



Yes to Reading project
Final evaluation report
March 2018

Partner: Africa Educational Trust (AET)

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the *Yes to Reading* programme implemented in Dol Dol, Laikipia North Sub-County in Kenya. The goal of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which the projects' results were achieved. This report describes outcomes achieved for pupils, teachers and parents regarding learning outcomes and the reading culture. Key lessons are outlined and recommendations provided.

Overall the evaluation found that the *Yes to Reading* project has produced positive results and has achieved its objectives. Findings show that the reading culture has significantly improved in the schools and the community. All the 14 participating schools have established libraries and developed programmes to allow pupils and adults to access the books. Teacher-librarians have been able to utilise the skills they gained in the training to maintain proper library records, organise the books and introduce reading activities. Teachers reported that reading levels of pupils have improved and this has in turn led to better communication and fluency in English. Parents have been informed of the importance of reading and school libraries are borrowing books to read with their pupils. The school libraries have also led to a strengthened-relationship between our implementing partner Africa Education Trust (AET), schools, parents and the Sub-County Education Office. Reading and libraries are now discussed in key community meetings. In addition, teachers reported that there are less cases of absenteeism because children are eager to attend school and access books. Their parents are also encouraging them to go to school. Discipline in the schools has improved considerably since pupils can now use any free time to read.

Key challenges included poor infrastructure in the schools. They have a limited number of classrooms and in some schools two grades share the same classroom. However, this did not hinder the schools in setting up libraries. Schools used alternative spaces to set up libraries such as staffrooms, offices, classrooms and head teachers office. The metal boxes and cupboards were useful for storage of books in the designated spaces.

School enrolment in schools in Laikipia North is still low compared to other parts of the country therefore the quantity of books received per school was adequate. However, there is need for more Kiswahili and English local story books. Some of the schools also need to increase time allotted for pupils to access the books and to allow children to take books home. This would further help to improve the reading culture and learning outcomes among the pupils.

Key learnings from the project show that school libraries are vital in reclaiming the library lesson, the availability of books helps to reduce absenteeism and leisure reading helps pupils to manage their time well which encourages discipline in the school. In addition, the school library is a catalyst that has strengthened relationship between AET, the schools and the community. IN addition, findings have shown that increased access to books helps in the transition from Maa to English.

The *Yes to Reading* project has proved the important role of school libraries in children's learning. AET are keen to see the project continue. This will be achieved through continued engagement with the community and the Sub-County Education Office.

Background

In Laikipia County only 23% of residents have secondary-level education or higher. Specifically, in Laikipia North constituency, the rate is the lowest of the entire county¹. The local community are mainly pastoralists whose main economic activity is herding livestock. The nomadic lifestyle inhibits learning because families move frequently in search of pasture for their livestock. Illiteracy levels are high in the community. In 2014, AET launched a programme to support Maa speaking children with an aim of improving learning outcomes through encouraging establishing reading skills in the local Maa language and preparing them for the transition to learn in English. The initial project started off with a pilot of 14 primary schools in Laikipia North Sub County and has since been scaled to support all 28 primary schools within the Sub-County.

The schools had limited outdated texts and lacked access to supplementary reading materials and resources to purchase books. Book Aid International partnered with AET in 2015/2016 to implement the *Mother Tongue and English Education Project* in Laikipia County targeting 14 schools which received approximately 1000 books each. Following the positive results of this project a second phase covering the remaining 14 schools was conducted in 2017/2018 through the *Yes to Reading* project.

Introduction

The *Yes to Reading* project ran for one year from 2017 to 2018 and targeted 14 primary schools in Dol Dol, Laikipia. A total of 13,496 new UK donated books and 5698 locally purchased books were donated to the schools and 14 metal boxes and seven cupboards were procured to store books. Further, 13 head teachers, 25 teachers and six AET staff were trained on school library development and reading promotion. The overall goal of the project was to improve the learning outcomes of school going children in Laikipia North Sub County.

The project addressed four key objectives:

- Improve access to books in local language and in English for 14 primary schools in Dol Dol, Laikipia North Sub-County
- Train teachers from each school to manage a school library, to use books in class and to promote reading
- Promote reading among rural communities in Dol Dol to encourage support for reading for information, study and pleasure
- Monitor, evaluate and report on project activities and outcomes to inform future project development.

¹ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013

Four main intended outcomes of the project were:

- Improved learning outcomes for 3,650 boys and girls in 14 schools, especially in English
- Increased numbers of children reading for enjoyment
- 28 teacher librarians equipped with skills and confidence to manage school libraries and promote reading
- Literacy hour implementation within communities and community engagement in supporting reading and learning.

This evaluation was conducted between 5th to 8th March, 2018 by Caroline Kayoro, Book Aid International Projects Officer in conjunction with AET staff in Dol Dol. The project benefitted 5,079 pupils and 113 teachers in 14 primary schools in both Early Childhood Development and Education and primary school level. In addition approximately 174 adults were reached through the Manyatta Learning Centres (MLC)².

This evaluation included key informant interviews and focus group discussions with children in seven primary schools and two MLCs. A total of 14 teachers, five parents, two MLC facilitators, two volunteers in the catch up programme and two AET staff were interviewed. A series of seven focus group discussions were carried out in seven project schools with pupils. In total 49 pupils were interviewed. This report also presents findings of reading tests conducted by AET using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) model to determine the impact of the project on learning outcomes. The assessment covered 116 pupils from grades three to six in 10 schools. Although it would have been ideal to meet with and talk to all relevant respondents, a number of logistical and practical challenges prevented this from being entirely successful. For instance, due to time constraints, rough terrain and long distances between the schools, it was not possible to interview beneficiaries from all the 14 schools. However, appropriate tools were developed to capture information on key project objectives.

