

READERS ARE LEADERS LITERACY END OF PROJECT REPORT

PLAY IT FORWARD AND THE BRIAN MURTAGH CHARITABLE TRUST OCTOBER 2022 TO DECEMBER 2023

Project Duration: 12 months

Project Location: Livingstone District, Southern Zambia.

Goal: To increase the reading ability of the enrolled participants aged 8-15 by 50% in one year.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the Readers are Leaders project from October 2022 to December 2023. It provides an overview and outlines the project's background, key activities, successes and challenges.

PROJECT BACKGROUND & ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Play it Forward provides literacy sessions three times weekly to 115 participants in Livingstone District of Zambia alongside monthly environmental awareness activities. The programme includes 115 participants, 60 boys and 55 girls: 55 from our academy and 60 from our three partner schools (Zambezi Primary, Holy Cross Primary, and Libala Primary School).



A literacy session at the pitch



An English phonics class at Libala School

The participants were assessed every month to measure their improvement in reading and also to check progress through different reading stages, starting from letter naming, phonetic reading, word reading, sentence reading, paragraph reading, story reading, and finally, the comprehension stage.

Environmental Awareness

The first environmental awareness activity was led by Mr Lloyd Nundwe from Zambia Environmental Management Agency (Z.E.M.A), covering topics from resource preservation to the impact of littering and climate change. Our second activity was a tree-planting activity run by our trustee Ben Kayuma. Our 55 participants planted 500 tamarind and 500 mango seeds. 108 sprouted and these trees were

planted in 4 schools: Zambezi Primary, Highlands Secondary, Libala, and Simatobolo Primary.



Participants learning about climate change, delivered by Zambia Environmental Management Agency.



Our stakeholders (Ministry of Education & Reach All), taking part in planting trees at Zambezi Primary.

Our third activity was an education trip to the dump site. A trip to a dump site showed participants firsthand the effects of waste and pollution. Facilitators Royd Kabila and Simunza stressed the importance of proper waste management and recycling. The fourth trip participants had was an educational visit to Heartlands Farm which provided insights into sustainable farming practices, showcasing the farm's contributions to Zambia's agricultural sector. After taking part in all these activities, the participants started taking ownership of their environment by rubbish picking in their communities every Tuesday afternoon. Lastly, the participants had a trip to the National Museum to learn about how people historically used to care for the environment in traditional settings.



Pupils planting trees at Highlands School.



Participants from our academy on an educational tour to the dump site learning about waste management.

PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS BY KEY RESULT AREAS

Outcome: Better reading skills for participants that are attending literacy sessions.

Activities

- **Training:** A two-day workshop was held for 4 volunteers and one refresher course.
- **Literacy Sessions:** 591 literacy sessions were delivered.
- **Teacher Recruitment:** 4 volunteer teachers were recruited.
- **Environmental Awareness Activities:** 7 environmental awareness sessions were conducted.
- **Participants:** 115 (60 boys and 55 girls)

- **Parents Forum/Stakeholders Meetings:** 3 meetings were held throughout the entire project.
- **Assessments:** 5 assessments were conducted.
- **Contact Hours:** A total of 468 contact hours.
- **Programme Management and Staffing:** 1 project staff and 4 volunteers.

Reach

Participants	Type	Number	Location
Boys (8-14)	Primary	60	Livingstone District
Girls (8-14)	Primary	55	Livingstone District
Parents/Stakeholders	Secondary	49	Livingstone District

Reading Stages

The following reading stages were covered throughout the project:

1. Letter reading	2. Sound reading	3. Word reading
4. Sentence reading	5. Paragraph reading	6. Story reading
7. Comprehension		

Findings

(Baseline and end-line data was collected from 66 participants from our academy only)

Improved reading culture at home and at school

In the initial segment, our emphasis was on understanding the current reading habits of participants, both at homes and at school. The data gathered in this section were self-reported by the participants themselves. When asked about their proficiency in reading, 45 (83%) of the participants affirmed their ability to read, while 10 (17%) indicated their inability to do so, as per the baseline data. However, it's noteworthy to observe a shift in this data to 95% by the time the endline evaluation was conducted. At baseline, the number of participants that reported practising reading were 61%, after a year of being part of the literacy project the percentage increased to 94%, which shows that the reading culture has significantly improved among the participants.

Improved reading proficiencies

The next series of questions focused on assessing the participants' reading abilities. The tool used to assess the participants was the DIBELS, which is commonly used to ascertain the maximum degree of comfort that participants can get when reading. It centres on five main reading levels: which are letters (alphabetic), sounds (phonetics), words, sentences and paragraphs, and stories.

