



THE MOBILE LIBRARY

EARLY GRADE COMMUNITY READING INTERVENTION

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO ACCESS READING MATERIALS

GHANA LIBRARY AUTHORITY

EARLY GRADE COMMUNITY READING INTERVENTION

END OF PROJECT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Without a doubt, COVID-19 affected education on a global scale. Many countries resorted to online pedagogy to engage children in some degree of remote learning to mitigate the losses caused on education. However, it remained certain that children in underserved communities where there is no internet, television or radio did not have access to these interventions rolled out.

In Ghana, the Ghana Library Authority in collaboration with UNICEF rolled out the Early Grade Reading Intervention. The project enabled children in remote areas to access reading materials and activities necessary for improvement in reading levels. This was coupled with the provision of capacity building trainings to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in strategies to build students' reading and writing skills. This project supported the goal of UNICEF's overall mission of *helping meet children's basic needs and to expand opportunities to reach their full potential*, especially during the period when schools were on lockdown. Additionally, it supported the government of Ghana's agenda to improve early grade reading skills.

It is no new phenomenon as substantial evidence has revealed that improving reading and writing outcomes has far-reaching implications as it increases the likelihood of future academic and workforce success. In addition, it is revealed that addressing fundamental reading skills such as phonological awareness and alphabetic principle in the first year of primary school, in a systematic and sustained way, can measurably improve reading. Children who succeed in basic skills such as letter naming, and familiar word reading also, have higher oral reading fluency and comprehension scores. It is therefore important to focus on these basic skills early and more importantly during the Covid-19 pandemic era. In support of these overarching goals, the goal of the early grade reading intervention was to support the government's effort in mitigating losses on education by providing opportunities for children to access reading materials and facilitate change in classroom delivery of early grade reading and writing instruction through training of teachers in these selected communities.

This report presents details on the background, methodology, context, and results of the intervention.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Ghana Library Authority

The Ghana Library Authority (GhLA) is the state agency under the Ministry of Education mandated by law to establish, equip, manage, and maintain public libraries in Ghana. It was set up with the objective of positioning it as a best-in-class institution whose mission is to connect Ghanaians to knowledge resources to reinforce good reading habits as a critical component of the country's development agenda, and the overall strategy towards tackling illiteracy, poverty, diseases, and unemployment related problems.

Evidence has shown that most children in Ghana struggle to read. According to the 2018/2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), in Ghana, only one out of every five children between age 7-14 years has foundational reading skills and 59% of children live in households with no child-friendly books. Most often children in rural communities without electricity, internet services, televisions or even radio lack access to valuable support that might otherwise enable them to learn. It is therefore our collective responsibility to provide avenues for children to read in their early years, so they grow to become avid readers.

Over the years, the GhLA has made significant strides in supporting education efforts by providing teaching and learning resources, information, and referral services. In addition, it has engaged in several projects and outreach programs designed to meet the needs of people in rural and underserved communities, and specific groups to achieve specific results.

Within its strategic plan, the GhLA has partnered with like-minded institutions to influence literacy rates in Ghana through the power of the collective influencing of reading habits and improvement of service delivery for increased access to knowledge resources.

Mission

Be a leading knowledge service hub in the sub-region by connecting all citizenry to knowledge resources to radically improve literacy and development outcomes which transform lives and communities.

Vision

To connect every Ghanaian to knowledge resources.

1.2 GhLA's Mobile Library Services – A Brief Overview

The Mobile Library Services of the GhLA is the most popular acclaimed pro-poor, rural outreach, public library service in Ghana. It is the centerpiece of the GhLA's extension services and allows library services to be provided in rural and deprived areas that do not have static library facilities. The aim is to address matters of social exclusion by disseminating parallel services provided in static libraries to underserved communities.

Currently, the GhLA operates 10 mobile library vans, each affiliated to one of the ten regional libraries based in 10 of the 16 regional capitals in Ghana making books and computers with internet access available to the surrounding communities and runs reading promotion activities as well as ICT training for youth and adults alike. The mobile library service, therefore, is a key component of the GhLA's overall mandate.

