



LITERACY BOOST

“Enhancing early grade reading skills”



THE SITUATION FOR CHILDREN IN RWANDA

The ability to read and write is the foundation for all future learning. Ensuring children master these skills early is an essential component of addressing the learning crisis. Not only will it pave the way for children’s on-going learning success, it reduces the number of children dropping out of school early and thus reduces inefficiencies in the education system.

In late 2013, Save the Children in partnership with researchers from Stanford University, led an assessment of current reading levels amongst children in primary one in the Gicumbi district, Rwanda. The assessment revealed that the majority children were struggling to read with fluency, accuracy and comprehension. Many children had a poor grasp of more basic skills, such as simple letter identification: on average, students at the end of P1 could only identify 8 out of the 24 letters in their alphabet, with a mere 4% being able to identify all the letters. Furthermore, when presented with a basic comprehension exercise, students could on average read only 3 words per minute, with 17.5% accuracy.

PROJECT AIM

As part of our ‘Advancing the Right to Read’ programme in Rwanda, Save the Children is implementing Literacy Boost, our evidence-based approach to strengthen the five core skills of reading (alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension) and supports children’s reading practice both inside and outside school walls.

It uses three components - rigorous assessment, teacher training focused on the five core skills, and community

action - to identify reading gaps and demonstrably improve children’s reading skills.

Working together with Umuhuza, a Rwandan child-focused NGO in Gicumbi District, Save the Children’s Literacy Boost project in Rwanda aims to:



- Improve the teaching of reading;
- Create a rich literate environment which guarantees children access to high quality, local language reading materials;
- Develop a culture of literacy and learning in which communities understand the value of literacy and create opportunities to practice and enjoy reading together.

By implementing the project in phases along with rigorous baseline, midline and endline assessments, the project also aims to provide robust evidence for scaling up efforts beyond the project cycle.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Teacher training of all Primary School teachers in Gicumbi District on how to teach key reading skills to P1-P3 students using active learning approaches and formative assessment;
- Community action, which includes:
 - Mobilising youth and community volunteers to conduct weekly Literacy Boost Reading Clubs with children, following an established curriculum that uses games, read-aloud activities, songs, and make-and-take activities to build the five core skills of reading and to develop a sense that reading can be fun;
 - Engaging and training Umuhuza to lead in Literacy Boost community reading awareness activities with parents, and to support in the monitoring and mentoring of Reading Club community volunteers;
 - Conducting capacity building and activation initiatives with target schools' Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs);
 - Initiating a system of reading buddies to encourage older children to read with younger children, providing additional support to literacy development outside school;
 - Establishing book banks in communities and schools to enhance the print environment.
- Assessment through a rigorous research component and Randomised Control Trial (RCT) led by Stanford University.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Outcome 1: Students receiving Literacy Boost in primary schools of Gicumbi District will have improved reading skills in Kinyarwanda, leading to higher learning outcomes as a result of improvements in the quality of teaching of Kinyarwanda.

Outcome 2: There is a stronger culture of reading and learning for children, as a result of families and communities across all sectors of Gicumbi District providing increased support and opportunities for children to develop and practice their reading skills outside of school.