



**Happy Readers Initiative  
Summary and Analysis**

for

**Happy Readers**

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by

**Laura Wangness Willemsen, Ph.D.**

**Suzanne Cade, M.A.**

**Shirley J. Miske, Ph.D.**

**Miske Witt & Associates Inc.  
3490 Lexington Avenue North #320  
Shoreview, MN 55126 USA  
[www.miskewitt.com](http://www.miskewitt.com)**

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## **Abbreviations**

ERI	Early Readers Initiative
HoS	Head of School
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
PLAP	Performance Lag Address Programme

## Introduction

Happy Readers is one of nine interventions comprising World Vision Zimbabwe's "Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education" (IGATE) project, which has been created to support girls' enrollment, attendance, retention, and learning in Zimbabwean schools. Happy Readers targets students' literacy and numeracy skill development through the provision of books tailored to Zimbabwean contexts written in three languages: Shona, Ndebele, and English. The organization trains teachers to make use of these texts to support student learning.

The Terms of Reference requested "a report distilling the feedback (i.e., a qualitative analysis) from Heads of School (HoS), teachers, and pupils into a coherent narrative of the effect and impact of the Happy Readers intervention on children in the schools. . . . The report should cover a summary of feedback from Heads; from teachers; [and from] children/pupils; as well as an assessment of overall impacts of Happy Readers in the lives, learning and wellbeing of children in the schools."

Following a brief description of background information (i.e., the Happy Readers approach, IGATE monitoring data, and the process of data analysis), the report offers a brief summary of feedback provided by the three stakeholder groups: HoS, teachers, and pupils. These summaries are followed by the more extensive narrative on the effect and impact of Happy Readers in IGATE schools.

## Background

Happy Readers is a set of Learn-to-Read books developed in Zimbabwe for use in African school situations, especially where English is a second language. The books use African wild animals as the characters to promote positive African values in a learning environment, as well as sensitizing children and teachers to gender specific issues, best cultural practices, and better world themes. The stories are printed on durable gloss paper with large, clear, color pictures on each page to illustrate the stories. The books are designed for increasing skill levels at Grades 1, 2 and 3, and are also used in grades 3, 4, 5, and 6. (According to Happy Readers website, the books are used "even in Grade 7 for remedial reading."<sup>1</sup>) All books are approved by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) in Zimbabwe for use in schools. Pupils

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<sup>1</sup> Happy Readers Website, <http://www.happy-readers.com/>

read the books individually, according to their skill level, and teachers have forms to keep track of the color-coded levels at which pupils are reading.

IGATE has implemented the reading component of the Happy Readers in 300 rural schools in Zimbabwe, in close collaboration with the MoPSE. During IGATE implementation, School Inspectors gathered feedback (as part of their routine monitoring) on the effectiveness, impact, and popularity of Happy Readers. Feedback was collected from HoS, teachers, and pupils using these survey forms: (1) Schools Visit Booklet; (2) School Survey Form (Reading); and (3) School Survey Form (Numeracy). The number of schools and the number of HoS, teachers, and pupils whose responses comprise the data for the report are listed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Happy Readers: Number of schools and stakeholders providing qualitative data for analysis**

	Schools	Heads of School (HoS)	Teachers	Pupils
Total No.	38	36	220	192

Since the report summarizes only qualitative data, a standard process was used for analyzing the qualitative data. First, data analysts aggregated the relevant sections of data from the files according to stakeholder (i.e., HoS, teachers, pupils). Next, they read through the data entries to develop a sense of the data overall and to formulate codes to assign to the text. Then the data were coded in order to identify key themes for each stakeholder group and in relation to overall impact “in the lives, learning, and wellbeing of children in the schools,” as requested in the TOR. The themes that emerged now form the main sections of this report.

It must be noted that self-reporting data, while valid, is only one source of data. Responses can be influenced by stakeholders’ desire to impress the School Inspector who is collecting the data, in hopes of receiving more resources, or by a variety of other motivations besides reporting “facts” straightforwardly. Usually self-reported data is triangulated with other data (e.g., classroom observations) to establish higher confidence in the findings. Nevertheless, the monitoring data analyzed here reveal both positive and negative aspects of the intervention, which suggests stakeholders were speaking candidly and honestly.

## **Analysis by Stakeholder Group**

Below is a brief summary of the findings according to each stakeholder group, beginning with pupils, their teachers, and then HoS. While some participants noted challenges and contextual factors that mitigated the success of Happy Readers, the analysis of participants' perspectives reveals that *overall, Happy Readers has had a substantial positive impact on the learning, lives, and wellbeing of children in the IGATE Zimbabwean schools implementing the Happy Readers program.*

### *Pupils*

Pupil feedback was consistently positive and favorable toward Happy Readers. Pupils found the Happy Readers books to be entertaining and educational. They focused on the books' physical appeal; they liked the books' bright colors and illustrations (pictures). Pupils replied consistently that they enjoy the stories; some even said the stories "made them happy." Several noted the Happy Readers books are easy to read. Pupils attributed their own improvement in reading, writing, comprehension, and improved English language skills to reading and learning from Happy Readers books. Pupils also described their own improvement in verbal, written, and cognitive skills after using Happy Readers books. One pupil specifically mentioned improving in oral reading, in writing, and in self-confidence:

Happy Readers helps me to know how to read. I am not shy to read aloud in my class as I was before I started reading Happy Readers books. I have learnt many new words through Happy Readers. I now read fluently, answer comprehension questions in correct English grammer [sic]. My ideas now come easily when writing composition [sic].

(See Annex C for quotes from pupils separated into two categories, "Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative" and "Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative.")

### *Teachers*

Teachers' feedback revealed mostly favorable responses to Happy Readers, with some mentioning concerns or challenges – primarily regarding the small quantity of books and materials available to students. Key areas in which teachers observed that Happy Readers either helped students or brought about actual improvements were:

decoding words, pronunciation, vocabulary, motivation to read, fluency, reading comprehension, development of a reading culture, sentence construction, writing (spelling and composition), and students' passing rate for English. Teachers observed students' appreciation for the Happy Readers books in relation to these characteristics of the books themselves: colorfulness, pictures, bold print, font size, simple language, various levels for all learners, interesting stories, and information relevant to students' local environment.

Teachers observed that Happy Readers promoted attendance and increased punctuality; some students even arrived early to school so they could read. There was a consistent tone of increased student motivation in learning to read. Several teachers credited the Happy Readers model for the development of a reading culture that had begun to emerge. As students themselves had noted, teachers observed that students enjoyed the stories; and teachers as well as students found the texts educational.

Teachers identified the Happy Readers materials as useful teaching tools that helped ease their workload and gave them support for teaching reading. Teachers consistently connected students' improvement in reading skills to the Happy Readers model. They noticed students' improvement in reading comprehension, and they noted that students often were able to answer questions about the stories in the Happy Readers books. Teachers observed how Happy Readers books are designed to meet students' individual needs, and frequently mentioned the simple-to-complex nature of the books and how beneficial this was for students. The gradual increase of text complexity, the book design that catered to individual student differences, and the materials that enabled teachers to provide guidance to students, supported teachers who utilize scaffolding as an instructional strategy.

Teachers noted that the design of the books was particularly helpful for students who were at the lowest reading levels and/or not reading at all prior to the implementation of the initiative. They observed students beginning to recognize Happy Reader vocabulary words "out of context" or in new contexts. Teachers recognized students were engaging with the content and not just attracted to the physical presentation of the books. After students read Happy Readers books, they were able to share summaries of the stories they read, and the stories sparked discussions.

One teacher observed that the Happy Readers books boosted students' self-confidence in reading. This enhanced self-confidence appears to be a critical component of the development of the reading culture at each school. Related to this increase in confidence, teachers noticed students were more engaged in reading, were interested in the stories they read, and read books of various levels. Students talked to each other about the stories, which improved their reading proficiency and, subsequently, also improved their writing skills. All of these benefits accrued to students at the same time that teachers found Happy Readers was a help to them in their own teaching. (See Annex B for quotes from teachers separated into two categories, "Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative" and "Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative.")