2.0 THE MOBILE LIBRARY EARLY GRADE COMMUNITY READING INTERVENTION

2.1 Project Background

The closure of schools due to the rapid spread of the Corona Virus pandemic necessitated initiatives by educational institutions to ensure the continuation of education. The Ghana Library Authority, likewise, introduced several initiatives to continue the provision of library services and engage school children during their stay at home to mitigate the effects of the spread of the virus on education/ cover up on the losses on education due to the lockdown. One of such initiatives was “THE MOBILE LIBRARY EARLY GRADE COMMUNITY READING INTERVENTION”. This project was to be rolled out through a well-planned outreach programme with our mobile library vans by first identifying remote low-performing communities in specific regions in order to deliver age-appropriate reader packs for children.

Targeted in selected communities and districts, the programme sought to achieve two major results areas;

- **Result I:** Access to reading resources to early grade children in selected districts in eight (8) regions through bi-weekly mobile van visits.
- **Result II:** Enhanced knowledge in effective reading methods

Undertaken in two phases (six months for each phase), the initiative focused on reaching a target of 5000 children in the six (6) newly created regions of Ghana in Phase 1, and an additional 3500 children in the Eastern and Central regions in Phase 2; all children were within the Kindergarten to Basic 3 levels in low performing schools in the selected communities. In addition, selected teachers and officers from the district education offices were trained on the best methods to adopt in helping children read upon their resumption to school. A video version of the harmonized library management manual was also curated to expand the dissemination of its contents.

2.2 Project Objectives

The main objectives of the Mobile Early Grade Community Reading were to.

1. Promote reading habits and spark reading interests of children in rural communities in selected districts of the newly created regions by making reading resources accessible through mobile library vans' bi-weekly outreach programmes to homes in selected communities.
2. Expand the dissemination of contents of the harmonized comprehensive library manual to reach selected teacher librarians to guide the operations of school library management.
3. Equip teachers and librarians with skills to support reading and manage libraries effectively.
4. Introduce effective community and parenting habits that foster support for improved reading skills.

2.3 Project Beneficiaries

- Direct beneficiaries – 8,500 KG 1 to Basic 3 school children (including children with special needs from 10 districts in the 2 additional regions).
- Indirect beneficiaries –10,000 children

2.4 Project Components

2.4.1 Reading Promotion

One component of the intervention was the reading promotion exercise. The project was officially launched with community stakeholders and leaders and children were first registered to become library members before commencement of the project. This was to permit them to have access to the reading materials.

An assessment of reading levels of the beneficiaries was then carried out for a selected few. The reading skills tested were letter naming, initial sound identification, word identification, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. Each of these subtests contains important component skills in early reading and is predictive of later performance in literacy.

This feedback informed project coordinators, librarians, parents, and schoolteachers on how children within the selected regions were faring with regards to their reading levels. The assessment results were then utilized to determine the appropriate books to select for the beneficiaries. Thus, student scores on this assessment indicated the level of reading books and attention required for each of them.

The reading promotion comprised of the following activities in engaging the children. It must be noted that activities varied in communities, depending on the reading resources and the availability of the children;

- Book distribution in reader packs and bi-weekly exchanges.
- Reading sessions with children.
- Personality reading engagements to read to children.
- Independent reading sessions at library spaces.
- Outdoor audio-visual stories showcasing and engagements.
- Read aloud sessions.

On Inclusivity

To ensure that full participation and inclusion of all children, during the phase two of the programme implementation, the Authority reached out to children with special needs—particularly visually and hearing impaired. With the assistance of their teachers, reading and audio-visual sessions were held with them. In total 51 pupils (27 males and 24 females) were reached. This was to ensure that all children have access to quality reading resources and reading engagements, translating to quality education.



Children of Adukrom Special school being engaged

Cape coast School for the deaf/blind



Central Regional Library



Central Regional Library



Central Regional Library

2.4.2 Capacity building

A critical component of the project was the capacity building of early grade teacher librarians and officials from the district education offices. The goal was to equip the teachers with knowledge and skills in effective reading methods to engage children in, how to conduct reading activities and proper classroom library management for improved reading levels of children and enlighten the officials on the need to support reading activities in their respective regions.

Due to the pandemic, the training had to be held separately (in small groups) in the respective regions. In all, **eight (8)** different workshops were organized purposively for selected participants. Facilitators were the Head, Technical services, supported by the various Regional Directors. Topics covered during the training include;

- The concept of the Classroom Library.
- The reading clinic concept.
- Importance of Assessing readers, grouping, and evaluating them.
- Raising funds to support reading activities.
- Helping children choose books to read.
- Reading festivals.
- How to properly manage the library for improved reading levels.
- Reading promotion activities to engage children.
- Story telling.
- Role playing.
- Book Tours.
- Educational games.

