Food For Education: A Path Forward After 10 Years of Learnings

February 2023
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Meet the Speakers

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USDA

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USDA

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Catholic Relief Services

Uttara Balakrishnan, PhD
AIR

Michaela Gulemetova, PhD
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Glynnis Melnicove, MPA
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Pooja Nakamura, PhD
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David Seidenfeld, PhD
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Daniel Zaas, MIDP
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Unpacking the Relationship Between Components of Food-for-Education Programming and Literacy Skills

Michaela Gulemetova, PhD
Uttara Balakrishnan, PhD
Daniel Zaas, MIDP
Motivation

• Half of all children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read or comprehend age-appropriate text by age 10 (World Bank, 2019).
• The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate this “learning poverty”
• Several evidence syntheses have found that multifaceted interventions have shown promising results (Evans & Acosta, 2021; McEwan, 2015)
• Questions remain about which components of these literacy interventions are most effective in improving literacy skills
Research Question

- What is the relationship between McGovern-Dole Food-for-Education literacy programming components and literacy skills?
  - Focus on McGovern-Dole programs in 4 countries: Liberia, Mali, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Cote d’Ivoire

Photo Credit: CRS Lao PDR
## McGovern-Dole Literacy Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher training</th>
<th>Training for administrators and government officials</th>
<th>Support from pedagogical trainers</th>
<th>Teacher motivation</th>
<th>Teacher attendance</th>
<th>Extracurricular and community reading events</th>
<th>Capacity strengthening for monitoring and assessment</th>
<th>Advocacy - teacher training</th>
<th>Inclusive education</th>
<th>Provision of literacy materials</th>
<th>Materials by local authors</th>
<th>Engagement with school stakeholder groups</th>
<th>Engagement with caregiver groups</th>
<th>Radio programs</th>
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Methodology and Evaluation Timeline

Methodology Steps:

- Define outcome variables using early-grade reading assessment tools:
  (a) Oral language skills (b) Decoding/reading comprehension
- Scan existing data and arrive at a list of theory-driven proxy constructs
- Conduct descriptive analyses of literacy components to examine variations
- Run regression to examine correlations: literacy constructs (*independent variable*) on oral language skills and decoding/reading comprehension skills (*dependent variable*) for each country

Evaluation Timeline
Theory-Based Constructs

### School Resources and Activities

- Borrow books from school (C, La, Li)
- Access to textbooks in the classroom (C, La, Li)
- Access to cards/letters/objects to touch or handle (C, La)
- Access to posters/illustrated reading boards (C, La)
- Hear/read stories at school (La, Li, M)
- Play educational games at school (C, M)
- Ask questions about stories or lessons (La, M)

### Home Literacy Activities

- Read outside of school (C, La, Li, M)
- Access to books at home (C, La, Li)
- Read to child (C, La, Li, M)
- See a family member read at home (La, Li)

*Note. C = Côte d’Ivoire, La = Lao PDR, Li = Liberia, and M = Mali*
Access to Grade-Appropriate Books and Reading Materials at School Matters

**Decoding/reading comprehension**

- Cote d’Ivoire 2 yr
- Cote d’Ivoire 4 yr
- Lao PDR 2 yr
- Lao PDR 4 yr
- Liberia 2 yr
- Liberia 4 yr

**Oral language**

- Lao PDR 2 yr
- Liberia 2 yr
- 4 yr

**Effect Size**

- Borrow books from school
- Access to textbooks in the classroom
- Access to cards/letters/objects to touch or handle
- Access to posters/illustrated reading boards

Values:
- 0.05* for Cote d’Ivoire 2 yr
- 0.02 for Lao PDR 2 yr
- 0.03 for Liberia 2 yr
- 0.02 for Cote d’Ivoire 4 yr
- 0.04* for Lao PDR 4 yr
- 0.39 for Liberia 4 yr

- 0.09** for Lao PDR 2 yr
- 0.09 for Liberia 2 yr
- 0.10* for 4 yr
- 0.07* for Lao PDR 4 yr
- 0.05 for Liberia 4 yr
- 0.10*** for 4 yr
Student-Teacher Interaction Is Positively Associated With Higher Literacy Skills

Decoding/Reading Comprehension

- **Hear/read stories**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.04
  - Mali 2 yr: 0.25
  - Mali 3 yr: 0.42