² Manyatta is a Maasi word for settlement or compound where a family or clan live. AET has established Manyatta Learning Centres in some of these settlements to support lower-grade learners using books and parental support. For more information, visit <https://africaeducationaltrust.org/celebrating-international-literacy-day-with-manyatta-learning-centre/>

Key Findings

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine whether the projects' results were achieved. The section below outlines key findings under each objective.

1. Improved learning outcomes of 3,650 boys and girls in 14 schools especially in English.

Learning outcomes were determined through interviews with teachers, pupils and volunteers working with pupils in the AET catch up programme. In addition AET conducted reading tests using the Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) model.

Teachers views on how the books have contributed to learning outcomes.

Teachers reported that the books have exposed the children to a world beyond Dol Dol. They can now imagine another lifestyle and environment which they write in their compositions. They can go to America and beyond through books. Teachers assess children by asking them to retell stories they have read and to write five sentences from the books they have borrowed.

“Pupils are now writing more interesting compositions about travelling, machines and overseas countries. They have become more creative and the compositions are no longer boring.” **Lenson Rikana, Teacher, Olotasha Primary School.**

Teachers also reported that pupils can communicate and respond to questions in class. They are more confident because they now have a broader vocabulary. The Headteacher at, Seek Primary School reported that one pupil in grade four, who could not read before the new books arrived, is now able to read and retell a story and write five sentences.

“Before the project pupils could only speak Maa and could not write. We have noted that pupils can now write and read in Maa language”. **Robert Karugu, Deputy Headteacher, Olotasha Primary School.**

“Communication among pupils has improved. Grade four had a big problem and could not understand simple English words. Now I can tell them to stand and they stand. They can now respond when I say good morning. Out of the eight pupils in the class only two are still struggling”. **Daniel Waithaka, Deputy Headteacher, Nkiloriti Primary School.**

Learners views on their reading confidence

A total of 56 pupils across seven schools visited during the final evaluation took part in survey questionnaires to assess reading confidence. They were asked to self-report on confidence in reading individually, reading aloud, reading with a small group, asking teacher to explain or help, helping a fellow pupil, selecting books by themselves and taking books home. 98% said they were confident in reading individually, 98% said they were confident in reading aloud, 66% said they were confident reading in a small group, 78% confident about asking teachers to explain, 98% confident about asking teachers to help, 100% confident that they could help fellow pupils,

98% confident about selecting books and 100% confident about taking books home. There was a big margin of improvement compared to the results in the baseline.

		Confident		Unsure		In doubt
		Number of pupils	Percent %	Number of pupils	Percent %	Number
	Learner Matrix					
1	Reading individually	55	98	1	1	0
2	Reading aloud	55	98	0	0	0
3	Reading with a small group	37	66	15	27	0
4	Asking the teacher to explain	44	78	2	4	0
5	Asking the teacher for help	55	98	1	1	0
6	Helping a fellow student	56	100	0	0	
7	Selecting books by themselves	55	98	1	1	0
8	Taking books home	56	100	0	0	0

Improved reading scores through reading tests conducted over the project period

AET also conducted assessments of reading levels using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) model as part of another project. The assessment aimed to establish the reading scores of learners across the same 14 targeted schools from grades three to six after one year of intervention. A stratified random sampling was used in which four learners were randomly selected from each grade. In addition, a consideration of gender and age was observed during sampling in order to ensure a balance for the cohort. The reading test looked at grade appropriate vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The same test was used in the 2017 baseline and in the 2018 comparison study. English teachers from grades three to six were consulted and they assisted the team in getting the vocabularies which were grade appropriate. Therefore, every grade was subjected to vocabularies which were meant for their grade levels and not a common vocabulary test as it is done in EGRA tests. Two AET staff administered the tests in 10 schools and managed to get a total sample of 116 learners across the 10 schools. One child was assessed at a time in all the three categories of reading. Testing was undertaken in the following areas:

- Vocabulary knowledge
- Words correctly read per school in one minute
- Fluency
- Comprehension

Comparisons between results at the beginning and end of the project show a clear improvement. AET shared the assessment report with Book Aid International during the evaluation. See detailed findings in Appendix 3.

Catch up programme support.

The book donation in the *Yes to Reading* programme has further contributed to improvement in reading among weaker readers, identified by AET's catch up program. This programme is part of a bigger programme dubbed ILOL (Improving Learning Outcomes in Laikipia North). The primary focus is to help learners that are lagging behind to catch up. The donated books in the *Yes to Reading* project complement the ILOL program well as they are used by learners to progress to level four (reading club). Learners at this level are encouraged to read on their own, read to each other and provide summaries of what they have read. Matthew Saibulaa, a volunteer teacher in Musul Primary School stated that he has been using the story books for a remedial class of 13 pupils in the catch up programme. After using the story books provided through the *Yes to reading* programme, eight pupils have improved and moved to the next level.

2. Increased numbers of children reading for enjoyment.

School libraries set up

All the 14 schools in the project have set up functional school libraries, including those that lacked designated library spaces. They have set up libraries using available spaces and resources. For example, at Nkiloriti Primary School the ECDE class is conducted outside under a tree while grades one and two share the same classroom. In these schools, the Headteachers and schools Boards of Management were encouraged to utilise the resources they had. As a result, school libraries have

been set up in ECDE centres, classrooms, staff-rooms and head teachers' office. In Nkiloriti

Primary School, the deputy head teacher collected off cut pieces of wood and made shelves for the library which has been created by partitioning a classroom used by grade four:



Children reading in the newly partitioned school library in Nkiloriti Primary School

“After we received the books I rolled up my sleeves and collected offcut pieces of wood and embarked on making shelves to arrange the books and make them more visible. Retrieving books from the metal boxes was a challenge so I preferred making shelves from available resources. We went further and partitioned the classroom used by grade four using manilla paper. Half of the class is a library and the other half is used by grade four.” **Daniel Waithaka, the Deputy Headteacher, Nkiloriti Primary School.**

Out of the seven schools visited during the evaluation, five are using a section of classrooms, one is using the staffroom and one is using a corridor space next to the headteachers office. The headteachers can now proudly declare that they have school libraries. *“Upon receiving the books I quickly identified a class that was not in use and set up a library. Our school is in a ranch therefore we receive visitors who are lodging in the ranch. The guests used to wonder why we don't have a library. I now proudly show them our library with beautiful books.”* **Halima Hussein, Headteacher, Oljogi Primary School.**



Children selecting books-Oljogi Primary School library



Pupils in Lekiji Primary School arrange books in the new library cabinet

All 14 school received metal boxes to store the books. However, teachers reported retrieving books from the metal boxes was a challenge. AET carefully selected seven schools that were in need of better storage and used the savings from the project funds to make for them a cupboard with shelves. This provided a much better way of shelving, retrieving and storing the books.