Other discussions centered on the unnecessary punishments meted out to children who have difficulty reading, the challenge of not having locally written reading resources available and the use of dedicated timetables for reading for other activities aside reading (Teachers were discouraged from doing classwork and other activities during library periods).

Participants were introduced to the Ghana Library App and informed of the unlimited resources available there for use.

On inclusivity

Invitations were sent to Teachers of special needs children to participate in the training programme. All honored the invitation and were present for the training programme.

2.4.3 Video curation on Library Manual

A harmonized library management manual was developed by the Authority with the support of UNICEF in 2020. The manual details the concept of a school library, steps required in developing the library collection, processing, and cataloguing of library materials, the management of a school and classroom library among other important details. The curation of a tutorial video on the manual became important due to the lapses revealed on the over-reliance on print media in our part of the world.

On Inclusivity

During the implementation of this project, the video was curated with sign language interpretations for wider dissemination to patrons. A total of 8 episodes was completed and shared on our platforms for the use of the public.



A screen shot of the library manual video curation with sign language interpretations.

2.5 Approach and Methodology

The program adopted the following in achieving results (improved interest in reading and reading competencies):

- Structured Travel Routines in Delivery of Reader Packs (Age-Appropriate Reading Materials Specially Selected According to Reading Levels) to the homes and schools of selected children.

- Community Engagement/Involvement-
 - Community Sensitization in Local Dialects Through Information Centers Supplemented with Announcements from The Vans on The Importance of Reading.
 - Community Stakeholder Engagements (Chiefs and Traditional Leaders, District Education Offices).
- Parental and Teacher Engagement-
 - Attachment Of User Guidelines to Reader Packs to Allow Parents Assist Children to Read.
- Engagement of Parents through PTA on the importance of Engagement of Parents In improving Reading Levels of Their Wards.
- Assistance of special needs teachers during implementation.
- Launch of Project for Publicity and Acceptance in Community.

2.6 Scope of Work

Selected communities/districts marked for the intervention can be found below

1. **Western North** - Sefwi-Wiawso, Juaboso, Bibiani.
2. **Northeast** - Tinguri, Gbani, Gbanu, Bongbini, Gambaga, Nyingari.
3. **Savanna** - Larabanga, Busunu, Fuu, Nyamaliga, Daboya, Yapala.
4. **Oti** - Jasikan, Teteman, Guama EP PR.
5. **Bono East** - Grumah line, Fanyinah, Mo-line, Jema, Jema-Nkwanta.
6. **Ahafo** - Techimantia, Wamahiaso, Tanoso, Yamfo.
7. **Central** – Gomoa East, Komenda Edina Eguafo Abirem, Asikuma Odoben Brakwa.
8. **Eastern** - Fanteakwa, Abuakwa, Okere.

3.0 IMPACT AND RESULTS

3.1 Students Reached by Region and Gender

The direct target population for the entire duration was 8500 (5000&3500 for each phase) early grade children. Below is the breakdown (by region, grade, and gender) of students reached within the project period. At the end of the intervention, direct beneficiaries for phase 1 and 2 recorded 5,032 and 3500 respectively.