### *Heads of School*

Whereas pupils' comments focused on the colorful books and the fun stories, and teachers commented on the usefulness and efficacy of the materials for the pupils and for themselves; HoS observed how Happy Readers had either introduced or had strengthened a culture of reading in the school. For example, one HoS noted, "Teachers report that each pupil wishes to get hold of the book once or twice a day, thus developing a reading culture in the school." Not only were the pupils eager to pick up the books and read, but they also brought the story characters into other contexts. Another HoS noted, "Children spent most of their time when outside imitating and miming Happy Readers' activities. They have also given each other nicknames from the Happy Readers books." Nearly all HoS mentioned that pupils *enjoy* the books. Half of the HoS said the books and the program increased students interest in reading. Two-thirds of the HoS said the Happy Readers program was "effective" and about the same number said it was "useful" for their teachers. Other HoS said Happy Readers had brought a "strong foundation" in beginning reading to the school, and that it had been able to "bring reading to a much higher level."

In addition to their numerous positive comments, HoS also expressed drawbacks to the program as they had observed it being rolled out. Nearly half of the HoS were concerned about the small number of books allocated to their school. Several observed that teachers learned from each other how to use the Happy Readers; others expressed the need for more teacher professional development in using the program. (See Annex

A for quotes from teachers separated into two categories, “Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative” and “Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative.”)

## **Analysis and summary of program and impact**

This section of the report integrates the stakeholder findings summarized above, to describe the program’s significant and positive impact on children and on their schools and classrooms. The impact is described according to these areas: (1) literacy development, including the sub-categories of impact on students’ reading skills; (2) aspects of Happy Readers associated with improved literacy; (3) perceptions of impact at various literacy levels; (4) student engagement; (5) pupil attendance; (6) numeracy; and (7) instructional supports for teachers and teaching improvement. Following this is a discussion of contextual factors, concerns, challenges, and issues identified by stakeholders that may impact sustainability.

### **Literacy**

The most prominent theme in the feedback from all groups of stakeholders was the positive impact of Happy Readers on student literacy. HoS, teachers, and pupils frequently describe Happy Readers as having supported a strong increase in students’ reading in a variety of ways. These include: establishing sound-symbol connection, decoding words, reading comprehension, word pronunciation, spelling, writing, and language fluency, particularly in English. Stakeholders also connect an increase in individual student literacy to an overall increase in a culture of literacy and learning at the school level, something HoS and teachers alike greatly value.

Teachers and HoS recurrently attribute improvement in reading, speaking, and in written language skills to Happy Readers. Data analysis revealed that teachers and HoS identify pupils’ improvement in the following areas: reading comprehension, vocabulary exposure, spelling improvement, sound-symbol connection, pronunciation, ability to decode words, language fluency, and increased interest in and enthusiasm for reading. This HoS summarizes what many respondents described as an increase in skills associated with Happy Readers: “Since the arrival and receipt of the Happy Readers at school, we have . . . [realized] a change indeed. Pupils whose reading capacity was very low have shown some degree of improvement especially with word attack, word recognition, spelling, pronunciation, comprehension.” Another HoS stated,

“Pupils have improved well through reading of the books. The illustrations made it easy for the pupils to understand. Things like fluency, speed, accuracy have also improved. The pupils have also improved in their comprehension skills, [and] spelling of words taken from the books improved the pupils’ listening skills.”

Teachers and HoS alike frequently note that an increase in one or more of students’ discrete skills was connected to students’ ability to enjoy reading. One HoS linked teaching vocabulary and spelling with a decrease in students who cannot read. He stated, “[Happy Readers are] effective on teaching new vocabulary as they lend themselves well to spellings. Number of non-readers has been reduced.” Another HoS similarly notes an increase in students’ vocabulary alongside an increase in enthusiasm for reading: “. . . The teachers have found the books very useful. Pupils are enjoying reading the books as they expose them to a wider range of vocabulary. A great difference has been noted since the introduction of Happy Readers. Most pupils are now able to read and have developed interest in reading.” Pupils also echoed teachers’ and HoS’ association of increases in skills with enthusiasm for reading. As one pupil stated, “I like reading Happy Readers books. They are easy to understand and interesting. I can spell better. I can now speak the English better than I used to.”

As the previous quote indicates, Happy Readers is commonly attributed to increasing students’ spoken language fluency, particularly in English, in addition to their reading skills: “Learners enjoy reading animal stories; by so doing they are improving fluency, understanding, and spellings. Spoken English is also being improved” (Teacher). Where reading in English was once deemed difficult for many students, both teachers and HoS are noticing a significant improvement, as this teacher observes: “We have pupils in grade one who are now able to read English on their own, which is very good when compared to previous grades.” One pupil states, “I like Happy Readers Books because they make me happy and they help me to improve in English. They interest me and their words are easy to read.”

These self-assessments from pupils regarding their own literacy levels echo teachers’ assessments and offers insight into how pupils view the ways in which the books have helped them improve their literacy skills in different ways, from enhanced oral communication skills to improved composition and writing skills – and understanding the use of punctuation marks. One said, “I like Happy Readers books. They helped me in reading some words in English language. I can now speak the

language better than before.” Another pupil added that Happy Readers “help me to read English and know where to use punctuation marks.” Pupils also expressed increased enthusiasm for reading: “I enjoyed reading Zippy Zebra and Mrs. Impala. It has improved my English writing” and, “I like Charlie Cheetah, Ronnie Rhino and Jacky and James Jackal. I learnt how to spell and read new words.”



*Pupils with Happy Readers*

Some pupils describe an increase in self-confidence concerning their reading and language abilities since using Happy Readers:

I like Happy Readers because it helps me to read English language. My favorite book is Level 2 Book 4 *Charlie Cheetah*. My favorite characters are Charlie Cheetah, Mother, Mr. Elephant, and Mrs. Elephant. Happy Readers help us because I was a non-reader, but now I am the good reader in my class because of Happy Readers.

Some students even recognized that their increase in literacy supported by Happy Readers was beneficial for learning in other content areas. Stated one student, “The readers have helped me in all subjects. I can now write interesting . . . [compositions]. I am a good reader today.”

This HoS notes that the Happy Readers initiative has increased students' literacy and attainment at all levels, and it has improved the quality of instruction:

Happy Readers . . . [program] is fully done at this school. It started slowly in 2015 with . . . [infant] departments taking the reading role. In 2016, all of the other junior grades followed. This . . . [program] is very useful to both our teachers and pupils . . . [Reading] has improved in the school, especially word pronunciation and meaning, because of the layout of the books . . . and the pictures. The . . . [infant] pupils have improved their passes in reading tests. Juniors have developed an interest in reading such that they are seen busy reading during their . . . [teacher's absence]. Generally, with more time, Happy Readers . . . [program] is going to improve the reading abilities of our pupils in the school."

To conclude, all three groups of stakeholders – HoS, teachers, and pupils – see Happy Readers as increasing students' reading skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, spelling, and speed). Discrete reading skill development is further associated with students' increased reading fluency, often linked with students' enthusiasm for reading. As skills are developed and reading fluency increases, this also has an impact on spoken language fluency, with stakeholders noting an increase in students' spoken and written English. In short, "success breeds success"; and students, teachers, and HoS alike attribute Happy Readers with establishing success in overall improvement in literacy.

The next section explores more thoroughly particular aspects of the Happy Readers program and the materials that are associated with their impact.

### **Aspects of Happy Readers associated with improved literacy**

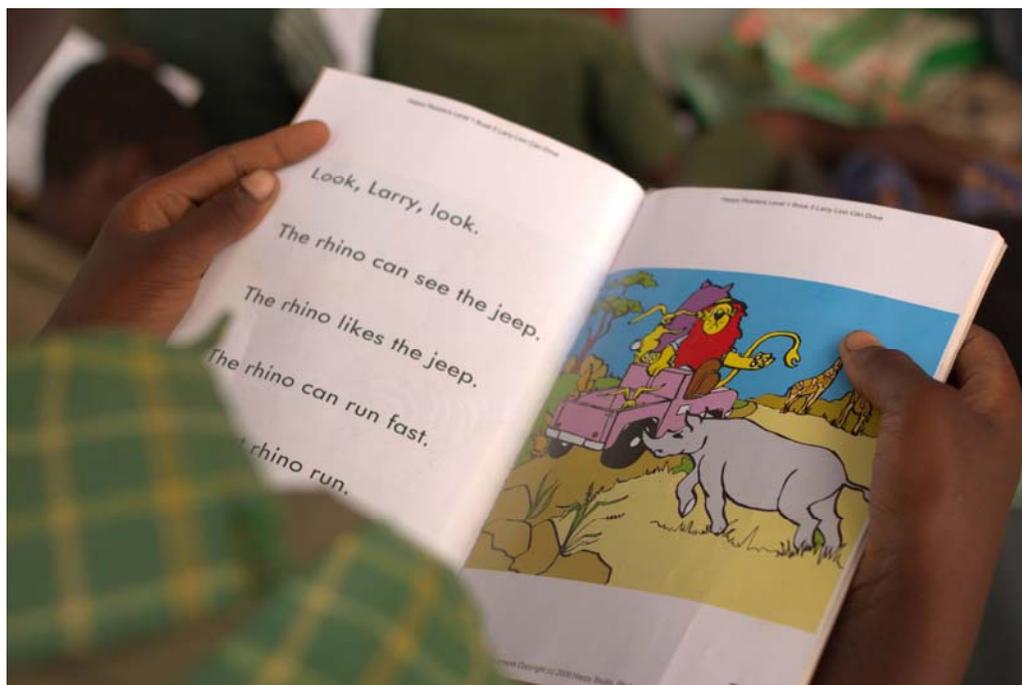
Various aspects of the Happy Readers program were recognized as supporting students' literacy development. Stakeholders praised the books, the storybook characters and story content, the bilingual character of the program, the exercises and comprehension questions, and the teaching materials.

