2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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It was another dynamic year for ACR GCD as we advanced technology-based innovations to improve early grade reading outcomes in developing countries. This fiscal year was the culmination of many activities, resulting in the delivery of nearly 20 published reports demonstrating the impact of our sourced solutions on literacy gains, and a robust body of learnings for the EdTech community. This research enabled our awardees to demonstrate results, seek additional funding, and expand their reach.

Our work in enhancing reading outcomes for learners with disabilities greatly expanded this year with two global competitions that leveraged partnerships with Pearson, World Federation of the Deaf, and others and offered solutions for more accessible learning for children with print disabilities and children who are deaf.

As we look ahead to 2019, we are thrilled with the Partners’ re-commitment to Round 3, with a new strategy that builds off a robust body of work and deepens the impact of localized solutions for scale. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and commitment to addressing tough challenges and collaboration over the past seven years. We look forward to what we will accomplish together in 2019 to advance child literacy around the globe.

Deborah Backus
Project Director, World Vision Fund Management Team
Sourcing solutions to advance child literacy

Two grant awards were operational: the Institute of Disabilities Research and Training and The Asia Foundation, with each achieving significant milestones. In addition, multiple prizes were in implementation.

Additionally, several innovations developed by our grantees and prize winners experienced scaling and acceleration, furthering their impact.
Institute for Disabilities Research & Training

The Institute for Disabilities Research and Training project worked to improve the reading skills of students who are deaf or hard of hearing in Morocco by providing teachers with an assistive technology: Moroccan Sign Language (MSL) Clip and Create software. The software allows teachers to create, publish, and print customized materials that provide MSL-translations of written text and to generate instructional activities incorporating both MSL and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). As a result of this project, ACR GCD piloted an Early Grade Reading and Sign Language Assessment (EGRSLA) tool that was used to conduct both the project baseline and endline.

Although it is not possible to deduce the impact of the project on students’ reading and MSL skills because of research limitations, results from the EGRSLA and MSL vocabulary assessment indicate that students’ skills did improve over time.

Most notably, the project did appear to impact teachers’ perception of the importance of MSL, and it started positive conversations with government stakeholders on the importance of sign language as the most accessible pathway for deaf children to access language and learn to read.

ACCELERATION

This project was the only grant both funded and managed by a USAID mission. USAID extended and expanded the project for a total award of more than $1.5 million.
The Asia Foundation (TAF) created technology classrooms for Grade 1-3 students in Kandahar and Nangarhar. These students cycled through the classroom during the week and used a series of video lessons and workbooks to improve their literacy skills. The project engaged parents and teachers through a series of training sessions and outreach in which they distributed and installed lessons on parents’ phones for children’s use at home to reinforce the skills they were developing at school. Both the EGRA endline results and feedback from the Ministry of Education and parents indicate that the project successfully contributed to an increase in early literacy skills, school attendance, and student engagement.

ACCELERATION
The Asia Foundation continues to support and work in these provincial schools. The existence of solar panels at the schools and the strong existing relationships between TAF and the MoE within these provinces presents an opportunity to scale the project or develop new interventions that could potentially introduce different technology to support early grade readers in this low resource setting.
Acceleration

**Kampuchean Action for Primary Education**

KAPE designed E-books 4 Khmer (E4K), a digital application containing 72 interactive Khmer e-books adapted from Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport Grade 2 and 3 readers and piloted them in 10 schools across Cambodia. The results have led to increased interest and funding for the solution, including direct funding from the Ministry of Education (MoE). Currently, the E4K app has been embedded in five projects, totaling nearly $2 million across 92 schools, reaching 30,989 students.

**Little Thinking Minds**

Little Thinking Minds (LTM) designed Qysas, a digital application containing 126 interactive Arabic e-books with comprehension questions and assessments. LTM won a UNICEF grant to work with the MoE to scale a solution modeled after Qysas to reach KG through Grade 3 refugee students in 100 public schools in Jordan. LTM is expanding through refugee centers in Jordan and Lebanon and seeks to grow throughout Arabic speaking regions. LTM considers the ACR GCD funding a launch pad for expanding their work to marginalized populations.

**Benetech**

Benetech provided 115 children who are low vision or blind access to 50 audio stories on DAISY players; converted more than 1,000 books into accessible formats; and adapted the Bookshare platform to support books in any language. Benetech has since been awarded a Google Impact Challenge grant and funding from the Lavelle Fund for the Blind to expand their reach in India. They now serve more than 13,000 Bookshare India members with more than 390,000 English, Hindi, Tamil, and Gujarati books. Benetech also provided technical expertise and guidance on the Book Boost: Access for All Challenge.

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"The ACR GCD partnership has really helped us on the international stage as it has given us a position of strength and knowledge from which to speak, leveraging our experience to continue to provide books for underserved populations."

~ Brad Turner, Benetech

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Oeuvre Malienne d’Aide à l’Enfance du Sahel

OMAES established community libraries where children could access reading activities in Bamanakan in print or via mobile phones and tablets. They received funding from USAID Mali Selected Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA) to establish 42 additional community libraries and provide household training on reading games and activities in more than 300 communities.

Réseau d’Acteurs pour le Renouveau de l’Education

RARE developed three teacher training videos, showcasing the Balanced Literacy Approach, available on mobile phones for teachers to watch and study. They received follow-on funding from USAID Mali Selected Integrated Reading Activity (SIRA) to expand their three teacher training videos for use by the MoE for 12,000 basic education teachers and school principals.