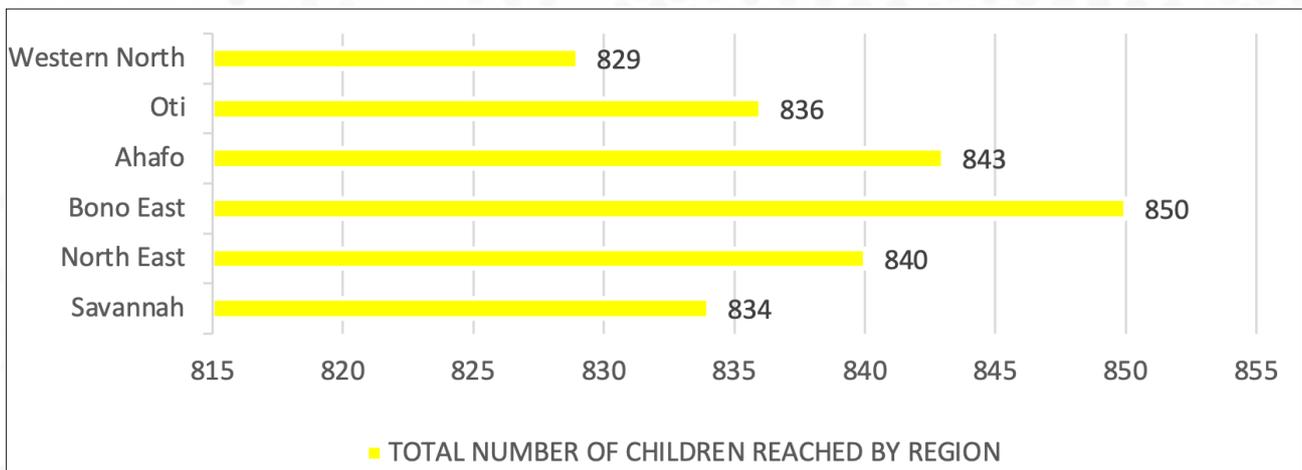


Figure 1: Total number of children reached by region for phase 1

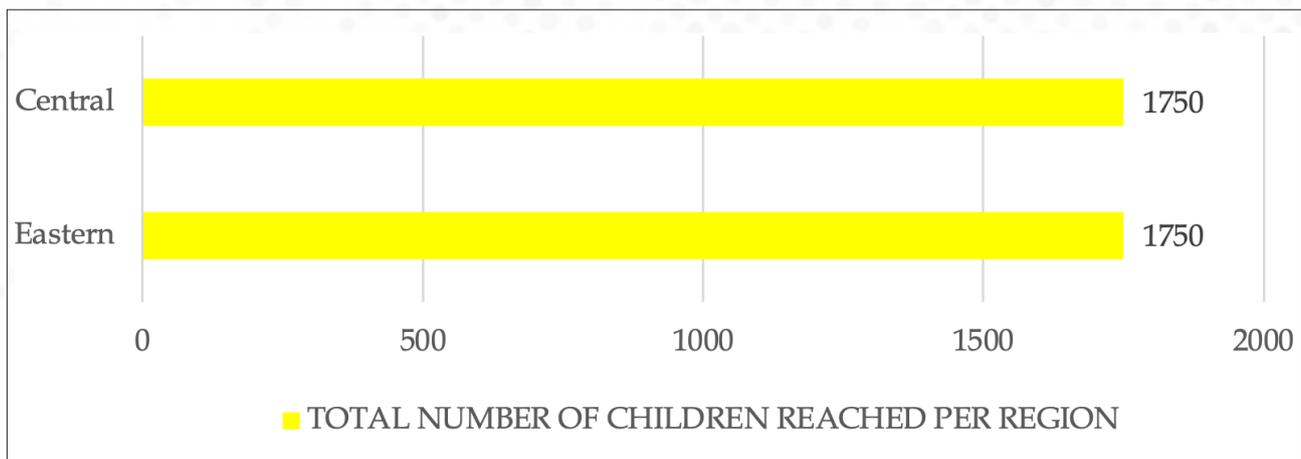


Figure 2: Total number of children reached by region for phase 2

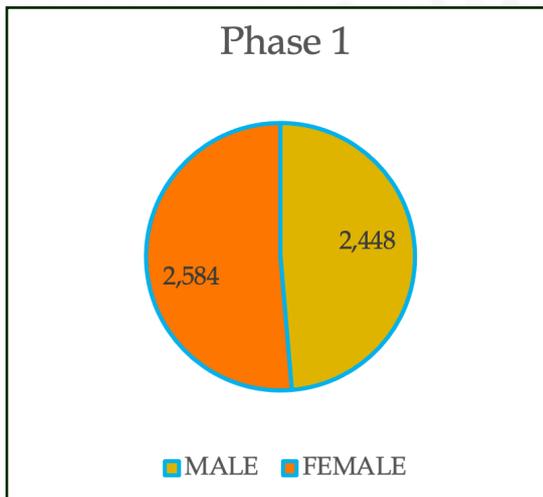


Figure 3: Gender distribution for Phase 1

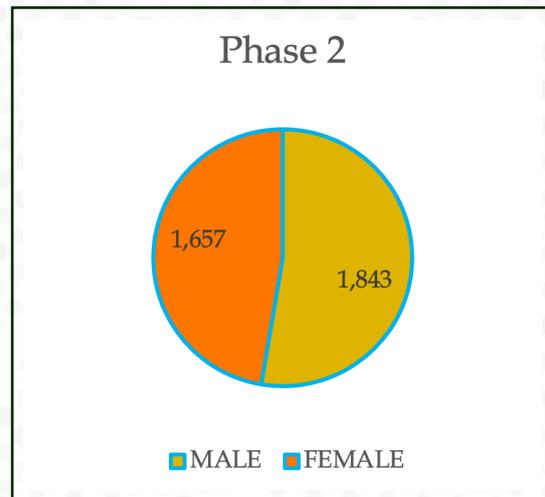


Figure 4; Gender distribution for Phase 2

3.2 Reading Assessments

The baseline assessment was conducted for 10% of the target population. This sample size for the assessment was randomly selected from primary 1 to primary 3 pupils and questionnaires used for the assessment were the Authority’s specially designed questionnaires (see appendix.1.). As mentioned earlier, these questionnaires covered the following areas: Letter Name Identification, Word Identification, Reading Comprehension and Listening Comprehension as these subtests contain important component skills in early reading and is predictive of later performance in literacy.

	ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	BASELINE	ENDLINE
		PERCENTAGE (%)	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	Number of children who can identify only letters	80.29	88.1
2	Number cannot identify letters	19.71	11.9
3	Number of children who can identify words	29.33	60.5
4	Number of children who can't identify words	70.67	39.5
5	Number of children who can read & understand sentences	24.52	46.3
6	Number of children who can't read & understand sentences	75.48	53.7
7	Number of children who can read & understand stories	17.55	33
8	Number of children who can't read & understand stories	82.45	67

Table 1: A percentile distribution of assessment results.

3.3 Book Issues and Number of Visits

Phase one focused on reaching children at the various communities since schools were completely closed during the period of implementation. During the phase 2, children were visited in their schools and some weekends were taken advantage of to engage children in other reading activities. At the end of the intervention, a total number of **195** visits were made by the mobile vans to the communities and schools. As stated earlier, schedules for visits depended on the availability of the children and schools. Below is the breakdown of visits by regions

○	Central	—	32 visits
○	Eastern	—	61 visits
○	Western North	—	10 visits
○	Bono East	—	17 visits
○	Ahafo region	—	21 visits
○	Oti	—	11 visits
○	Northeast	—	19 visits
○	Savanna	—	24 visits

