several instances where our programs influenced the work of leading international organizations and influential donors. In a variety of ways, Save the Children's thought leadership and reputation have influenced their choice of programs and partners. A few standout examples include:

- When **World Vision** decided to adjust their educational programs towards learning outcomes, they partnered with Save the Children US to provide technical assistance to implement Literacy Boost programming. Through this partnership, World Vision is now **implementing Literacy Boost in 13 countries** worldwide and the scope and number of countries is increasing. Over **3 million children** will directly benefit from this work.
- Save the Children is a leader among international organizations in promoting **the role of families and communities in supporting children's literacy development**. Recent calls for proposals by **USAID** in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malawi, Ethiopia and Rwanda have all referenced our work on literacy, and in particular have drawn on our work to understand children's home literacy environments and their relationship to classroom-based interventions. In **Malawi** an RTI-led, USAID-funded reading program has adopted our reading club activity, and in **Rwanda and Ethiopia**, USAID has created programs dedicated to activating community support to complement their school-based activities.
- In **Bangladesh**, the **World Bank's** Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) project chose our **adapted Literacy Boost methodology** as one of their first pilots – further adapting it to reach an out of school population, reaching nearly **780,000 children**.
- In **Rwanda**, Save the Children has provided training on emergent and early literacy teaching techniques to more than 15 local and national organizations, many of whom are now using these techniques in their project areas.

## Creating a Culture of Literacy: Inspiring the Private Sector

Save the Children staff have had a significant impact on the quality and availability of children's books through our work with the publishing community:

- Save the Children's **First Read** project works directly with the publishing industry to improve the quality, quantity and availability of children's literature.
  - In **Cambodia**, the First Read project partnered with Sipar, a well-known publisher, and 7 other local publishing companies (including the publishing house of Ministry of Education Youth and Sport) to create **15 new titles**. Appropriate for young children (ages 0-6), these new Khmer titles are used in First Read implementation sites and **available for sale throughout the country**.
  - In **Rwanda**, Save the Children has trained more than 100 people within the publishing industry, resulting in the production of approximately **75 new, high quality Kinyarwanda children's titles** from 10 different publishers.
  - The work of Save the Children's **Rwanda Children's Book Initiative** has also led to increased professionalization of the book sector. One example of this is the introduction of professional editors into the book development chain, as publishers are willing to invest in contracting specialized staff to improve the quality of books produced. Now, **8 out of 10 publishers** working with Save the Children have started contracting with professional editors.
- In **Malawi**, Save the Children has made a concerted effort to partner with local media to improve awareness of the importance of reading and to improve the quality of media reporting on the topic. Save the Children has also trained local radio stations on literacy to improve the local coverage of the issue, and linked radio reporters with Literacy Boost reading camps as a source of stories for reporting.

## Sustainability and Looking Ahead

At the core of Save the Children's literacy programs is a desire for sustainability at both local and national levels. We have typically seen evidence of sustainability at the community level, but we are also beginning to see sustainability happening at increasingly higher, systemic levels.

- Two years after the phasing out of our sponsorship program in Gaza Province, Mozambique, cluster school directors and teachers have **continued using our teacher training modules** and encouraging student use of the **book banks**. As a result of the measurable and sustained success in Gaza, Literacy Boost has garnered national attention and the Minister of Education regularly invites Save the Children staff to consult on Mozambique's early grade grading reading reform efforts.
- In the Ngororero district of **Rwanda**, **reading club activities**, implemented in 2013 through our partners, have not only continued after the end of the project but have also increased the number of children in attendance and the number of club meetings each week. Additionally, the presence of these reading clubs attracted book donations and new book titles from the USAID-funded L3 project in 2014.

What isn't seen in the above facts and figures are the places where Save the Children staff are intentionally pursuing future influence and impact – already **56** more potential ripples have been flagged that will help us to continue to track the success of our literacy programs. We look forward to watching the ripples multiply and to measuring increased early grade reading outcomes in children beyond our immediate reach.