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RE: LITERACY OUTCOMES FROM HAPPY READERS PROJECT IN ZIMBABWE

I include the summary of results on Reading & Literacy impacts that we have already achieved within the DFID-funded Girls Education Challenge-financed project in 300 deprived rural schools in Zimbabwe (IGATE).

Below is a quick summary of our research findings on the literacy impact of Happy Readers in this project. The project was a multi-faceted approach to alleviating barriers to Girls Education access and outcomes. The four year project ran from 2013 to 2016, but Happy Readers joined the project mid-2015, with 18 months remaining.

In this project, Happy Readers delivered 235,000 books to 300 schools and trained 2,525 teachers in the use of the materials over 18 months. Proven GIRL beneficiaries reached were 53,000 for literacy and 45,000 for numeracy (target was 37,000). The total will be higher (just over double) as the Happy Readers intervention reached both boys and girls equally, although the key metric for the project was girl beneficiaries. All targeted schools were among the most marginalized rural schools & communities in Zimbabwe.

We tested over 5000 children in Grades 2,3,4&5 a year or so apart - just before they started using Happy Readers and one year on. This is a very short time to expect results and literacy improvements, but what we have seen so far has been very exciting !

Key Findings

The results show significant impacts across all reading ability levels and grades:

- **big drops in the hard-to-reach Non-Readers, (down by 60%)**
- **significant improvements in Headline Literacy rates (up by 55%+) (based on Word Recognition)**
- **significant improvements in Sentence Reading (+70-85%), especially in Grades 3 to 5**
- **significant improvements in Comprehension scores (+46-65%) in Grades 3 to 5**
- **Huge improvements in "Real Readers"¹ (+110% in Grades 3 to 5, +250% in Grade 2)**

The largest benefits of Happy Readers are seen in Grades 2 and 3.

Grades 4 and 5 show improvements mainly in the struggling readers, but also significantly in terms of sentence reading and comprehension.

These results show that the Happy Readers literacy program has benefitted children across age groups (Grades 2 to 5) and initial ability levels from complete Non-Readers, average readers

¹ This is the proportion of the class who could read at least 20 words from the word test, and read at least 1 sentence from the reading passages, and answer at least 1 Comprehension Question correctly.

LITERACY OUTCOMES FROM HAPPY READERS PROJECT IN ZIMBABWE

through to good readers. The literacy improvements cover Word Recognition (basic literacy) and also the more in-depth reading dimensions of passage reading and comprehension.

In summary we saw big headline literacy rate improvements in Grades 2&3 of 55%, less so in Grades 4&5 (+10%). Grades 2,3&4 started with literacy rates of 40%, and 25% for Grade 5. However we found that the Grades 4&5 had only used the Level 1 Happy Readers, and their reading scores were at or above the expectations for Level 1 in the beginning (as one would hope!)

However what we DID see were very good improvements in the Sentence Reading, and critically, the Comprehension scores of the Grade 4&5 children. This has been very pleasing to see. Sentence reading scores were up by 86% in Grade 4, and Comprehension scores up by 64%.

We saw steep drops in the proportion of complete Non-Readers (the Zero Word Scores). Across all Grades 2 & 3 tested, these were 40% of the class before using Happy Readers, and under 15% after. In the Grades 4&5 there were still 16 to 20% of children unable to read a single word at the initial test time - these rates halved over the first year of using Happy Readers.

I attach an extracted summary of these results for you. I hope you find them interesting! These results, and the improvements seen, are consistent with other tests we have done in other projects. All this is backed up by extensive Qualitative analysis that shows the impact and perceived highly positive impact of Happy Readers on reading in the schools, by Heads, teachers and pupils.

One year was a very short time to expect significant impacts, but I also believe that once children in the medium to upper grades have completed Happy Readers Level 2 we will see more impact at Grade 4&5. We are also bringing out the Level 3 books and these will improve the literacy impact at upper grades in any future projects we do. These books also feature relevant themes including Conservation Farming & selling of produce for sustainable livelihoods, Child Protection including early childhood marriage, displaced communities resettling and rebuilding, and even landmine risk education.

Illiteracy is a notoriously difficult problem to solve, and many literacy projects are delighted to see positive changes of around 10%. These results, and the supporting qualitative feedback from schools, show that Happy Readers in IGATE has proven to be a powerful tool to improve student literacy, motivating children to read and improving their reading skills. Teachers are enthusiastic about how Happy Readers has inspired a culture of reading within schools that has been maintained by the students with the support of their teachers.