Books were specially selected from the various libraries to suit reading levels of children, in addition, supplementary readers developed by Nacca, and the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF were used to supplement books from the library. A total of 6,591 book issues were made. Children were also engaged in other reading activities such as **reading clinics, group reading sessions, video story time sessions and personality readings** to spark interests in reading among the target group. Book issues made at the end of the intervention include.

Table 2: A regional distribution of total books issued

No.	REGION	BOOK ISSUES
1	Central	5,250
2	Eastern	7,221
3	Western North	820
4	Oti	398
5	Bono East	720
6	Ahafo	615
7	Northeast	833
8	Savanna	763
	TOTAL ISSUES	16,620

3.4 Capacity Building

3.4.1 Attendance

Table 3: A regional distribution attendance during capacity building

No.	REGION	Invitations	Turn up
1	Central	50	50
2	Eastern	50	51
3	Western North	17	17
4	Oti	17	15
5	Bono East	17	17
6	Ahafo	17	17
7	Northeast	17	17
8	Savanna	17	17
	TOTAL PARTICIPANTS	202	201

3.4.2 Training Evaluation

Participants completed training evaluation forms before and after the training sessions. Most participants explained that the workshop provided them with new competencies and skills in teaching students how to read. Participants at the start of the training confessed to not utilizing reading periods for its intended purpose. After taking them through the training sessions, they agreed to make the most out of it to encourage reading among their students. 80% of participants scored usefulness and relevance of information shared as excellent.

3.4.3 Summary Narrations from beneficiaries from the Eastern Region

1. Hon. Dramani, the DCD of Fantekwa North District Assembly (Begoro) narrated how helpful the project has been. He testified of his little daughter in K.G 2 ability to gradually put words together to read. Hon. Dramani wishes the project should be extended to other deprived communities in the district.
2. Madam Charlotte Boadu of Amehi township, a parent of a pupil in class also testified on how the audio visual story time coupled with the new books we have been giving to her child to read has helped her child. Now her child is able to read and she wants to thank UNICEF and Ghana Library Authority.
3. Afia Serwaa, a pupil of Abiriw Presby A Basic 1 wasn't able to read. Due to the intervention of the Early Grade project, she has now been able to pick reading and can now understand sentences.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Despite the short span of both project phases, results thus far demonstrate that supporting the Authority with funding to undertake reading activities/promotion exercises in critical moments is important as it assists in efforts to mitigate learning losses.