In the physical books, stakeholders repeatedly mentioned the colorful and interesting illustrations (pictures), the font size, repetition of words within a story, the appropriateness of the stories for the Zimbabwean context, and the exercises.

One HoS offered this description of how the design of Happy Readers boosts literacy and enthusiasm:

The Happy Readers books have boosted the learners' interest in reading because they are very attractive and colorful—unlike their textbooks, which are dull. An improvement in reading culture has been realized as compared to previous days where they were not introduced . . . The children also spent most of their time when outside imitating and miming Happy Readers activities. They have also given each other nicknames from the Happy Readers books. For example, you will hear a child calling his friend "Hey, Harry Hippo," which is a sign of understanding the book.

Educators noticed that, beyond the bright and interesting illustrations, Happy Readers' use of font variation and word repetition is effective in supporting students' literacy. One teacher says, "Most pupils now enjoy reading due to its colors, characters in the books, print varying from the big front to small front." A HoS states, "Happy Readers use of pictures and word repetition is effective."



*A Happy Readers book*

Another teacher states that Happy Readers "are effective because they are attractive to pupils because they have colorful illustrations and bold print. They cater for individual

difference since the language used is simple and in the majority of cases illustrated” This mention of students’ individual differences is notable because it underscores another theme, which is the variation of impact of Happy Readers according to students’ ages, grades, and abilities. This theme will be explored more thoroughly below.

With regard to culturally appropriate content, one teacher notes that the “characters in most books [are] suitable to our local environment.” Another teacher states that the books “make use of animals they find in their local environment.” Pupils similarly note that Happy Readers books featuring animals found in Zimbabwe were of great interest and aided in the improvement of their reading skills: “Happy Readers are books that helped us on how to read. *Betty Bear’s Holiday* is the book I enjoyed reading most . . . Betty Bear says, “I have a good holiday in Africa” and [she] is going to see the animals in Africa. Generally I enjoyed reading Happy Readers.”

On a related point, educators note that the bilingual aspect of Happy Readers is particularly helpful for developing and improving students’ literacy. This feedback aligns with research showing that the use of mother-tongue instructional materials supports students’ emerging literacy. For example, one teacher notes that Happy Readers has helped students “to recognize the sounds of alphabet of both Ndebele and English . . . understand the meaning of words and use them in sentences.” A HoS notes that students’ enthusiasm and literacy alike increased with the use of their mother tongue: “[Students] enjoyed the games, and it was an advantage to them to learn alphabet in both languages, English and Ndebele.”

Some teachers and HoS noted that the exercises and comprehension questions included with Happy Readers books were helpful for students. According to one HoS, the books have “boosted the answering of comprehension questions in their daily exercises.” Similarly, a teacher stated, “Pupils scramble for the books . . . exercises given are also good.” Another teacher adds that the books are “useful, as they provide comprehension questions at the end of each book which help the learners to have the skill of comprehension answering.”

Teaching materials are another benefit of the Happy Readers’ approach for classroom instruction, which also help to build a culture of reading. One HoS notes the benefits of teachers’ using sentence strips in this context:

Most of the pupils are happy with the Happy Readers. The . . . [colorful] books attract the eyes of the pupils to the extent that they are motivated to read on and on. A good reading culture has been established. With the help of pictures, pupils can now interpret the meaning of the sentence in their first language. They can now construct sentences with the use of sentence strips and alphabet formulated words with ease.

A teacher similarly notes the effectiveness of cards for the earliest grades: “Number cards and the alphabet cards . . . have been of great assistance in the infant department.”

### **Perceptions of impact at various literacy levels**

Some teachers and HoS believe the books are useful for students at every grade level and ability. Other respondents observe distinct variation of impact on pupils according to their ages, grades, and, occasionally, ability levels.

One primary school HoS observes that students at all grade levels are enthusiastic about Happy Readers: “ECD [early childhood development] to Grade 7, pupils enjoyed reading the books, and they borrowed them to read during their spare time.” A teacher concurs, stating, “The books have been effective in all grades. They have helped pupils to develop a positive attitude towards reading English in particular. They also helped to close reading gaps for the upper grades.” Another teacher notes: “The books are helpful and effective in all the grades. Children are enjoying the books. The books have boosted up self-confidence in reading. Pupils have developed a reading culture.”

Other respondents believe that the books are most useful in the lower primary grades. For example, one HoS stated, “the books are quite effective and readable, mainly [in] Grades 0 to 4 and special class.” Another HoS notes, “The books are effective, especially in ECD to Grade 3. The books are really enjoyable to the kids especially the pictures and activities.”

In contrast, still others believe that the students who most benefit from Happy Readers are older students who have already acquired some literacy skills: “All the Happy Readers books are useful especially to the grade 7 pupils who quickly finish reading and answer the questions in those books well. In lower grades they are a few.

The majority are still struggling to read even a word.” This teacher also thought some level of literacy was necessary to access Happy Readers: “They are useful, but Level 1 is difficult to use when dealing with non-readers. The alphabet is mixed with vowel sounds and consonant blends.”

Another important theme was that, regardless of grade level, Happy Readers were very appropriate for children who were not readers or who were not reading well. One HoS observed: “We found that the books are effective in all grades and the teachers found them useful, pupils really enjoy them. Slow learners are now able to read.” Another HoS echoed that students who were previously challenged in reading are especially benefiting from Happy Readers: “The books are very useful in developing and enhancing reading across the primary schools. The books are simplified especially for pupils with challenges in reading.” Similarly, another HoS stated: “Yes, in all classes all children who had reading disabilities have improved.” Other respondents felt that Happy Readers benefitted all students, regardless of ability: “They are effective, as the levels focus on both slow and fast learners.”

These competing themes emerge: the Happy Readers initiative is useful for all grades (1 to 7); the program is particularly useful for earlier grades; the books are too difficult for young children and are more useful for older grades; the books are especially useful for non-readers and for readers who need additional help. It is not clear whether this variation and range of perceptions is associated with length of implementation, stakeholder involvement with the program, or with other contextual factors. It may be possible that the Happy Readers books are being used more regularly in earlier grades, since they are designed for Grades 1, 2 and 3; perhaps in some schools the books are not used at all in the upper grades. Stakeholders’ varying perceptions do underscore how the Happy Readers program supports skill and fluency development for different ages and abilities. The feedback also suggests that, whatever the grade or ability, the structure of Happy Readers books supports pupils on their unique levels and is helpful in increasing pupils’ self-confidence in reading.

In conclusion, more extensive data is needed to understand the connections some respondents observe between grade level, ability and age and the efficacy of Happy Readers. While the stakeholders frequently note patterns of impact and efficacy, these patterns were also in tension with each other, and the data provided does not

allow for sufficient analysis of contextual factors that are likely to have influenced respondents' perceptions.

## **Student engagement**

“Student engagement” was another recurrent theme in the feedback from HoS, teachers, and pupils alike. As noted above, pupils are drawn to the Happy Readers books because of their colors, font, and illustrations. Pupils are also interested in the content of the books; they find the stories and characters interesting, engaging, fun, and relevant to their own lives. Teachers note how students are engaging with the Happy Readers materials and are motivated to read.

One key aspect of student engagement mentioned repeatedly was the development of a reading culture. One teacher noted, “In my class, less than half were able to read but with the help of Happy Readers books . . . [about] three-fourths are able to read well and the class has developed a reading culture.” Undoubtedly, students are motivated to read and have more positive dispositions toward reading when they have high quality materials, when teachers are trained in using the materials to support students' reading, and when students' individual efforts – and their peers' efforts – to read are successful. Repeatedly, HoS and teachers alike reported a change in the overall culture of schools around literacy: “The reading culture has been cultivated in the school.”