Increased book stock in schools

A total of 19,194 books were distributed to the schools. Each school received 964 UK donated books and 407 locally purchased books. Teachers reported that the UK donated books were suitable and age appropriate and expose the children to the wider world while the local books are more relatable to the local context. Children also enjoy the colourful illustrations and pictures in the UK donated books. The schools had no supplementary readers before the project. Headteachers in Seek, Nkiloriti and Oljogi Primary Schools reported that their schools are not in the Government Free Primary Education

Programme (FPE) because they are not duly registered with the relevant Ministry department due to instability and inconsistency in the schools in the past. They therefore lacked

any books including course books. *“We had no books or learning resources before the project. We saw as if God was truly on our side when we received the book donation. I had sacrificed and bought a course book per class from my personal resources. The books are shared by teachers and pupils. Lack of books made teaching very difficult.”* **Jane Kahia, Headteacher, Seek Primary School.**

“Children did not know what books were. They had not seen such colourful books. They did not even know how to turn the pages. The donation is like precious gold. We have now trained them how to turn pages and use a book.” **Daniel Waithaka, Deputy Headteacher, Nkiloriti Primary School.**



Cupboard library in a corridor next to the Headteacher’s office in Kuri Kuri Primary School

Programmed reading times and increased access to books.

The schools have developed different ways to ensure that children access the books. In some schools books are accessible daily. A good example is Seek Primary School where the books are accessible between 1.30 to 2.00 p.m. daily and 3.10 to 4.30 p.m. twice a week. This is possible because a selection of books are displayed on the desks daily between 1.20p.m and 2.00 p.m. in a designated classroom so that pupils can easily see them and select what to read. The titles are changed after every two weeks. The desks are small and therefore about 100 books only can be displayed at any given time. In addition, Children have difficulties reading the big books on the small desks. Turning pages of the big books on small desks is a challenge. In Enaikishomi primary, pupils can access the books on weekdays, during the short break at 9:30am, long break at 11:00 to 11:30a.m. and lunch time from 1:00 to 1:30pm. The library is also accessible over the weekend. The teacher-librarian works with library prefects to ensure the library is accessible at all times.



Books display for easy access in Seek Primary School



Children in Seek Primary School reading at break time

In the bigger schools a timetable has been developed where each grade has its own day to use the library because the teacher-librarians cannot serve the whole school at once. This was noted in Kuri Kuri Primary School where every grade accesses the library books once a week. The time is limiting because some pupils would want to borrow more than once a week. Other schools namely Lekiji and Oljogi Primary need to create more time for children to access the books. In Lekiji Primary School, pupils borrow books once a week.

In schools with inadequate teachers the school library has helped to fill in the gap. A good example is Nkiloriti Primary where there are only six teachers for seven classes. At any given time there is a class without a teacher. The affected pupils utilize this time to read in the school library. The school library in Nkiloriti is accessible to pupils throughout the day. Pupils in the classes housing the library tend to use the library more than the pupils in other classes.

Introduction of library lessons

Before the project, a lack of story books meant that a library lesson was not included in the schools weekly timetables. However, schools started conducting the library lessons after receiving the book donation. Class teachers select books for a class and conduct reading activities which include silent reading, drama, miming, retell and summarising in which children

are asked to write five sentences about what they have read. The books have motivated the teachers to conduct library lessons.

3. Teachers have the skills, knowledge and confidence to manage school libraries and promote reading.

A total number of 38 teachers (13 Head teachers and 25 teachers) and six AET staff were trained on basic library management and reading promotion. Head teachers and teachers have been able to utilise this new knowledge and skills in their schools.

Use of supplementary books to teach in class

Teachers reported that the skills they gained in the training have helped them to use the donated books to teach comprehension and other subjects in class. The training helped teachers to appreciate the use of supplementary books in class.

“I use the books in class because they help the pupils to be more creative and imaginative. The books are exposing the children to the outside world. They are able to travel to other parts of the world through the books. The learners mind is expanded. The books helps them to aspire to study hard in order to be able travel to other countries.” **Jane Kahia, Headteacher, Seek Primary School.**



“The UK donated books are resourceful and useful in teaching and illustrating science e.g. roads, highways. The pictorial work is very good and helpful to the children who have never seen a tarmacked road in their lifetime” **Lenson Rikana, teacher-librarian, Olotasha Primary School.**

Left: Teacher-librarian Lenson Rikana, Olotasha Primary School

“The UK donated books are good for lower grades. They contain interesting illustrations, activities and sounds. They are very different from our local books. The books are simple and clear. Learners understand easily. I use them to teach grade 8 who are having challenges with reading. I was not taught sounds and phonetics in the teachers training college nor was I taught through sounds when I was a pupil. I’m learning how to use sounds in teaching through the UK donated books which make it very easy to learn and teach the pupils”. **Charles Karuri, teacher-librarian, Oljogi Primary School.**

“The UK donated books are useful for teaching comprehension. Children are curious and eager to read the books.” **Mohamed Abdi Noor, Headteacher, Kuri Kuri Primary School.**



Mohamed Noor Abdi, Headteacher, Kuri Kuri Primary School

Teachers in ECDE and lower grades in Lekiji Primary School borrow the Maa books very frequently to get more stories to tell the younger children; they had told and retold all the stories they knew. The new Maa books have given them an avenue to get more stories to share with the pupils.