- ↳ The capacity and knowledge of 207 teacher librarians who teach and manage early grade children-KG to Primary 3 pupils from 47 schools in 8 regions of Ghana have been improved.
- ↳ Enhanced professional standards in library management.
- ↳ Community awareness have been created amongst parents of targeted children (8500 children) for increased support in reading.
- ↳ Increased reach of target audience of the library manual as sign language interpretation have been included in video to include and reach people with disabilities.
- ↳ Generated reading interest and improved reading levels amongst all targeted children.
- ↳ Library services promoted across the 8 regions of Ghana.

5.0 CHALLENGES

- ◉ Unavailability of braille materials for sharing with children with special needs (visually impaired).
- ◉ Wide coverage of project area putting a strain on resources for fuel.
- ◉ High demand of reading resources causing available ones to be insufficient for the project.
- ◉ Unavailability of teachers who were selected as volunteers during phase 1 implementation.
- ◉ Frequent postponement of meeting dates with community stakeholders due to political activities.
- ◉ Inadequate variety of videos on supplementary readers.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◉ Consideration be made for the adoption of children's libraries to supports its operations.
- ◉ Expansion of project to other regions.
- ◉ Support be given for the purchase of children's books for supply in GhLA's branch libraries across the country.
- ◉ Support the GhLA led classroom library set up for kindergarten schools in the various communities.
- ◉ Procure and make available more videos on supplementary readers.
- ◉ Support in fuel acquisition for GhLA library vans to increase outreach activities to rural areas without access to static libraries.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSMENT

Basic Literacy Test

Literacy Evaluation

Participant's name: _____

Community: _____

Evaluator's name: _____

Date: _____

A. Letter Name Identification

D s v G K z O S E L W B F h k a m N
 e n p H A I X R O Y r w c M P j T
 B f I V Z C o g i q t u x y Q J d

B. Word Identification:

head	goat	sunrise	grandmother
water	good	uniform	dance
wall	book	government	fan
tree	back	honest	fun
three	library	window	telephone

C. Reading comprehension /Sentences:

Ama lives in Accra.
 She lives near a market.
 Every day she buys fruit.
 She likes oranges.