Students' enthusiasm for Happy Readers was nearly universal. Here is a small sampling of students' feedback:

- The introduction of Happy Readers to our school was a blessing. Now I am able to read well.
- Happy Readers helps me to know how to read. I am not shy to read aloud in my class as I was before I started reading Happy Readers books. I have learnt many new words through Happy Readers. I now read fluently, answer comprehension questions in correct English grammar. My ideas now come easily when writing composition.
- Happy Readers books make me like reading many books, newspapers, and magazines. They help me to know how to read. They are useful to me.

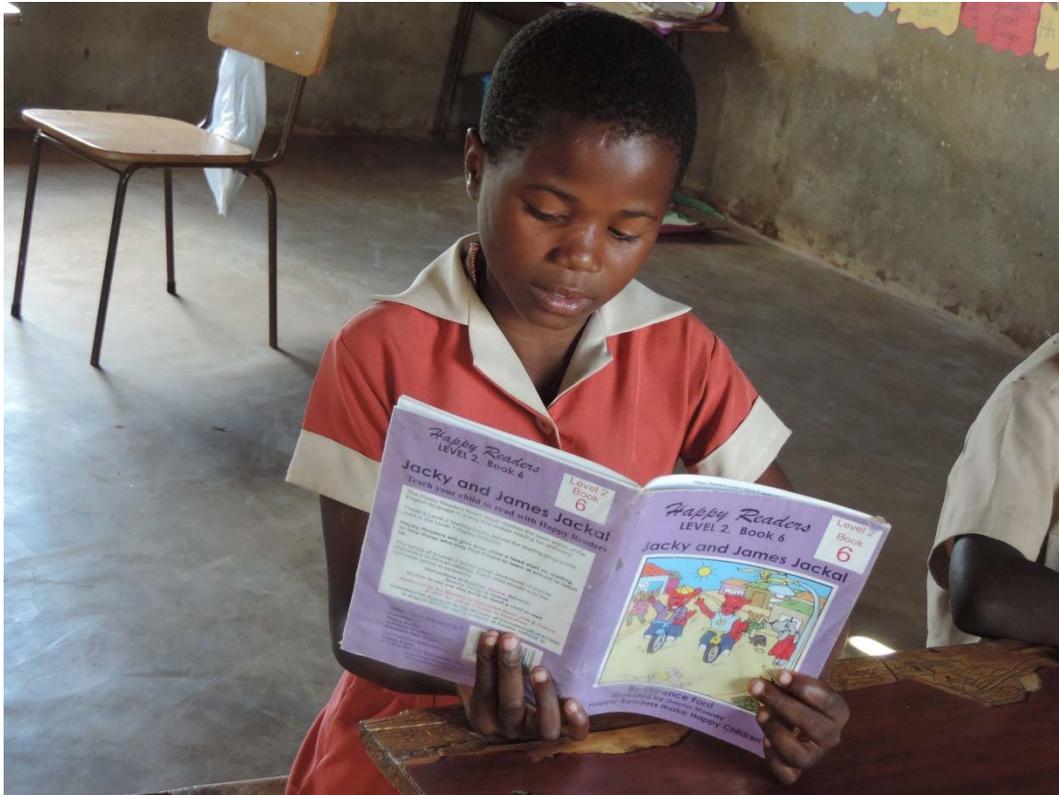
- I was very happy when Happy Readers was introduced to our school. I can now read quite well. One of the stories which I enjoyed reading was about Charlie Cheetah. I really love reading Happy Readers books.
- I enjoyed reading Happy Readers. I was happy to answer the questions in the Happy Readers. My favorite animals are Henry Hare and Kenny Kudu. My favorite book is *Henry Hare Goes Shopping*.

Students also connect their enthusiasm for Happy Readers to their interest in participating in reading competitions, which in turn supports literacy development, as this child illustrates:

I am a girl. I am 11 years old. I was born in June 12, 2005. . . .In this piece of paper I want to write a story I read in Happy Readers. I like to read Happy Readers because I will be able to read well. The one I read I like is *Charlee [sic] Cheetah*. If I read well I will know more about animals. It improves me to read better and I will become a best reader in competitions.

This pupil is sharing her enjoyment of Happy Readers books and her future ambition to be a top reader. It is noteworthy that the improvement in reading she anticipates is prefaced both by her desire to read well and by her enjoyment of reading. “The books are easy to read and very interesting,” she added.

To conclude, interviewees described Happy Readers as having an impact on students’ engagement with books and with reading. This in turn increases their literacy skills and improves the overall reading culture of the school. All respondents regarded this as a valuable aspect of Happy Readers, and educators in particular appreciated that the program is “motivating, encourages pupils to read and retell the story. Keep up the good work,” said a teacher.



*Pupil with Happy Readers book*

## **Attendance**

Given the positive impact on student enthusiasm for and engagement with reading, it is not surprising that several stakeholders note that student attendance is being affected positively by the Happy Readers initiative. One student described arriving at school early to have time to read: “I like reading Happy Readers. I now come to school early so as to read the books. My English language has improved because of the Happy Readers books. I now answer comprehension questions better. My . . . [composition] writing has also improved.” A HoS also associated Happy Readers with improved punctuality and attendance: “Most of the children have interest in coming early to read these books and it has improved punctuality.” A final quote by a HoS illustrates how significant the benefit of Happy Readers on attendance has been for one school:

Before the advent of the series, the school used to have a serious problem of absenteeism in the post-exam period. This term's post-exam period has been devoted mainly to reading the Happy Readers books. The problem of absenteeism has disappeared thanks to the Happy Readers series. It has

provided a remedy that has eluded us for years. The Happy Readers series has definitely paid off unexpected dividends at my school in terms of teaching reading and learning to read.



*Pupils with Happy Readers*

## **Numeracy**

Although Happy Readers focuses on both literacy and numeracy, the numeracy component has been newly implemented (beginning in July, August, and September, 2016). Therefore, there is not as much data on the newly implemented numeracy component of the Happy Readers initiative as there is for literacy. Nevertheless, based on the currently available data, Happy Readers was described as having a positive impact on pupils' numeracy skills. One HoS observed, "Numeracy books are helping learners in recognition of numbers and an appreciation of operations. Concepts come in the form of games and play so pupils enjoy dealing with them."

Just as stakeholder feedback on the literacy component noted the benefits of the simple-to-complex structure of the Happy Readers books for literacy, feedback on the numeracy component also mentioned the benefit of the simple-to-complex numeracy books. A HoS stated, "The numeracy books are very effective to Grade 1 pupils. We

benefitted a lot from the Happy Readers numeracy books. The learners enjoyed the books. They start from simple to complex. They have clear instructions that can be understood by the Grade 1 pupils.” Another HoS similarly noted that numeracy is improving because of Happy Readers: “The school has found the numeracy books to be very effective in all grades, especially the Infants department. Their practicality and the characters help children read better.” Overall, stakeholder comments point to this recurrent theme of the effectiveness of the numeracy books when they have been implemented, particularly for remediation and for pupils at beginning levels of learning. “The numeracy books are quite effective especially at infant level. They have been used for remedial sessions and sometimes in PLAP [Performance Lag Address Programme] programs. The difference noted is that the books provide media for learning as well as the numeracy cards” (HoS). This quote brings together a national policy (i.e., PLAP) and a Happy Readers instructional strategy (i.e., numeracy cards), both of which support teachers to enhance students’ learning. In so doing, it highlights the value of the Happy Readers program to teachers, which is the subject of the next section.

### **Instructional supports and improvements**

Even as students are showing increased engagement and enthusiasm for learning, the implementation of the Happy Readers program has, in some cases, also supported teachers by improving their instructional quality and increasing their enthusiasm for teaching. Teachers are benefiting because the Happy Readers materials provide the resources they need to introduce and teach reading skills more efficiently and effectively. The following teacher notes how Happy Readers books have been useful in providing diverse instructional materials: “The books are very effective in all grades. They are very . . . [colorful] hence attracting the attention of the pupils to read. The teachers have found the books very handy in introducing the language and also sentence construction, especially with the capability of flash cards. Pupils have developed so much interest in the books. So much differences [sic] have been noted since the introduction of the books. Most pupils can now attack words and also construct simple meaningful sentences.” The benefit of Happy Readers materials to teachers as well as students is repeated throughout feedback received from both teachers and HoS. Indeed, one HoS notes that Happy Readers has made it easier for teachers and students alike to be engaged, with enthusiasm extending all the way to the assignment of homework: “Teachers have also shown great love of the use of . . . these

books, which have captivated a lot in the teaching of these children. Most of the pupils now find themselves having homework every day they dismiss.”