Confidence to train other teachers and library prefects and monitors.

Teachers have managed to confidently train their colleagues and library prefects who help in running the school libraries. Class teachers are responsible for the books in class during the library lessons. The teacher-librarians have shown them how to maintain records of books borrowed by individual pupils. Library prefects oversee and monitor how pupils handle and read



Pius Wandiki Rusu, Library prefect, Nkiloriti Primary School

books in class. They ensure there is silence and concentration especially when the teacher is not there during both the library lesson and the other designated reading times. In Olotasha, Lekiji and Nkiloriti Primary Schools, the library prefects have further been trained to record books in the accession and lending register.

“Running the library is not a problem for me as it is fun interacting with the books. I love books and my teacher has shown me how to record and arrange the books.” **Pius**

Wandiki Rusu, library prefect, Nkiloriti Primary School.

Well maintained library records

All the schools maintain an accession register and a lending register. The records help the schools to monitor the use of the books. The teacher-librarian in Nkiloriti Primary school has created a database of all the library books received through the donation.

“The process took a lot of my time but I am glad that I managed to type details of all the books in the database. I have saved the data online so it can be accessed even when the laptop in the school breaks down. We were trained on basic ICT skills through the government laptop programme and I found this to be a wonderful opportunity to use the skills in the library.” **Daniel Waithaka, Deputy**

Headteacher and teacher librarian, Nkiloriti Primary School.



Daniel Waithaka, Deputy Headteacher, Nkiloriti Primary school

Reading activities

Teachers have introduced reading activities which include reading competitions between classes, reading aloud, summarizing, storytelling, retell and small incentives to motivate children to read more. These activities motivate pupils to read.

4. Literacy hour implementation within communities and community engagement in supporting reading and learning.

Community meetings.

AET conducted four community meetings in March 2018 in Nkiloriti Primary, Lower Segeera (Oljogi and Lekiji primary schools) and Upper Segeera (Olgirgir Primary). It was not possible to conduct the meetings in schools in the east due to security issues. Parents were informed about how to care for, handle and use books. Parents committed to encourage their children to borrow books and urged schools to allow pupils to borrow books to read during the holiday. Parents agreed to monitor the use of books by their children during the holidays. Parents also committed to borrow books to read. Parents in Oljogi and Lekiji primary schools declared their will to contribute towards the supply of some additional reading desks for their library. They also agreed to contribute some money for the purchase of additional locally-published readers.

Increased borrowing by parents.

AET staff and teachers reported that parents have developed an interest in knowing what the children are reading. AET has actively sensitized parents about the school libraries in community meetings. Teachers reported that more parents were borrowing books from the school libraries to read at home as a result. Pupils are also borrowing books for their parents. The reading culture is spreading beyond the school:

“I borrow books for my father. He likes reading our books, currently he is reading a book titled Who put that there?”

Lincoln Wachira, grade three, Olgoji Primary School.



Joyce Kiso a parent at Enaikishomi Primary School

In Enaikishomi Primary school about 10 parents visit the school library regularly to borrow books to read at home with their children. *“I decided to start reading the children’s story books so that I can monitor my children more closely. They used to cheat me a lot. After I started borrowing the books to read they cannot cheat me and I am able to guide them. They have to tell me the stories they have read. My favourite story book is Ajali Barabarani, I enjoy reading Kiswahili stories.”* **Joyce Kisio, a parent at Enaikishomi Primary School.**

Increased reading in the community.

Head teachers reported that most of the parents in the community are illiterate but are very supportive and are spreading the word that schools now have good books for children. Parents’ attitudes have changed and they are sending their children to school. In addition, headteachers have tried to reach out to school leavers who are at home. About four school leavers borrow books from Seek Primary School. Parents are also borrowing books to read with their children at home.

Most of the children do not go home for lunch because there is no food at home. They therefore read in school during lunch break. Some stay in school until 5.30p.m. to read the books. Teachers also reported that cases of absenteeism have reduced drastically. The school library has curbed absenteeism especially after Maa books were introduced. Pupils are reading at home and in school. *“Parents come to school to complain that children don’t help with some chores and are always reading.”* **Jane Kahia, Headteacher, Seek Primary School.**

“Children are always asking me when I will open the library. Before we received the books they could only go to the field to play.” **Charles Karuri, Teacher-librarian, Oljogi Primary School.**

“Children are now able to read and comprehend. Readers are identified and asked to read during assembly. This encourages others to read the books.” **Mohamed Abdi Noor, Heateacher, Kuri-Kuri Primary School.**

Teachers observed that children from different schools are discussing the books they have read. This is encouraging more reading because they want to read what the other pupils in other schools have read. In addition, pupils interviewed said that they read the books at home with their siblings and parents.

“We have children who were formally non-readers who are now readers. The book donation has helped to inculcate a culture of reading in the school. More children are now able to speak English words.” **Samuel Lenhura, Deputy Headteacher, Lekiji Primary School.**



Children reading in Seek Primary School



Reading time at Nkiloriti Primary School

Teachers have developed different ways to ensure that children read. In Nkiloriti Primary School a sign has been put in strategic places in the school with the question “**Have you read a book today?**” This helps to remind children that they need to read a book daily. The deputy headteacher also asks them to tell him the book they have read whenever he meets them in the school compound.

“Reading culture has improved and children are able to express themselves and tackle examination questions positively. They have also gained self-confidence hence improving self-esteem.” Benjamin Karingithi, Deputy Headteacher, Enaikishomi Primary School.