*Where does Ama live?
 What does she do every day?
 Does she like apples?*

D. Listening Comprehension /Story:

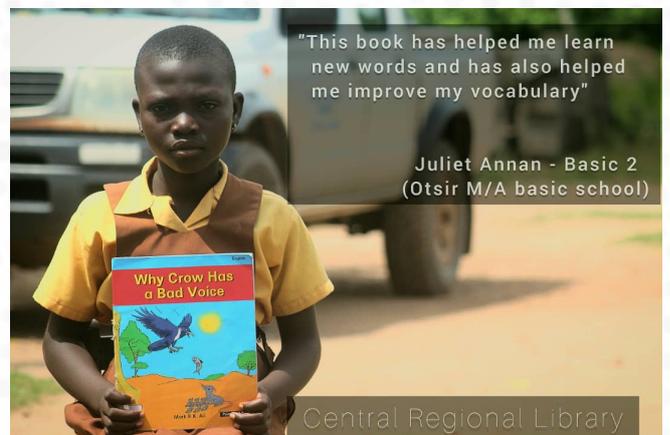
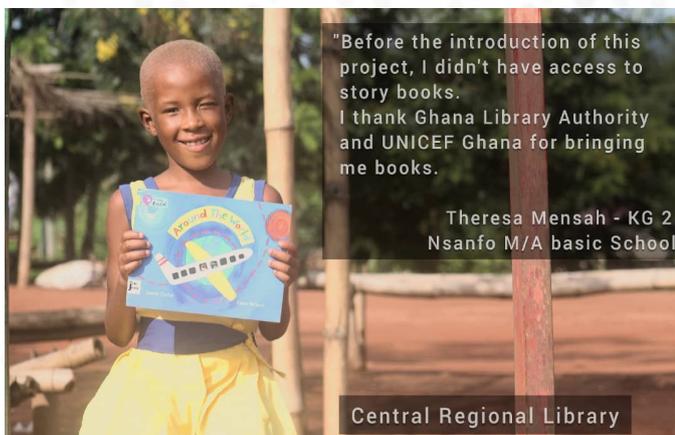
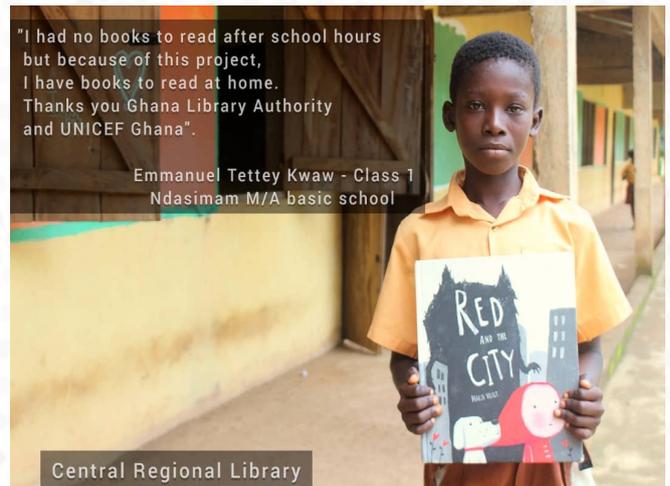
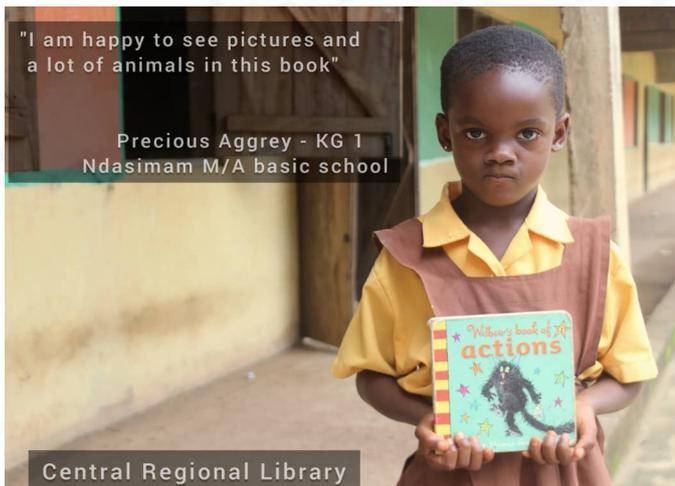
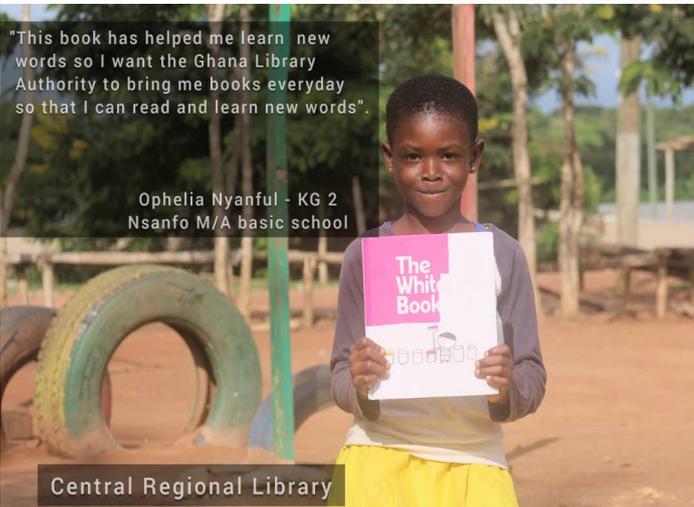
Ayoko, the happy goat, lives with her mother and seven sisters. They all sleep together in a shed. Their favourite food is cassava leaves, and they love to run in the long grass by the river. Their best friend is Tiger, the friendly dog. Tiger is funny and likes to play hide-and-seek with Ayoko.

One night it began to storm and suddenly the shed fell down! All the goats panicked and ran away. Ayoko was still inside, trapped under the metal roof. She was hurt and crying loudly.

Tiger heard her cries, and came running through the pouring rain. She found Ayoko and gently grabbed her leg with her mouth. She pulled and pulled, and finally she came free. Oh, how good it felt to be free! She wagged her tail and thanked Tiger for saving her life. Tiger was delighted.