Happy Readers supports teachers’ use of one-on-one strategies to differentiate instruction, enabling them to support pupils’ individual needs better. One teacher describes Happy Readers as “very useful books. Learners can use them by themselves.” The following HoS connects Happy Readers to a teaching renaissance that involves new approaches to teaching and assessment and allows teachers to offer individualized instruction, thereby furthering student enthusiasm and attainment:

Happy Readers has managed to revive the teaching of reading in the school. The discussion of pictures accompanying stories has led to oral lessons before reading. Word recognition skills are being trained before reading a story. The reading is now being done from simple to complex. A word story without pictures per . . . [reading] exercise is leading to a better assessment of understanding. Availability of reading material that motivates reading has revived interest in teaching and learning reading. Reading tests in Happy Readers . . . [programs] have improved the assessment of reading ability in pupils. There is improvement in pupils’ reading motivation. Pupils no longer wait for the teacher to make them read; instead, they read on their own and seek for the teachers help to be helped where they cannot understand.

It is also significant that Happy Readers complements two of Zimbabwe’s governmentally-mandated educational policies: (1) Performance Lag Address Programme (PLAP), which targets students who are not on grade level; and (2) the Early Readers’ Initiative (ERI), which targets early literacy. The feedback from teachers and HoS show that the Happy Readers numeracy books are particularly helpful in complementing PLAP: “Happy Readers [n]umeracy books are very effective in all grades. Teachers found them effective as they are using them in PLAP. Learners enjoy using them since they are suitable for all levels of pupils. They are now able to identify, count, and arrange numbers in their [sequential] order.” One headmaster notes: “The Happy Readers books are very useful and helpful to both learners and teachers. . . . Learners frequent the office, requesting for these books to read during their own time, a point to show that they are very much interested in them. [T]eachers say these books complement PLAP and ERI . . . [programs] since these books are user-friendly in

pictures and words . . . [thereby] enabling understanding.” Another HoS notes how the Happy Readers program supports teachers in supporting student learning and the enactment of governmental policy, underscoring the program’s usefulness for instruction:

The school is well pleased with Happy Readers since its inception towards the end of last term. There is so much excitement and enthusiasm among learners and teachers such that an interest in reading lessons has greatly improved. The Happy Readers books are easy to use and learners find them . . . [colorful] with interesting text and comprehension passages. Most pupils in the school have developed great interest towards reading such that those who were not able to read felt left out and are now motivated to be able to read.

The Infant Department is using the books in its ERI . . . [program] as well while the junior department is making good use of the books in the PLAP . . . [program]. All grades from ECD up to Grade 7 use the books while Grade 1 to 7 have reading registers. A pleasing progress is noted in the current Grade 4 who started Happy Readers in Grade 3 in November 2015. It is hoped that by the end of 2016, there would be no non-readers across the grades. The books are relevant and can be easily incorporated into school reading . . . [programs].”

In conclusion, there is significant qualitative evidence that the introduction of the Happy Readers program to these IGATE schools has improved teachers’ instructional quality. In particular, the program has improved teachers’ ability to differentiate instruction and to incorporate student-centered pedagogy. This has resulted in increased student attainment in and enthusiasm for reading, at the same time as it has increased teachers’ ability to meet governmentally-mandated program demands. The final quote is an excerpt from a HoS’s description of the impact of the Happy Readers program on teachers’ pedagogy and on students’ enthusiasm. The HoS summarizes the effective aspects of Happy Readers and the positive results that the stakeholders have described the program as having brought to their schools:

Whenever it is a Happy Readers session, you can't help noticing the . . . [children's] excited anticipation and expectation. Indeed, these books inspire the children's desire to read and motivate them beyond description. Children particularly enjoy reading the books in groups and in pairs. Arguments and discussions arise spontaneously in the groups and pairs. Pupils argue and discuss about pronunciation of words or their meanings. Pupils are always eager to recount the stories after reading them to the teacher or to the class. They . . . [organize] themselves in their groups to take turns to read words, sentences, or stories. A particularly striking observation I have made since the introduction of the Happy Readers series at my school is the remarkable improvement in reading fluency by the children. This development is more pronounced when children are . . . [reading] the Happy Readers series readers. I think this phenomenon can be attributed to the enlarged print the books use and the interesting stories that fire their imaginations and fantasies. The stories, unlike . . . [those] in our traditional readers which tend to be formal and factual, are highly imaginary and take the child to the world of wonder and dreams. The nature of the Happy Readers stories completely captures the interest of the child and holds it there.

## **Analysis of implementation and contextual factors**

### **Importance of and concerns with teacher training**

The more professional development to which teachers have access, the better-informed they are likely be about strategies to incorporate the Happy Readers initiative into their current lesson plans and activities. Another recurring theme in the feedback was the importance of and the need for further teacher training. As recounted by one HoS: “. . . The training of teachers and the feedback to other school staff have improved the teachers' knowledge and information base. At first most teachers did not take [Happy Readers] seriously due to the . . . little knowledge they had about the project. When more training workshops were rolled out, the teachers came to . . . [realize] the importance of Happy Readers books in teaching and learning. . . . The books are now used daily, the class teacher . . . [and] . . . learners take care of the books . . . Our teachers enjoyed the training workshops.” Stakeholders noted that the investment in preparing teachers to use Happy Readers material effectively and

efficiently is critical, since no classroom intervention can be successfully implemented without teachers' leadership. For example, one area of concern related to the numeracy component of Happy Readers, and this was that "at first the only problem was that the teachers had no training." Furthermore, the provision of teacher training and professional development has implications for increases student literacy and program impact as well as program sustainability.

Although some HoS note that some teachers are reluctant to implement the Happy Readers initiative, they did not explain why this may be the case. However, given the changes noted with the provision of teacher training, it is possible that such teachers may have changed their approaches and become more receptive had they received additional support and training. Indeed, one HoS suggested that Happy Readers would be more effective if additional training were to be offered: "[T]here should be more workshops on the teaching of the model so as to accommodate new teachers and those teachers taking new classes."

### **Inadequate provision of books to pupils**

The primary concern of teachers, HoS and even pupils with the Happy Readers initiative was the pupil to book ratio; there were not enough books for each student. This issue was reported frequently; every stakeholder group mentioned it as problematic at some point. One HoS pointed out, "[T]he books are very few for the school's 401 enrolment (1 book per 20 pupils). This shortage of books is a serious barrier to children's reading progress." The insufficient supply of books also seemed to create other problems. One teacher noted that the scarce quantity of books created a challenge for monitoring individual pupil progress. Other teachers observed that while a benefit of the Happy Readers design is to enable the teachers to cater to individual student needs, this seems to be counter-productive when each student does not have a book (i.e., when students must share). With regard to the desire or need for more books, stakeholders mentioned the following:

- The materials are few. They need to be supplemented so that all pupils have the access to them at any time (HoS).
- [There is a] shortage of textbooks as pupils share and classes also share the books. Each child should have his/her book (HoS).

- The problem/challenge we have at our school is the pupil/book ratio because our school has a very big enrollment (Teacher).
- Currently [students] have to wait for each other to finish reading before they can access the next [book] (Teacher).
- Give us more reading books (Student).
- Please add more Happy Readers (Student).

### **Additional concerns**

Teachers noted the following concerns within their classrooms, some of which are tangential to but also have an impact upon Happy Readers: limited time to assess pupils because of the Ministry’s official reading curriculum; further need to incorporate things that are familiar to the students; a need for reading cards; challenge to implement with high pupil absenteeism; difficulty with using Level 1 books (the alphabet was “mixed with vowel sounds and consonant blends”); the busy schedule of a HoS hindering progress of listening to pupils; and not using the Happy Readers books frequently enough (i.e., the need for students to take the books home). Some additional concerns expressed in feedback from HoS and teachers were related to Happy Readers books’ content being relevant to the pupils’ local environments and contexts, and the lack of pupils’ understanding of how to care for books to maintain the condition of the books.