Reading in Manyatta Learning Centres (literacy hour)

Africa Education Trust (AET) has supported the establishment of 29 Manyatta Learning Centres (MLCs) in the Sub-county. They were set up to encourage families who live in the same area to come together to learn so that they are better able to support their children. In Laikipia County only 23% of residents have secondary level education or higher. Specifically, in Laikipia North constituency, the rate is the lowest of the entire county³. This led AET to develop a programme for parents and children to learn together. The learning centres aim to support lower grade learners through parental participation in learning. At the centres, parents help learners with their homework as well as help them read story books, school books and other materials available. Many of the stories are traditional folk tales that AET has collected, published and given to the MLC’s. The MLCs are hosted in villages with schools which enables easier access to books from the school libraries. The learning takes place in local spaces – a local church, an ECDE class, under a tree etc. Each centre has about 20 to 40 adults attend and is run by volunteers who have been trained by AET. Books form a major component of the centres where learning and reading takes place twice a week.

A visit to two Manyatta Learning Centres in Morpusi and Munipicha revealed the evident need for simple English and Kiswahili books for adult learners. Adult learners who have learned how to read and write are gradually moved to the advanced level where they are introduced to Kiswahili and English books with pictures and short paragraphs which they enjoy reading with their children. Approximately 174 adults in the MLCs are advanced learners who borrow books from nearby schools that received the book donation under the *Yes to Reading* programme.

All the parents stated that they like reading so that they can be able to guide their children.

“I want to know how to read so that my children cannot lie to me. I have been taught on the black board but now I can read and I am happy. I can now read with my children.” **John, a parent at Morpusi Manyatta Learning Centre.**

“My children will not lie to me again. I am now able to supervise their homework and they respect me unlike before when they used to say that I know nothing and cannot help them, The English simple story books have helped me to learn more English words.” **Margaret Lenganon, a parent, Munipicha Manyatta Learning Centre.**

³ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2013

“It has taken me five years to know how to read. I now feel fulfilled and would like to read more Kiswahili and English books. I have finished reading all the Maa books.” **Grace Lentiya, a parent, Munipicha Manyatta Learning Centre.**

Pamela Morijoh, the volunteer teacher at Munipicha Manyatta Learning Centre explained that after the adults know how to read and write they are gradually introduced to simple Kiswahili books. She further stated that the parent and child sit together to read and whichever is able to read, reads for the other. Young children love and enjoy sitting with their parents. She observed that most of the parents are now able to oversee the children’s homework.

According to AET staff in Dol Dol, children enjoy reading story books with their parents in these centres. *“When the parent reads with the child their functional literacy improves. Through the books they are able to advance their literacy level. Parents are learning to read through the picture books with simple words and sentences.”* **Alex Kirimi, AET staff, Dol Dol.**

The main challenge in running the Manyatta Learning Centres is the security and storage of the books. The volunteer facilitators keep the books in their homes especially where the centres are outside under a tree. AET has trained the facilitators on basic record keeping. They are therefore able to maintain a record of all the books in their possession.



Parents and children enjoy reading together in Morpusi Learning Centre



Reading session between parents and children at Munipicha Manyatta Learning Centre

Lessons Learned

1. School libraries are key in reclaiming the library lesson.

The schools were unable to implement the library lesson due to lack of supplementary reading material. Provision of appropriate reading material has given the schools an incentive to utilise the library lesson for leisure reading. Pupils love the library lesson.

2. Availability of books in school help to reduce cases of absenteeism.

Teachers reported that cases of absenteeism have greatly reduced. Children are eager to be in school and parents are encouraging their children to stay in school to access the books. *“This is the best embraced donor and well-wisher.”* **Robert Karugu, Deputy Headteacher, Olotasha Primary School.** Olotasha Primary reported an increase in pupil population from 177 pupils in 2016 to 280 pupils in February, 2018. The community is largely pastoralist and absenteeism during the market days is still a challenge because children are left to tend the livestock as the parents go to the market to buy and sell more livestock and other items.

3. Leisure reading helps children to manage their time well in school.

Time management among pupils has improved greatly. *“Children eat very fast so that they can go and read. The cook no longer has any problem calling the children to go and eat.”* **Mohamed Noor Abdi, Headteacher, Kuri Kuri Primary School.**

4. Increased access to books helps transition from Maa to English language.

Availability of simple English books is contributing to an easier transition from Maa to English. Teachers reported that children are speaking more of English. Children are eager to use the words they have read in the books.

5. School libraries help to maintain discipline in the school.

In schools with an inadequate number of teachers, the school library has helped to fill in the gap and maintain discipline in the school. A good example is Nkiloriti Primary where there are only six teachers for seven classes. At any given time there is a class without a teacher. The affected pupils utilise this time to read in the school library. The library has been created from a classroom – manila paper has been used to partition the classroom. The school library in this school is accessible to pupils throughout the day. Noise has reduced considerably in the schools.

6. Library prefects are helpful in running school libraries.

Engaging pupil library prefects in running the school library gives pupils more time to access the books as the library prefects are able to serve the pupils when the teacher-librarian is not in.

7. Involvement of local education officials is key to sustainability.

Involvement of the local education office is crucial to the continuity of any school programme. AET staff attend quarterly project committee meeting at the Sub-county Education Office chaired by the Sub-county Education Officer. All educational projects are discussed at length and the Curriculum Support Officer is tasked to monitor all the projects being implemented by other partners while visiting the schools. As the programme comes to an end the Curriculum

Support Officer will continue to monitor use of the school libraries. The Education Office has designated it as part of the education programme.

8. The school library has strengthened relationship between Book Aid International's local partner, schools and the community.