*What does Ayoko's family like to eat?
 Who is Tiger?
 What happened to Ayoko's home? Why?
 Who pulled and pulled? Who came free?
 How did Ayoko feel at the end?*

APPENDIX 2: SUCCESS STORIES (PICTURES)



APPENDIX 3: PICTURES FROM INTERVENTION

1. Project Inception meeting



2. Pictures from meetings with Stakeholders (Assembly men, chiefs, DCE's, community leaders, headteachers, etc.)





3. Pictures from Project launch in communities/schools.

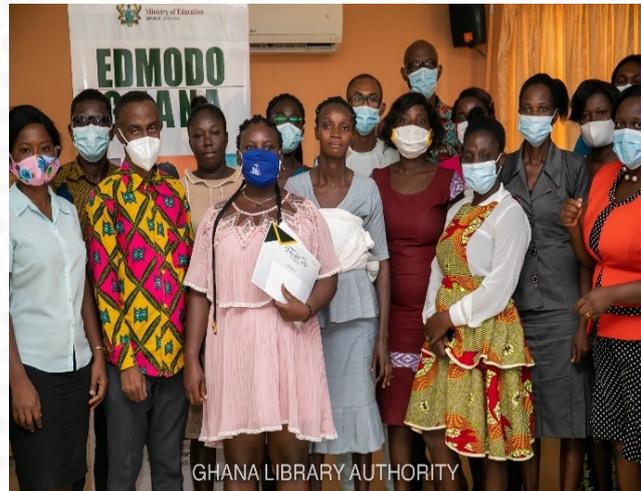
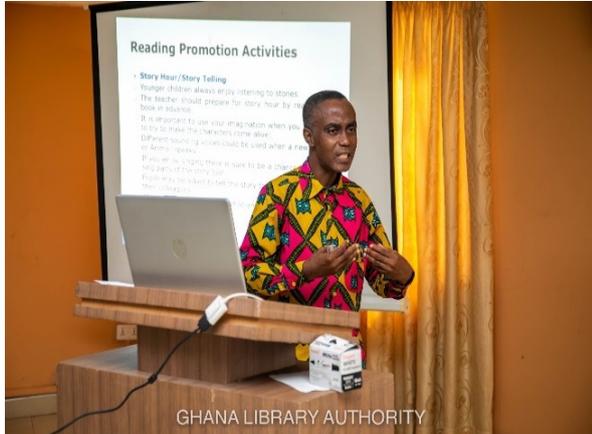




4. Registration and assessments



5. Pictures from capacity building workshops





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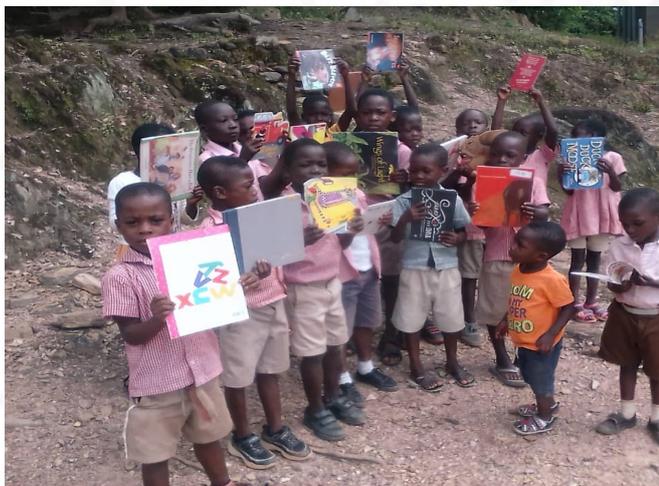
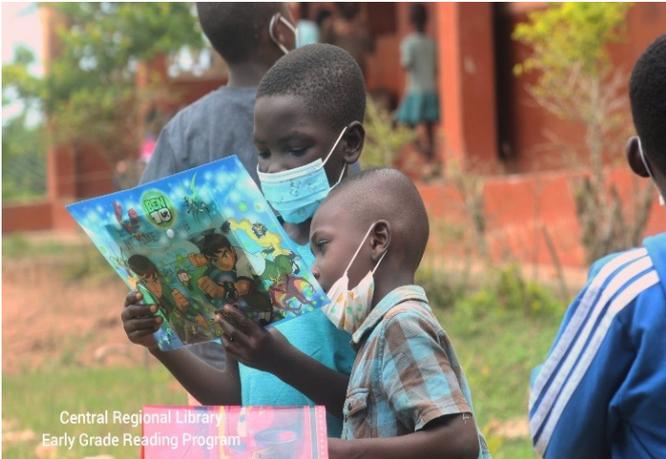


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6. Pictures on Mobile Van visits and Reading Engagements





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Central Regional Library



Central Regional Library



Central Regional Library
Early Grade Reading Program



Central Regional Library



Central Regional Library