A concern regarding the rigor of Happy Readers also emerged, particularly with regard to the numeracy component of the Happy Readers initiative. The following teacher quote captures this concern: “The numeracy books are good for the Grade 0 and Grade 1 low performers. They don't have information that can keep average and above average pupils busy at Grade 1 - 7 level.”<sup>2</sup> While having a two-subject approach may be beneficial in some ways, there appears to be a need to ensure that all pupils are challenged to master new literacy and numeracy skills or to sharpen literacy and numeracy skills. If the numeracy and literacy Happy Readers materials are primarily focused on beginning levels, then there is a concern about pupils who have exceeded

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<sup>2</sup> Since Happy Readers’ Literacy component has Levels 1, 2 and 3 (i.e., covering Grades 1 to 4 plus remedial at Grades 3 to 7+), it was not uncommon for stakeholders to expect Happy Readers’ Numeracy component to have similar levels of books available. However, while additional levels of Happy Readers Numeracy books currently are under development, only Numeracy books for Level 1 (i.e., Grades 0 & 1 and for basic remedial use with Grades 2 to 4+) were available during the IGATE project.

the beginning levels of reading and mathematics skills. The sentiments of the previously-cited teacher about keeping pupils “busy” indicates that pupils who have exceeded the beginning level books may not be engaged with the levels of books below their numeracy skill levels. In this sense, student engagement appears to be directly connected to pupils’ being challenged and having rigorous lessons.

### **Sustainability through parent involvement**

In addition to the provision of books and teacher training, parental involvement was a key component mentioned in feedback that could help to promote the goals of the Happy Readers initiative and to sustain its impact by giving pupils time to read the Happy Readers books at home, possibly with parents/guardians after leaving school. This is related to the sufficient provision of Happy Readers materials, which would support efforts in allowing pupils to take Happy Readers books home and study with their parents. In response to the concern of classes not using the Happy Readers books frequently enough, one teacher suggested that students could take the books home and encourage parent involvement with the Happy Readers. Community involvement in the form of reading competitions was noted as being highly effective at supporting students’ enthusiasm and pride in their emerging literacy. This HoS recounts how Happy Readers has cultivated a culture of reading that has reached beyond the school to the community and back:

Reading has improved greatly across the board in the school. Children are competing to finish stories. The school won emerged winners of a reading competition in September 2016. The competition revealed the wonderful talents the school has. . . [A] girl in Grade 5 showed exceptional reading talent. The school is planning its own reading competition. The school will invite parents and members from the community to come and witness the event. All this has been motivated by Happy Readers . . . [program] and surely it is a wonderful development.

Any efforts to engage parents and community members in students’ literacy are likely to improve the impact and sustainability of the Happy Readers program.

Finally, respondents frequently mentioned that there is need to maintain the condition of Happy Readers books, including a need for mechanisms, systems, and

pupil training to ensure that books do not become worn out. Some schools, however, make an effort to cover the books with plastic coverings, and respondents feel that this has been a successful strategy in maintaining the condition of Happy Readers materials.

## **Conclusion**

The feedback from HoS, teachers, and pupils reveals a nearly universal consensus that the Happy Readers initiative has been a powerful tool to improve student literacy. Happy Readers has been instrumental in motivating students to read; building their discrete skills such as decoding and spelling; providing additional resources for teachers to incorporate new instructional strategies; increasing the amount and diversity of reading materials at schools; and generating a culture of reading in schools, which has generated enthusiasm for and engagement with reading in pupils and teachers alike. In particular, stakeholders appreciate the high quality of reading materials, particularly the use of culturally-relevant subjects, bright pictures, bilingual materials and a variety of fonts. Students report feeling more confident about reading because they are being exposed to such high-interest reading materials targeting them at their levels, which further increases their confidence in other subjects and may in turn, inspire students to continue reading and learning. Overall, Happy Readers has inspired a culture of reading within schools that is maintained by the students with the ongoing support of teachers and HoS.

Teachers and HoS are enthusiastic about how the Happy Readers initiative supports their abilities to promote literacy effectively in their schools. The materials allow them to differentiate instruction and support their ability to implement government-mandated educational policies. Respondents report various perceptions with regard to Happy Readers efficacy according to students' ages, grades, and abilities; but feedback overall is extremely positive.

Although the provision of Happy Readers books and materials targeting numeracy has been less widespread, early indications are that Happy Readers also support numeracy. However, more time and more data will be useful in determining the ways and the extent to which these materials will have an impact on student learning.

The feedback also reveals there are concerns with Happy Readers that could impede the progress that schools are making in student literacy, innovation, and instructional strategies, primarily due to the ratio of pupils to Happy Readers books. Respondents consistently expressed concern over the insufficient number of books preventing pupils and teachers from maximizing the possible benefits of the Happy Readers program. Another concern was the provision of sufficient teacher training, which respondents note as being critical to the success of the program. Increased teacher training and opportunities for teachers to share what they have learned with each other will only further benefit the Happy Readers initiative.

In summary, Happy Readers has been highly effective, in some cases even revolutionary, for individual students' literacy development and enthusiasm for learning, teachers' development of new and effective pedagogical approaches, and schools' overall cultures of reading. Happy Readers is an engaging and effective initiative that has inspired innovation, assisted teachers with teaching, improved literacy and numeracy among pupils, and is likely to have life-long positive impacts on the learning and wellbeing of students in Zimbabwe.

## Appendix A. Selected quotes from heads of schools

<b>Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative</b>	
<b>Head</b>	The happy readers series prove to be very effective. The children enjoy reading the books. Since we have started using the books, we have reduced the number of non-readers.
<b>Head</b>	The books are of great help. They cater for individual difference hence they motivate every child to participate.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective and beneficial such that pupils really like reading them. All grades like using them and even teachers have found them to be of great value. They have cultivated a lot of interests among the whole school. Of course some pupils who are slow learners have struggled in catching up with the fast ones.
<b>Head</b>	The readers books have greatly benefited pupils at the school which have seen the culture of reading being uplifted in all grades.
<b>Head</b>	Yes, in all grades. The teachers have found the books very useful. Pupils are enjoying reading the books as they expose them to a wider range of vocabulary. A great difference has been noted since the introduction of happy readers. Most pupils are now able to read and have developed interest in reading.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective and useful in grade 3-7. Teachers have used the books and pupils enjoy them. In infant class pupils enjoy learning to read. The books have made teaching of reading easier.
<b>Head</b>	The books have been a stepping home for learners learning to read. The structure of material is helpful in making pupils learn to read. The books are effective on teaching new vocabulary as the end themselves well to spellings. Number of non-readers have been reduced.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective in our teaching and pupils learning activities, In all grades ecd to grade 7 they are interesting to pupils. Pupils enjoy the stories and pictures. Questions are easier and assist in comprehension answering. Number of non-readers is being reduced at the school.
<b>Head</b>	The happy readers is actually being a very strong foundation for beginning reading at our school. It has generated interests in reading.
<b>Head</b>	Yes the books are very effective in all grades. Teachers use them to assist non-readers and to implement plap, eri and thrass reading programs. Pupils enjoy reading because they are attractive and informative. Easy to teach reading. Bright colors and interesting.
<b>Head</b>	Pupils enjoy reading through the books and the colorful pictures and characters capture their interest Reading the books especially home. Teachers have found the books handy in facilitating and promoting the culture of reading. There is positive progress in children's ability to read.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective in all infants and junior pupils. Teachers have found the books useful and pupils are enjoying the books especially those who are good readers. Some pupils have improved in word attack and reading accuracy.

<b>Head</b>	Happy readers is a very useful reading intervention. The books are very useful at all levels from grade 1 to 7. All the teachers have found the books to be useful. The pupils have developed a culture of reading using the books.
<b>Head</b>	There are effective as the levels focus on both slow and fast learners. Some pupils have since improved in reading for comprehension.
<b>Head</b>	Yes in all classes all children who had reading disabilities have improved. It has also boosted our reading material in the library for the school. Teachers Are benefiting and giving children more reading vocabulary as part of reading work.
<b>Head</b>	All the pupils enjoy reading the books and even the teachers always use them because they are very useful. The happy readers books are different from other books because pupils are graded according to their reading level.
<b>Head</b>	The happy readers services were most effective to use with grade 1, 2 and 3 classes. The teachers found them very useful. Pupils were enjoying the books as they were attractive and user friendly.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very useful in all grades as a way of bridging the gap in the upper and lower grades and unlocking the reading skill in the lower grades.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very useful in developing and enhancing reading across the primary schools. The books are simplified especially for pupils with challenges in reading. The teachers liked the books. Pupils enjoyed them.
<b>Head</b>	The books are so helpful especially grade 1 and 2. Teachers have found them useful. Pupils found them very enjoyable. The books have simple language.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective especially to infant grades. Teachers enjoy using the happy readers as pupils as well. Word attack has improved. Children quickly read through the look and say words used in the happy readers.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very effective in grades 1 and 2. The infant teachers found the books useful. The pupils are enjoying the books. Most pupils are improving their reading and comprehension.
<b>Head</b>	We found that the books are effective in all grades and the teachers found them useful pupils really enjoy them. Slow learners are now able to read.
<b>Head</b>	Very effective in all beginners and upper grades who have reading difficulties. Pupils enjoy the stories and colourful pictures.
<b>Head</b>	Happy Readers are very effective in the teaching and learning process. Teachers have found the books very useful. Pupils are really enjoying the books since they have colorful pictures accompanying the stories. There is progress in reading.
<b>Head</b>	Happy readers are the best in teaching reading. They are very effective from grade 1-7. The pupils are enjoying reading the books.
<b>Head</b>	The books are very useful. Most pupils enjoyed the books because of the pictures. Grade 1 and 2 found the books most useful. More than 50% of the grade 2 pupils can now read fluently as compared to previous years.
<b>Head</b>	Very useful in grade 1. Many children are enjoying reading happy readers. At first when we introduced the books to the pupils, they lacked confidence but now my stock is empty as we have issued them to pupils.