The programme has helped to strengthen the relationship between AET, the schools and the community. The well-stocked school libraries have drawn parents to the schools. They are more supportive and show keen interest in their children's learning process. *"I have been trying so hard to gain parental support in the education of the children which has not been possible. The school libraries provided an entry point for parental support. I have observed illiterate parents sitting with their children just to admire the pictures in the books as the children read. Parents now encourage the children to borrow and read the story books."*

Alex Kirimi, AET staff. Parents are now more receptive and willing to be involved in education of their children. More parents are sending their children to schools. Frequent follow up visits by AET staff to the schools helped in the seamless implementation of activities and cemented the relationship further. Every school was visited at least three times a month for the duration of the project.

9. Metal boxes unsuitable as book box libraries.

The metal boxes acquired through the project were suitable for storing the books but retrieving the books from the boxes was a challenge. In addition, the boxes have very sharp edges that can harm children. The schools without shelves, display the books on tables and chairs for children to access every day in a chosen classroom. This is a very tedious daily exercise. Proper storage facilities that can allow easy access to the books would be more appropriate. Seven schools received cabinets with shelves that allows for proper shelving and easy retrieval. These lockable cabinets would have been more appropriate for all the schools.

Conclusions and emerging issues

- Each school in the project has established a library and developed appropriate library records. The schools have also activated the library lessons. Library management in general has improved in the schools.
- The schools have poor infrastructure. There is acute shortage of classrooms and in some schools different grades share the same classroom. Others learn outside under a tree. In these schools, having a separate library room is not a priority; however, schools have been innovative and have used existing resources and structures to facilitate access to the books.
- The reading culture is improving in the region. Both pupils and parents are borrowing books to read. Supplementary books provides good resources for leisure reading.



An ECDE class under a tree at Nkiloriti Primary School



Different grades share the same classroom at Nkiloriti Primary School

- The UK donated books are pictorial with good illustrations which supports the current new Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) education programme being implemented in the country.
- The UK-donated books are showing teachers how to use phonics to teach. Teachers of pupils in lower grades have recently been trained in the use of sounds through the government's Tusome programme. However, teachers of other grades have not received this training and are finding the UK donated phonic books very useful. They are learning how to teach sounds and are now able to help weaker children in upper grades.
- The time to access books in some schools is limiting. There is need for all the schools to allow children to take books home. It was noted that some schools do not allow children to take books home. Teachers in Kuri Kuri Primary School said it was not possible to allow the children to take books home because of the poor living conditions and nomadic lifestyle in the community. Parents need to be sensitized through the Board of Management and local administration so that children can borrow and take books home. AET has already conducted four community meetings and will continue with the meetings in collaboration with the Sub-county Education Office to sensitize parents.

- Seek and Oljogi primary schools are not registered with the Ministry of Education to receive Free Primary Education government books. Seek Primary was destroyed and closed during election violence in 1992. The school was revived in 2011 but the headteacher deserted the school in 2014 for over a year. The school was therefore not registered to receive Free Primary Education Books. The current headteacher is in the progress of having the school registered. Oljogi Primary School is situated in a local private ranch. The ranch owners feared the government would interfere with land ownership and rejected the Free Primary Education Programme (FPE). However, the government has posted teachers to the school. This is a decision that the ranch owners are now regretting because while other government schools are receiving funds to buy books they have to purchase the books themselves. All the schools should seek ways to be registered in order to benefit from government educational programmes.
- Prolonged drought in the region affects the pupils. They are unable to concentrate when they have not eaten. The region experienced a prolonged dry season for over five months. AET is implementing a programme that provides porridge for the pupils.
- The environment in the region is harsh with rough terrain, impassable roads and wild animals. All these make accessibility to the schools a great challenge.



Rough terrain



Wild animals walk freely

Recommendations

- More needs to be done to sensitize other teachers in the schools. In some schools, teachers are reluctant to use the library books. *“Teachers have a negative attitude. They reason that since I was the one trained then the library and the books are my responsibility. They have not understood and embraced the school library.”* **Jane Kahia Headteacher, Seek Primary School.**
- There is need for more Maa books. Teachers reported that the children have read all the available Maa books. Initial reading in Maa language helps children to transition on to English easily. The English books are simple to understand and they can translate the English words into Maa and vice versa.

- Schools need proper storage facilities. Provision of shelves to display and arrange the books would facilitate easier retrieval. Metal boxes are not suitable and safe enough to be used by young children due to sharp edges.
- Training should be increased from three to five days. Teachers stated that the training was good but there was an overload of information within a short time.
- Provision of simple Kiswahili and English books in all the Manyatta Learning Centres (MLCs). The books will improve functional literacy of the adult learners.

Please see our conclusions over the page.

Conclusion

Yes to Reading programme has without doubt shown the important role of school libraries in children's learning. School libraries have been well embraced in schools and teachers are more confident to manage them and make use of reading resources to help their learners. School libraries have acted as a catalyst to better collaboration among stakeholders (AET, education officials, schools and communities) and they are promoting reading even at community level. AET are keen to see the reading programme continue in schools and communities. This will be achieved through a community approach and engaging with the Sub-county Education Office. AET has an office in Dol Dol and are implementing other programmes in the Sub-county. They will continue to monitor the school libraries and community reading programmes as they implement other programmes.