- **Play educational games**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.04
  - Mali 2 yr: 0.68
  - Mali 3 yr: 0.48

- **Ask questions about stories**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.03
  - Mali 2 yr: 0.63
  - Mali 3 yr: 1.84

Oral language

- **Hear/read stories**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.04

- **Play educational games**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.05

- **Ask questions about stories**
  - Lao PDR 2 yr: 0.06
Home Literacy Environment Is an Important Predictor of Children’s Literacy Skills

Decoding/reading comprehension

- Read outside of school: 0.02, 0.19, 0.10***, 0.01, 0.04
- Access to books at home: 0.11, 0.44*, 0.47**, 0.09*, 0.03
- Children are read to at home: -0.06, 0.02, 0.03
- See a family member reading at home: -0.01, 0.04*, 0.01, 0.04†

Oral language

- Read outside of school: 0.11**, 0.08†, 0.09*, 0.01
- Access to books at home: 0.01, 0.09
- Children are read to at home: -0.00
- See a family member reading at home: 0.05*, 0.08†, 0.03
Implications

Consider the students’ primary language when developing instructional materials.

Manipulatives and supplementary materials are positively correlated with reading skills but must be culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Training and coaching sessions should encourage two-way student-teacher interactions.

Include reading activities outside of school and integrate parents and caregivers into the student learning process.
References


COVID-19 Disruptions and School Closures

Daniel Zaas, MIDP

Glynnis Melnicove, MPA
Research Questions

• What programming adjustments did implementing partners make during the pandemic?
• What were the successes and challenges of these program adaptations?
FFE Evaluation and Program Timelines

Note: Red line depicts beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic
COVID-19 Schools Closures, by Country

## FFE Program COVID-19 Adjustments

<table>
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<th>Delayed activities</th>
<th>Switched to take home rations</th>
<th>At-home learning materials</th>
<th>Radio-based literacy course</th>
<th>Remedial learning activities</th>
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Program Adjustments Successes

- Relatively few gaps in school feeding with switch to take-home rations
- Provision of handwashing kits and sanitation supplies at schools was well-received and handwashing behaviors improved
- Training on handwashing and health protocols inspired school communities to build handwashing stations, contributing to sustainability mechanisms
- At home learning materials allowed students to continue learning during school closures

Photo Credit: AIR (Mali)
Program Adjustments Challenges

- Need to revise previous years’ content when schools reopened
- Poor connectivity and network quality precluded some from attending meetings which transitioned to virtual meeting space
- Lack of access to technology and inconsistent internet connectivity limited some from participating in virtual learning programs (e.g., radio programs)
- Low levels of parental literacy and social distancing restrictions limited at home learning
- Poor road conditions and infrastructure limited distribution of at home learning materials

Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services (Lao PDR, LEAPS)
Key Takeaways

COVID adaptations were perceived to fill some immediate gaps, however, catch up programming was still perceived as necessary.

Explore options for remote lessons (e.g., mobile libraries, take-home assignments, radio-based lessons).

Take home rations and distribution of school hygiene kits were perceived as a useful COVID response.
Sustaining the Impacts of Food for Education Programming: A Synthesis of Promising Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations

Glynnis Melnicove, MPA
Motivation

• The Farm Bill stipulates that development outcomes should be sustained by host governments and local communities.

• Sustainability is built into every FFE program as foundational results.

• Sustainability takes a long time and therefore there is little evidence on what works.
Research Questions

• What approaches and strategies are being used to promote sustainability and handover?

• Which approaches and strategies show promise?

• What challenges do programs continue to face?

• How can USDA apply lessons learned to promote sustainability across current and future programs?
Methodology

**McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition project in Northern Mali**
Implementing partner: Catholic Relief Services
- Phase 1: 2007
- Phase 2: 2010
- Phase 3: 2011
- Phase 4: 2015
- Phase 5: 2016
- Phase 6: 2020

**Liberia Empowerment Through Attendance, Reading, and Nutrition (LEARN)**
Implementing partner: Save the Children and Mercy Corps
- Phase 1: 2018
- Phase 2: 2022
- Phase 3: 2026

**Beoog Biiga (Tomorrow’s Child)**
Implementing partner: Catholic Relief Services
- Phase 1: 2011
- Phase 2: 2014
- Phase 3: 2018
- Phase 4: 2022
- Phase 5: 2025

**McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition project in Côte d’Ivoire**
Implementing partner: World Food Programme
- Phase 1: 2015
- Phase 2: 2021
- Phase 3: 2025

**Learning and Engaging All in Primary Education (LEAPS)**
Implementing partner: Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children
- Phase 1: 2012
- Phase 2: 2016
- Phase 3: 2021
- Phase 4: 2026
## Strategies and Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Details/Description</th>
<th>Burkina Faso</th>
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Promising Approaches

- Leveraging community-based structures
- Engaging savings and lending groups
- Incorporating livelihood and income-generating activities
- Identifying champions of change
Challenges

• Communities’ inability to make contributions to support education or school meals programs
• Insufficient resources to continue monitoring the school meals implementation and literacy initiatives
• Lack of clarity around sustainability plans and processes

Photo Credit: AIR (Liberia, LEARN)
Implications

- Expand local and regional procurement commitments.
- Increase communication and coordination with government and local stakeholders.
- Continue to identify and support income-generating activities.
- Partner with local universities to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning capacity and evidence generation.
- Conduct stakeholder mapping to identify sustainability champions who can continue to support initiatives after the program.
Applying the Evidence: Foundational Learning Improvement Package (FLIP)

Pooja Nakamura, PhD
Motivation

Accumulated evidence on how to improve foundational learning, sustainably and at-scale

- FFE evaluations
- Evidence syntheses on factors that support foundational learning
- Piloting and evaluating foundational literacy programs with CRS in Guatemala and Lao PDR
- Studies on the role of language in improving learning quality

Photo credit: Lorina Richmond for the FRAME-India Project
What Is the Evidence Pointing To?

• Improve “quality” of instructional inputs
  – Tailor programming to teach in the “right” languages
  – Support teacher professional development, including appropriate design and use of supplementary materials, and structured interactions
  – Group students by skill levels
• Support caregiver/community engagement
• Support remote learning options
• Create strong channels for stakeholder buy-in and ownership for sustainability

Photo credit: Emmanuel Ikwuegbu on Unsplash
Foundational Learning Improvement Package (FLIP)

FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package.

Photo credit: Yannis H on Unsplash
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FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package

- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction

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FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package

- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning
- Deep focus on language issues
- Implemented through existing educational infrastructure and local stakeholders

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning
- Deep focus on language issues
- Implemented through existing educational infrastructure and local stakeholders
- Digitization – as appropriate

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Foundational Learning Improvement Package (FLIP)

FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package

- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning
- Deep focus on language issues
- Implemented through existing educational infrastructure and local stakeholders
- Digitization – as appropriate
- Implementation hand-in-hand with research

Photo credit: Yannis H on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

Which picture shows a girl singing?

This one!

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

Classroom-Based Reading Assessments
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

Full Package of Pedagogical Interventions Linked with Assessments Results

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

- Classroom-Based Reading Assessments
- Full Package of Pedagogical Interventions Linked with Assessments Results
- Supplementary Materials

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom
Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

- Classroom-Based Reading Assessments
- Full Package of Pedagogical Interventions Linked with Assessments Results
- Supplementary Materials
- Continuous teacher training, coaching, and support

Photo credits: (left to right) Zach Vessels on Unsplash; Elizabeth Spier; Husniati Salma on Unsplash; Yogendra Singh on Unsplash
Implementing FLIP in Benin With CRS as Part of Food for Education Programming

MGD21 Keun Faaba III At-a-glance
- 4 communes: Banikoara, Bembèrekè, Nikki, and Sinendé
- 175 schools
- 53,331 students served

AIR Literacy Activities
- Material development & validation
- Master training and teacher training
- Pilot implementation (60 schools)
  - 127 teachers
  - 60 school directors
Next Steps
Next Steps

• Continue to *apply the evidence* of what ingredients need to come together for improving foundational learning, at scale.
  – Fine-tune and adapt, as needed, in Benin with growing evidence
  – Start implementation of FLIP in Lesotho
Next Steps

• Continue to apply the evidence of what ingredients need to come together for improving foundational learning, at scale.
  – Fine-tune and adapt, as needed, in Benin with growing evidence
  – Start implementation of FLIP in Lesotho

• Continue to generate evidence
  – Ingredients for quality of teaching
  – Dosage, duration
  – Scaling and sustainability
Thank you!

Questions? Comments?
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