Improved reading capability in phonetics

At inception of the project, baseline data showed that only 56% of the participants were at the sound (phonetic) reading level, as they were able to pronounce 4 out of 5 sounds correctly, and this was seen to increase to 87% after the endline was conducted. This indicates a significant improvement in phonetic reading ability.

Improved reading capability in word/paragraph

At the beginning of the project only 33% of the participants were proficient in reading, i.e., they were able to read a word or text like a sentence fluently. On the other hand, 67% were unable to read a word without making numerous mistakes. However, the endline data demonstrates a notable improvement in reading capabilities with a 48% increment in the reading proficiency.

Story reading capability

The story reading stage has significantly improved, according to endline data, the percentage of participants who could read a story fluently increased from 30% to 75%. Fluency in reading, which is an aspect of reading capabilities was at 25% at project inception, increased to 45% at the endline. This increment goes to show a notable improvement in reading comprehension and fluency.

Global Warming

The project had an aspect of environmental awareness which focused on improving the knowledge levels of participants in global warming, climate change, and understanding if humans play a role in climate change. The table below effectively illustrates the shift in participants' awareness of global warming before and after engaging in environmental awareness activities.

	Baseline Data	Endline Data
Awareness of global warming	- 5% were aware of it	- 59% now are aware of it
Awareness of climate change	- 13% knew what it is	- 65% now know what it is
Human cause of climate change	- 33% understand humans play a role in climate change	- 76% now understand humans play a role in climate change
Human role in addressing climate change	- 37% understand the role humans could play in limiting climate change	- 70% Understand the roles humans could play in limiting climate change

Successes

- The project successfully delivered 591 literacy sessions, indicating progress in enhancing participants's reading abilities. Initially, one of our partnered schools, Libala Primary, assigned us a class that was supposed to proceed to a new grade. Unfortunately, the participants didn't progress because they were struggling with reading and writing. After a year of teaching these participants, the entire class has moved to the next grade and three participants who were in the examination class progressed to grade eight.
- Increased environmental awareness: Through seven environmental awareness activities, the project effectively raised awareness among participants about environmental issues such as resource preservation, waste management, deforestation, and sustainable farming practices.
- Strengthened community engagement and partnerships: Holding quarterly parents' forums/stakeholders' meetings and involving government officials facilitated community engagement and established stronger partnerships.
- Learning beyond the classroom: Educational trips to places like the dump site, Heartlands and the National Museum provided practical learning experiences, enhancing participants' understanding of environmental issues and historical perspectives on environmental care.

Challenges

- Participants switching from learning how to read in the Zambian language to English: participants learn in local languages in schools from grade one to four. Switching from Chitonga to English was a challenge for many of them.

- Age-appropriate storybooks: The participants were struggling to understand the stories in the books because they were not suitable for their age, and the majority preferred returning to the few age-appropriate books available. The problem also lies in that even in local bookstores, we couldn't find books suitable for kids.
- Delayed or no response from partnered institutions for environmental awareness activities: Due to this, most activities didn't take place. Some of the partners we wrote to didn't give us feedback, and for those who did, it was too late to make changes.

Learning/Suggestions

- Getting everyone involved: Involving parents and government officials helps make the project successful and creates partnerships.
- Continuing to educate participants on environmental awareness will assist them in understanding more about the environment, thereby leading them to take better care of it.

In conclusion, the Readers are Leaders Project was a huge success. It empowered participants with improved reading skills and instilled a sense of responsibility towards environmental stewardship, laying the foundation for a brighter and more literate future generation.

Testimonials/Stories:

Aaron Hakumbila

Aaron Hakumbila is a Grade Six pupil at Mujala Primary School. Aaron says that he is happy to be part of this project because it has developed his self-confidence. Now, he can read and write better compared to before he joined the programme. He said he used to miss classes most times because he was scared of being picked on to read in class, which was embarrassing for him. To avoid embarrassment, he preferred to stay away from school.



Aaron Hakumbila

Report written by: Carol Mapitao, Education Project Officer

We thank the Brian Murtagh Charitable Trust for their support on this project and hope to work together again in the future.

Project Photos



Parent forum (updating the parents about the project).



Educational trip to the dump site.



Participants learning at Libala Primary School class.



Literacy session at Mulwani led by a volunteer.



Participants arrange words during a literacy session.



Teacher Cloudia reading to the participants at Mulwani.