<b>Head</b>	Happy readers books are very effective especially on basic levels gr 1-3. The books are very useful since most if not all the children have the desire to read the books (interests) pupils are not commanded to read the books but whenever they are free they are always engaged to the books. Pupils like the pictures and step by step reading progression of content.
<b>Head</b>	The books have proved to be worthy and easy to use by all grades. Most teachers have used the books in their reading lessons. The books have brought illustrations that are enjoyed by most pupils.
<b>Head</b>	The books have been used well. They have motivated the pupils. Pupils have improved well through reading of the books. The illustrations made it easy for the pupils to understand. Things like fluency, speed, accuracy have also improved. The pupils have also improved in their comprehension skills, spelling of words taken from the books improved the pupils listening skills. There is also subject integration between Happy Readers, PLAP and ERI.
<b>Head</b>	The books are proving to be the centre of attraction at the school. Pupils enjoy reading the books with some imitating the main characters in these books. The books are very useful. A reading culture is being cultivated in the school which is a positive. Pupils are now able to read showing gestures and this shows that the pupils are deeply involved in the real story. The pictures in the books help to motivate pupils.
<b>Head</b>	The happy readers have proved to be an interesting series to the pupils since we have noticed a rise in the number of readers in all the classes at the school. Maybe this is attributed to the simple language used in the books and some pictures which attract even the non-readers who, in turn because readers although slow. The books have also reduced the problems of shortage of reading material and have gone a long way in PLAP and ERI. A grade 4 pupil who was enrolled in Grade from home in 2106 was a non-reader but now has proved to be a promising one since she can read and has pushed her way in the top 20 pupils in the grade.

<b>Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative</b>	
<b>Head</b>	The books are not enough for the number of pupils we have in the school. Those who have accessed them have enjoyed and improved their reading skills.
<b>Head</b>	The books are effective, especially in ECD to grade 3. The books are really enjoyable to the kids especially the pictures and activities. However the material are still few there is need to increase.
<b>Head</b>	The books are effective but they are very few to cater for all our pupils enjoyed the books and teachers found them useful.
<b>Head</b>	The books are quite useful in all grades. Pupils enjoy the books but there is need to develop a positive attitude towards happy readers. Some are available to teach reading. A difference has been noted but not so large.
<b>Head</b>	Happy Readers books are very effective. Though we have few books currently but they have changed the level of reading to a much higher level.

	Both teachers and pupils enjoy using the books. They are simple and easy to understand.
<b>Head</b>	Books are effective. However they are in short supply as compared to enrolment.
<b>Head</b>	Happy readers books have proved to be useful and effective in the school especially for grades 1, 2, 3 and 5. Teachers are recommending the use of the books and they are really using them. Children are gradually showing interests in the reading but the sentences and stories are too long.
<b>Head</b>	Happy Readers have been such a blessing to the school children who are using them. The first lot was issued to Grade 1 and 2. The children liked them a lot and so did the teachers who used these books for reading. The main problem was that these books were few in number. When we received the second lot we were able to set aside the problem of numbers. Children were now able to start reading. The children were now enjoying their reading. We were able to give Grade 3 to Grade 5. These children enjoy reading Happy Readers especially the animal characters. The Happy Readers have generated in interest in reading by most children. We believe this is a positive sign that we may see an improvement in results.
<b>Head</b>	The Happy Readers books have boosted the learners interest in reading because they are very attractive and colourful unlike their textbooks which are dull. An improvement in reading culture has been realised as compared to previous days where they were not introduced. This has also boosted the answering of comprehension questions in their daily exercises. The children also spent most of their time when outside imitating and miming Happy Readers activities. They have also given each other nicknames from the Happy Readers books. For example you will hear a child calling his friend "Hey Harry Hippo" which is a sign of understanding the book. However the school is suggesting if it can have more allocation of these books to ease the problem of pupil/book ratio
<b>Head</b>	It is a very comprehensive teaching of reading model which is quite fascinating to the pupils and the teachers. The reading of individual pupils is well monitored and shows progression. However, there should be more workshops on the teaching of the model so as to accommodate new teachers and those teachers taking new classes.
<b>Head</b>	Kwesengulube staff, pupils and parents like to express their hearty gratitude to Happy Readers. Their colourful series are written in a simple poetic form which is easy to read. The repetition of verbs complimented with colourful pictures make pupils understand the passages better and faster. Teachers reported that each pupil wishes to get hold of the book once or twice a day, thus developing a reading culture in the school. Every child buzz Betty Bear. Nonetheless, the books are very few for the school's 401 enrolment. The ratio stands of a book to 20 pupils. This shortage of books is a serious barrier to children's reading progress.
<b>Head</b>	Generally the teachers and pupils do enjoy the use of the Happy Readers. Pupils who have mastered the aspect of phonic work attack really enjoy the reading of the books. It was the head and teacher observation that the first

	<p>stage before the reading the words could have been the phonic word attack aspect of reading. The reading of phonic alphabet could have made the pupils to be able to read the words earlier and move on to the reading of the books. It was also noted that the number of books/readers can not be adequately be shared to the large number of pupils in the school. It was also noted that mandatory the books are not to be photocopied, hence a challenge to increase the numbers that we have in the school. Generally the school hopes to improve the reading culture using these books. More copies could help. More phonic aspect is however preferred by the school to association (PIC).</p>
<b>Head</b>	<p>Children are eager to read the Happy Readers books. These books have proved to be efficient since children are attracted to them. Since the school started using these books, there has been a great improvement in reading. The challenges face are of the teachers hardly getting any time to use the books since they assume they cannot be used in line with the syllabus. The teachers are soon gaining knowledge on how to use these books from others who attended training. Most interestingly, sometimes children request the books upon seeing that the teachers forget using them.</p> <p>The challenges face are of the teachers hardly getting any time to use the books since they assume they cannot be used in line with the syllabus. The teachers are soon gaining knowledge on how to use these books from others who attended training. Most interestingly, sometimes children request the books upon seeing that the teachers forget using them.</p> <p>Indeed children have since gained much interest in reading. The process seems a bit slow but effective. Surely we are looking forward to receiving Level 3 Happy Readers books which will see us improving even the Grade 7 pass rate.</p>
<b>Head</b>	<p>Shortage of reading material, some of the names of objects are not familiar in our African culture.</p>
<b>Head</b>	<p>Shortage of text books as pupils share and classes also share the books. Each child should have his/ her book.</p>

## Appendix B. Selected quotes from teachers

<b>Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative</b>	
<b>Teacher</b>	“Make use of animals they find in their local environment.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are very effective in all grades. All the teachers give good comments about the books. All the pupils seem to enjoy reading the books especially level 1 books with more pictures. We have pupils in grade 1 who are now able to read English on their own which is very good when compared to previous grades.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Very useful books. Learners can use them by themselves.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“They are very useful, pupils were able to recognise the words out of context.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“They are useful because the learners were able to recognise the words out of context.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“They are effective because they are attractive to pupils because they have colorful illustrations and bold print. They cater for individual difference since the language used is simple and in the majority of cases illustrated.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Very useful. Good print is being used.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are effective. Most pupils now enjoy reading due to its colours, characters in the books, print varying from the big front to small front. Teachers use the books to teach reading skills. Most pupils can now read.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“It has motivated a spirit of reading in pupils. It has reduced the number of non readers. Pupils want to read only happy readers books and not any other. Pupils are able to tell stories of what they read about from the books.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Yes, there are effective for infants grades. Teachers in the department are using the books and pupils enjoy them as they have colorful pictures to accompany the texts. Some pupils have since developed interests in reading and share their stories with others during the assemblies.”