Appendix 1: Book distribution to schools

	School	Book Aid International UK donated books	Local books in English and Kiswahili	Local books in Maa	Total
1	Seek	964	358	49	1,371
2	Kuri-kuri	964	358	49	1,371
3	Soit-oudo	964	358	49	1,371
4	Saramba	964	358	49	1,371
5	Olotasha	964	358	49	1,371
6	Enaikishomi	964	358	49	1,371
7	Sang'a	964	358	49	1,371
8	Sieku	964	358	49	1,371
9	Lokusero	964	358	49	1,371
10	Nkiloriti	964	358	49	1,371
11	Nosirai	964	358	49	1,371
12	Oljogi	964	358	49	1,371
13	Lekiji	964	358	49	1,371
14	Olgir-gir	964	358	49	1,371
	TOTAL	13,496	5,012	686	19,194

Appendix 2: School enrolment as at February 2018

	School	ECDE			Grade 1 to 8			Teachers		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Seek	15	17	32	31	23	54	3	2	5
2	Olotasha	60	55	115	144	134	278	5	2	7
3	Enaikishomi	35	32	67	106	98	204	7	2	9
4	Lokusero	23	20	43	160	145	305	7	1	8

	School	ECDE			Grade 1 to 8			Teachers		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Male	Female	Total
5	Sieku	23	27	50	73	73	146	5	2	7
6	Kuri Kuri	95	86	181	128	118	246	4	2	6
7	Soit Oudo	71	71	142	111	109	220	6	1	7
8	Sang'a	22	18	40	60	72	132	10	0	10
9	Olgir-gir	78	74	152	321	282	603	3	11	14
10	Oljogi	23	22	45	97	94	191	7	3	10
11	Lekiji	30	34	64	83	66	149	8	2	10
12	Sarampa	48	38	86	54	44	98	7	1	8
13	Nkloriti	24	14	38	35	44	79	4	2	6
14	Nosirai	48	38	86	56	36	92	4	2	6
	Total	595	546	1,141	1,459	1,338	2,797	80	33	113

Appendix 3: Findings of the reading tests conducted by AET.

1. Administering of the test

Two AET staff administered the tests in 10 schools and got a total sample of 116 learners across the 10 schools. The test is a one-on-one type where pupils were assessed one at a time in all three categories of reading.

Table 1: Number of learners assessed per grade in 2017 and 2018

Grade	Number of learners assessed			
	Frequency(2017)	Percent %	Frequency(2018)	Percent %
3	54	26.73	31	26.7
4	52	25.74	31	26.7
5	48	23.76	30	25.8
6	48	23.76	24	20.7
Total	202	100	116	100

Fewer learners were assessed in 2018 compared to 2017. This was because 10 schools were targeted in 2018 compared to 14 schools in 2017. There was insecurity in some regions which hindered enumerators from accessing four schools.

Table 2: Number of learners assessed across the gender divide in 2017 and 2018

Gender	Number of learners assessed across the gender divide			
	2017		2018	
	Frequency (2017)	Percent %	Frequency (2018)	Percent %
Female	102	50.5	58	50
Male	100	49.5	58	50
Total	202	100	116	100

Gender seems to have been balanced in both assessments as there is no significant difference between the number of boys and girls in both assessments.

2. Testing vocabulary knowledge

Table 3: Average number of words correctly read per minute

Grade	Average number of correct words read per minute (2017)	Average number of correct words read per minute (2018)
3	17.2	36.7
4	17.9	32.4
5	16.1	37.8
6	26.5	42.3

Using vocabulary derived from course books specific to each grade, the above averages show the capacity of learners in reading vocabulary that is specific to their grade level. There were a total of 50 words per grade and only grade six managed to read an above average number of words per minute in 2017. Grade five showed low reading skills after managing an average of only 16 correctly read words per minute, scoring below grades three and four in the same year (2017). It therefore shows that in reading, the majority of learners are below average in correctly reading vocabulary of their grade level in 2017.

In 2018, all grades read an average of more than half of the given sounds (50) per minute. This indicates that reading story books during library lessons and reading clubs started through AET's catch up program have greatly contributed to the improvement in vocabulary reading. Each school has received an average of 1500 books which shows the book-to-pupil ratio stands at 1:4 in most schools.

Table 4: Average number of words correctly read Per Minute in terms of gender

Gender	Average number of correct words read per minute (2017)	Average number of correct words read per minute (2018)
Female	18.7	34.1
Male	20.0	39.2

In terms of gender, there is no significant difference between reading skills of male and female learners though it's worth noting the slightly higher scores recorded by male learners in 2017. In 2018, both genders improved significantly and girls improved by an average of 16 correctly read vocabularies per minute compared to boys who improved by 19 vocabularies per minute. A teacher from Oljogi Primary School said that pupils have improved in reading vocabularies because of the variety of story books available hence broadening their knowledge of unfamiliar words.

Table 5: Average number of words correctly read per school in 1 minute

	Name of school	Average number of correct words per minute (2017)	Average number of correct words per minute (2018)
1	Enaikishomi	29.1	40.1
2	Oljogi	28.1	39.1
3	Lokusero	27.3	–
4	Sang'a	27.1	–
5	Olgir-gir	24.6	–
6	Olotasha	21	36.2
7	Nkiloriti	19.1	28.6
8	Lekiji	17.1	36.5
9	Sieku	13.9	–
10	Saramba	13.6	43.2
11	Kuri kuri	10.9	40.4
12	Soit-oudo	10.3	44.7
13	St. Ann Nosirai	5.5	–
14	Seek	4.6	18.3

Only four out of 14 schools (29%) managed to register all the four grades scoring above average in vocabulary reading in 2017. Seek, Nosirai, Soit-oudo and Kuri-Kuri had low reading scores. In 2018, there was a big improvement in scores at all the schools especially at Kuri-Kuri and Soitoudo primary schools where scores rose to an average of 30 words per minute. The monitoring reports from these two schools have indicated that books are greatly utilised and pupils have access to story books in reading clubs and library lessons. The schools have also given pupils an opportunity to learn decoding in remedial program which might have given them an extra boost with their reading.

The graph below reveals the improvement in the nine schools where comparison was done.