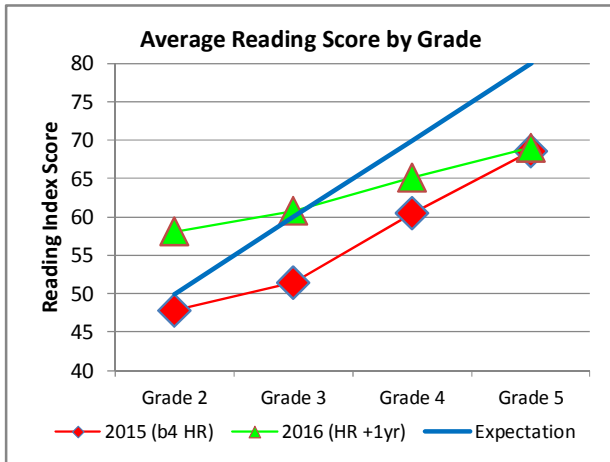
Yours sincerely



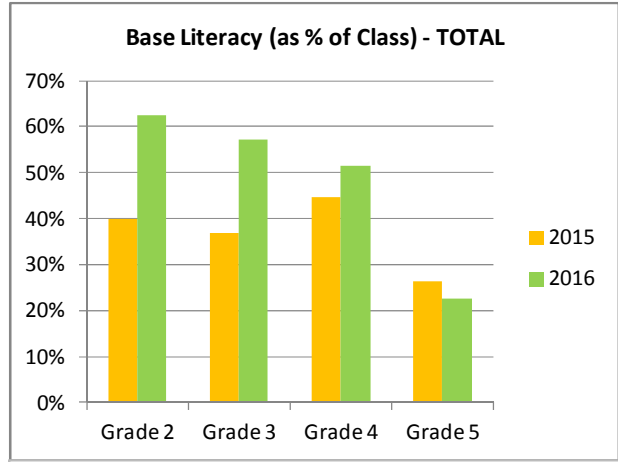
Conor O'Beirne
Director

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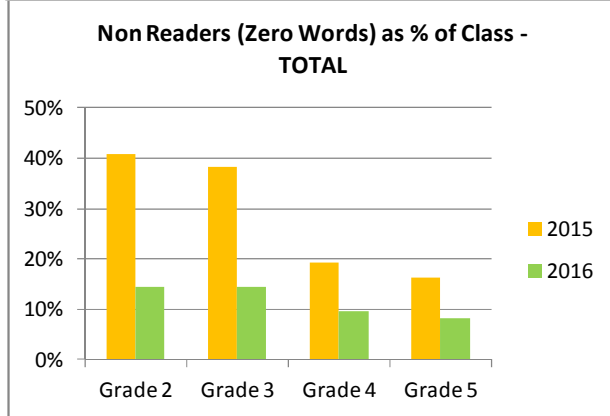
**SUMMARY OF READING OUTCOME RESULTS
HAPPY READERS USED IN 300 SCHOOLS
5000 children tested from 30 schools (Grades 2,3,4,5)**



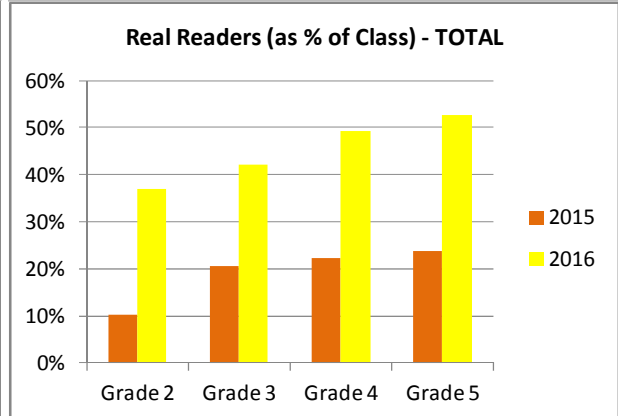
The Reading Index Score is derived from the number of words read correctly from a list of words graded from simple to complex. Pre-HR, all grades were well below the expectation, and after 1 year Grades 2&3 are ahead of expectation. Grades 4&5 still lag behind. Grade 2&3 post-HR score similar to Grade 4 pre-HR.



This is the percentage of children in the class that meet the minimum literacy level (threshold) for their Grade. (based on how far they progress on the graded word list). Big improvements in Grade 2 & 3, (from 40% to 60% of pupils). Minimal change in Grade 4 & 5. Grade 5 level is very low (25%)



This is the proportion of children who were unable to read a single word correctly from the list. In 2015 40% of children in Grades 2&3 could not read single word. Huge drop to c.15%. In Grade 4&5 Non-Readers dropped by half from 20% to 10%.



This is the proportion of the class who could read at least 20 words from the word test, and read at least 1 sentence from the reading passages, and answer at least 1 Comprehension Question correctly. The rates were very low in all Grades in 2015. Grade 2 increased from 10% to 37% of pupils and Grades 3,4,5 from c. 20% to 40% to 50% of pupils.