<b>Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative</b>	
<b>Teacher</b>	“The Happy Readers help develop pupils reading ability and exposure. However, there is limited time to assess pupils due to the packed curriculum.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Pupils have developed a reading culture and interest. Reading skills are also developed. However, more textbooks are needed for the program to be effective.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“They are useful but level 1 is difficult to use when dealing with non-readers. The alphabet is mixed with vowel sounds and consonant blends.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Characters in most books suitable to our local environment and reading resources not adequate.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are effective in improving the reading literacy. From grade 1-7 the teacher found the books useful as they provide comprehension questions at the end of each book which help the learners to have the skill

	of comprehension answering. Pupils enjoyed the use of the books especially the infancy because of the colourful pictures though they are not familiar with the animals e.g., the bears.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are effective and good. They are improving reading skills at school. The books are useful and pupils are enjoying reading the books but the books are few e.g., level 2 book 1, they are 10 and in grade three there are 35 pupils so pupils will read the books in paires [sic]. Pupils have improved in comprehending in most grades.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“All the happy readers books are useful especially to the grade 7 pupils who quickly finish reading and answer the questions in those books well. In lower grades they are a few. The majority are still struggling to read even a word.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Number cards and the alphabet cards book 1-3 level 1 books have been of great assistance in the infant department. However in junior classes 3-7 children enjoy reading the books and are also interested in the characters in each book. Pupils scramble for the books and a lot could benefit if there were plentiful .exercises given are also good.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“We need individual cards and sentence making cards for children to use as individuals in class”
<b>Teacher</b>	“With the increase in the number of each set, the pupils can read the books much faster. Currently they have to wait for each other to finish reading before they can access the next.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are effective and teachers found them to be useful. Pupils also enjoy reading the books. The problem / challenge we have at our school is the pupil/ book ratio because our school has a very big enrolment.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Yes, books are not enough, rot(e) learning.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“The books are few and pupils are many so pupils read in groups and it takes time to complete books in one level.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Quantity of books does not match with the number of pupils rather they share, sharing becomes a challenge.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Teacher -pupil ratio is very high to monitor the progress of every child.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“There was serious shortage of textbooks hence the teacher was concentrating much on the coverage pupils, also people were unable to read phonic words.”
<b>Teacher</b>	“Books are few for pupils to read individually. Teacher pupil ratio is a challenge to monitor reading as individual.”

## Appendix C. Selected quotes from pupils

<b>Benefits of the Happy Readers Initiative</b>	
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like happy readers. The stories are interesting. My favourite books are Lucy Leopard, Ronnie Rhino, Jacky and James Jackal.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“My favourite book is Betty Bear. I like Happy Readers because the stories are interesting. I practice reading after school using Happy Readers.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“Happy readers have pictures that make it simple to follow.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like book nine for Henry Hare builds a house. He was lazy. The other animals were not lazy.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I enjoyed reading. They make me happy. They are interesting.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like Happy Readers books. My favourite books is Harry Hippo. My favourite character is Mrs. Leopard. Happy Readers helped me to enjoy reading.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I enjoyed reading Happy Readers. I was happy to answer the questions in the happy readers. My favourite animals are Henry Hare and Kenny Kudu. My favourite book is Henry Hare goes shopping. Generally I enjoyed reading happy readers.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“Happy Readers are good books. I like the Happy Readers. My favourite books is Level 3a, book 3, Zippy Zebra goes to town. My favourite story is Zippy Zebra. My favourite characters are Isabelle Impala, Ronnie Rhino and Larry Lion. I am now able to read “
<b>Pupil</b>	“Happy readers have pictures that make it simple to follow.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“Happy Readers books are very simple and very interesting.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“These happy reader make me like to read books because the books are colourful and fun.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I read the readers every day. They have improved my reading. I enjoyed reading Zita Zebra.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I was very happy when Happy Readers was introduced to our school. I can now read quite well. One of the stories which I enjoyed reading was about Charlie Cheetah. I really love reading Happy Readers books.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“The introduction of happy readers to our school was a blessing. Now I am able to read well. I enjoyed reading the story of Henry Hare. I like reading Happy Readers books.”

<b>Pupil</b>	“My name is Nyasha Mhlanga. I like to read Happy Reader books. Now I can speak in English. It is nice to read Mr. Leopard and Ruby Rhino.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like reading Happy Readers books. The book I like most is Level 1 Book 7, Betty Bear going on holiday. I like it because it has interesting stories about wild animals. Happy Readers books make me like reading many books, newspapers and magazines. They help me to know how to read. They are useful to me.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like reading Happy Readers books. They are easy to understand and interesting. I can spell better. I can now speak the English better than I used to.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like Happy Readers. My favourite book is Betty Bear. My favourite character is Betty. These books have helped me to read.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I read them always, they are easy to read. I want others to read them. I like Zip Zebra very much.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like happy readers because it helps me to read English language. My favourite book is Level 2 book 4 Charlie Cheetah. My favourite character are Charlie cheetah, Mother, Mr Elephant and Mrs Elephant. Happy readers help us because I was a non reader but now I am the good reader in my class because of happy readers.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I like Happy Readers Books because they make me happy and they help me to improve in English. They interest me and their words are easy to read. My favourite book is Henry Hare built a house and my favourite character is Henry Hare.”

### Challenges and Concerns with the Happy Readers Initiative

<b>Pupil</b>	“I love to read Henry Hare builds a house. It is very interesting. It has very nice pictures. Please add some more happy readers books.”
<b>Pupil</b>	“I have read all the levels. They have interesting stories. I can now write good english. Give us more reading books. I liked very much reading Zippy Zebra.”

## **Appendix D. Terms of reference for consultancy monitoring report Jan 17 DRAFT**

Project Model: IGATE Happy Readers

Funded by: Happy Readers Model (World Vision Component)

### **Background**

The IGATE project has implemented a Reading component of the programme in a 300 rural schools in Zimbabwe, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. During implementation the sought feedback from Headmasters, teachers and pupils on the effectiveness, impact and popularity of the reading scheme. The feedback was gathered by School Inspectors as part of their routine monitoring.

There is a requirement for an external report to be compiled with this information and present the findings from the feedback received.

### **Data Gathered and available for this report**

Data has been gathered from schools using a number of survey forms:

1. Schools Visit Booklet (M2) (16 pages)
  - a. School Background
  - b. Letter from Head
  - c. Class/Teacher information (3 to 5 classes per booklet)
  - d. Pupil feedback - up to 6 pupils per booklet
2. School Survey Form - Reading (1 page)
3. School Survey Form - Numeracy (1 page)

Sample pages of these forms are shown in Appendix A

The following data has been gathered using the forms:

1. 49 x Schools Visit Booklet (M2)
  - a. 12 x end 2015/early 2016
  - b. 13 x mid 2016
  - c. 24x end of 2016
2. 273 x School Survey Form - Reading (1 page)
3. 50 x School Survey Form - Numeracy (1 page)

Initial analysis reports have been prepared on the following and can be made available to the consultant.

- 8 School Visits Booklets from Late November 2015
  - Data captured

- Report written
- 273 x School Survey Form - Reading
  - All data captured
  - Report Written - Overview

### **Output Required**

The main output required is a report distilling the feedback from school Heads, Teachers and pupils into a coherent narrative of the effect and impact of the Happy Readers intervention on children in the schools. It is expected that the report will be 25 pages in length (excluding appendices).

The report should cover:

- Summary of Feedback from Heads
- Summary of Feedback from Teachers
- Summary of Feedback from children/pupils
- Assessment of overall impacts of Happy Readers in the lives, learning & wellbeing of children in the schools

This will be a Qualitative Analysis - detailed quantitative analysis is not specifically required, as this has been covered in earlier reports.

### **Timeframe**

Report is required by: 15 February 2017.

Expected work time: roughly 4 to 5 full working days

Expressions of interest & Proposal/costs due by 31 January 2017.

### **Contact**

For further details please contact one of the below:

Name	Organization	Telephone	Email
Conor O'Beirne	Happy Readers	+236 772 386 163	happybooks.conor@gmail.com
Mbuso Jama	World Vision UK	: +44(0)1908841000	Mbuso.Jama@Worldvision.org.uk