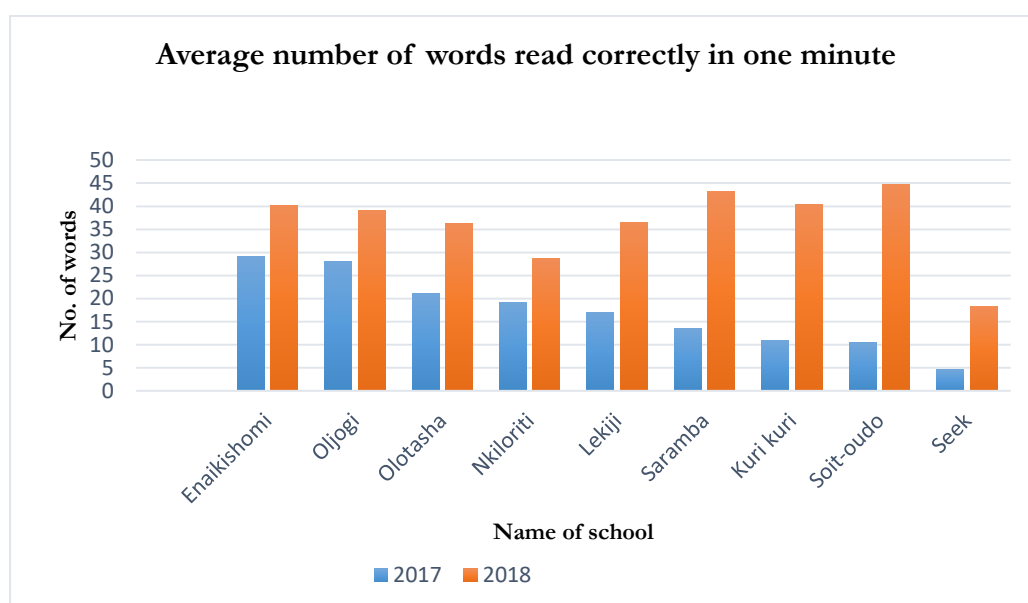


Table 6: Break down of correctly read words per minute across the classes

		Number of words read per minute				
	Year		Read 0 words per minute	Read >0 & <50% words per minute	Read 50% and above words per minute	Total
Grade 3	2017	Frequency	10	31	13	54
		Percent	18.52	57.41	24.07	100
	2018	Frequency	1	4	18	23
		Percent	4.35	17.39	78.26	100
Grade 4	2017	Frequency	7	30	15	52
		Percent	13.46	57.69	28.85	100
	2018	Frequency	2	5	20	27
		Percent	7.41	18.52	74.07	100
Grade 5	2017	Frequency	5	28	15	48
		Percent	10.42	58.33	31.25	100
	2018	Frequency	0	4	22	26
		Percent	0	15.38	84.62	100
Grade 6	2017	Frequency	1	20	27	48
		Percent	2.08	41.67	56.25	100
	2018	Frequency	0	2	22	24
		Percent	0	8.33	91.67	100

Further analysis has indicated that after one year of implementation of the reading program there has been a significant increase in learners who are able to read more than 50% of the words correctly per minute in each grade. In grade six, 56.25% of learners read more than half of the words correctly in 2017 compared to 91.67% of learners in 2018. In grade five, 31.25% of learners read more than half of the words in 2017 compared to 84.62% in 2018. Grade three seems to have improved most. Responses from teacher-librarians showed that grade three has been using the books to conduct reading as a continuation of the TUSOME and AET reading programs

3. Testing fluency

Fluency was tested after learners were subjected to an early grade reading assessment (EGRA) oral passage which was the same for all the four grades. The passage had 60 words and the learners were given one minute to read it. The EGRA passage is a simple connected text normally used for testing fluency at lower grades (grade one to three).

Table 7: Distribution of fluently read words across grades

	Year		Number of words read per minute			Total
			Read 0 words per minute	Read >0 & <50% words per minute	Read 50% and above words per minute	
Grade 3	2017	Frequency	11	5	38	54
		Percent	20.37	9.26	70.37	100
	2018	Frequency	0	0	23	23
		Percent	0	0	100	100
Grade 4	2017	Frequency	8	3	41	52
		Percent	15.38	5.77	78.85	100
	2018	Frequency	2	0	25	27
		Percent	7.41	0	92.59	100
Grade 5	2017	Frequency	3	5	40	48
		Percent	6.25	10.42	83.33	100
	2018	Frequency	1	2	23	26
		Percent	3.85	7.69	88.46	100
Grade 6	2017	Frequency	1	0	47	48
		Percent	2.08	0	97.92	100
	2018	Frequency	1	0	23	24
		Percent	4.17	0	95.83	100

In oral passage reading, all grades were found to have improved in reading connected text. However, grade six learners are seen to have slightly declined by 2% in reading more than 50% of the words correctly. Grade three showed the greatest improvement from 70% to 100% in reading half of the words in the passage correctly.

4. Testing comprehension

After reading the passage, learners were asked questions to find out if they had understood what they read. A correlation was done to look at the relationship between reading and comprehension.

Table 8: Relationship between reading and comprehension

Fluency	Year	Question one responses				Total
		No response		Correct response	Incorrect response	
Read 0 words correctly	2017	Frequency	23	0	0	23
		Percent	100	0	0	100
	2018	Frequency	4	0	0	4
		Percent	100	0	0	100
Read >0 & <50% words per minute	2017	Frequency	5	6	2	13
		Percent	38.46	46.15	15.38	100
	2018	Frequency	1	1	0	2
		Percent	50	50	0	100
Read 50% and above words per minute	2017	Frequency	22	123	21	166
		Percent	13.25	74.1	12.65	100
	2018	Frequency	0	89	4	94
		Percent	0	94.68	4.26	100

As expected, none of those learners who were unable to read the passage answered question one correctly. In fact none of them responded to the question. For those who read less than half of the words in the passage per minute correctly, 46.15% of them answered question 1 correctly in 2017 compared to 50% in 2018.

For those who read 50% and above words correctly per minute, 74.1% of them answered question one correctly in 2017 compared to 94.68% in 2018.

It is therefore evident that there is a relationship between reading and comprehension and learners who are fluent in reading have a higher chance of understanding the text than those who have less fluency. Learners have improved in understanding what they read in 2018 compared to 2017 and there is no doubt that the provision of story books have contributed significantly towards this positive move.