Sesame Workshop India

Sesame Workshop India (SWI) designed Play.Connect.Learn a digital application containing 12 e-books featuring Galli Sim characters with corresponding literacy games, and 28 supplementary PDF stories. SWI was recently selected as a Best Practice Honoree for the Library of Congress 2018 Literacy Awards for the Play.Connect.Learn project.
The Sign on for Literacy prize competition was announced in June 2018 and resulted in five semi-finalists, each of which were awarded $25,000 to develop a prototype aimed at increasing access to local sign languages and developing literacy interventions for children who are Deaf in low resource contexts. The prize winners offered solutions for implementation in Nicaragua, Kenya, Tanzania, and the Philippines, in addition to a globally adaptable innovation.

In November 2018, each semi-finalist pitched before a panel of five judges as well as ACR GCD partners, steering committee members, and external implementers with regional and sector specific expertise. The finalists—to be announced in January 2019—will be awarded at least $75,000 each to refine their prototype.
Two winners were identified for the Book Boost prize.

**eKitabu** adapted their product development model to create born accessible books from the onset of content creation. With this, they converted 50 Tusome project titles into accessible digital books, which are being reviewed for inclusion in the Global Digital Library. eKitabu also developed a toolkit for creating born accessible titles and launched a content development challenge to train and encourage Kenyan developers and publishers to adapt the toolkit for their own use. The competition will close in January 2019.

**SIL LEAD** launched their subscription service, Bloom Enterprise, providing users with accessibility features, custom branding, an analytics dashboard, and training materials, among other support services. SIL LEAD also enhanced their website to meet accessibility standards. All outputs will be technically reviewed by Benetech before the start of two pilot projects in the Philippines that involve creation of 20 accessible books. The project ends in March 2019.

**ACCELERATION**

eKitabu continues to pursue opportunities to implement and adapt their accessibility toolkit through partnerships, including the Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development, UNICEF, and the DAISY Consortium. By engaging Kenyan publishers to use their toolkit in the development of born accessible titles, the potential of scaling their impact is exponential.

SIL LEAD’s Bloom software is the first accessible book-writing software that allows authors to easily create and export text in mother tongue languages. By February 2019, the first 40 accessible titles will be created under the Book Boost prize. There is expanded utilization of Bloom by local organizations, USAID missions, and other implementers, and an additional 4,000 titles are anticipated from the Enabling Writers Workshop Program managed by University Research Corporation (URC), Inc. IREX also plans to use Bloom to produce 50 titles in the Philippines.
No Lost Generation Tech Summit Prize

Asafeer Education Technologies was awarded $100,000 to develop stories for early grade Arabic readers centered on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) content. The 100 audible, leveled, and accessible stories were launched on the Asafeer app and also translated into English. Both versions were uploaded to the Global Digital Library (GDL) for global use and adaptation. These materials represent the first Arabic language materials available on the GDL and are also born accessible, including image descriptions and audio voiceovers, for children with print disabilities.

ACCELERATION
The Global Digital Library (GDL), ideated by ACR GCD and developed by Norad and the Norwegian Digital Learning Arena, launched in April 2018 with books in 15 languages. The GDL plans to offer books in more than 100 languages by 2020.

The GDL offers a collection of high quality, open educational reading resources for children, and makes them available on web, mobile, and for print. The GDL also facilitates translation and localization of GDL resources to more than 300 languages. ACR GCD has contributed extensively to content on the GDL, including Pratham books converted into accessible formats through the Benetech project, the 100 Arabic and 100 English Asafeer books, and the 50 eKitabu books to be added in the coming year. The library can be accessed at digitallibrary.io.

“The GDL’s goal is to increase the availability of high quality learning resources in underserved languages worldwide, with a primary focus on early grade reading.”

~ Christer Gunderson, GDL
Global Book Campaign

The Global Book Campaign (name to be determined) is a $1 million initiative led by ACR GCD with funding from the Global Book Alliance and USAID's Africa Bureau.

The competition will award both the production and usage of early grade reading books in underserved languages. All books will be born accessible and available on the Global Digital Library.

In 2018, considerable ideation efforts were put into refining the focus of this prize, including a presentation at the GBA Steering Committee meeting. It is slated to launch in 2019.
Curious Learning continues to reverse Feed the Monster into additional languages (38 languages, to date) available here. Antura and the Letters is also available in English on the ACR GCD website. The developers of the prize have won multiple awards for their games, and ACR GCD assisted Norad in preparing an EduApp4Syria submission for USAID’s Digital Development Awards (winner announcement pending).

The Tracking and Tracing Books prize competition spurred the development of at least four tracking software systems tested in more than 1,000 school sites in Cambodia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Afghanistan. Ministries of Education in Honduras, Kenya, and Ethiopia are discussing use of these software to improve their book supply chains. This blog from March 2018 highlights opportunities and challenges for organizations interested in using these solutions.
SIL LEADS’ Bloom software, winner of ACR GCD’s first prize, provided an easy tool for creating leveled and decodable books. Through the Enabling Writers Workshop Program (EWWP), funded by ACR GCD and implemented by URC, more than 3,000 new titles were created in 15 languages and nearly 500 writers were trained to use Bloom. Organizations in more than 25 countries, including World Vision and IREX, are using Bloom to create new stories and/or download stories from the Bloom Library for use in their programming. In Indonesia, book leveling was introduced to the MoE through the EWWP. Subsequently, the MoE issued a law requiring the use of “Book Leveling System/Parameters” to produce reading materials for early grade reading instruction. In Bangladesh, Bloom software was integrated into the ICT teacher training curriculum.

The Global Reading Network (GRN) released three training resources (available in English, French and Spanish) to help individuals and groups learn to use Bloom. GRN also developed workshop guides and toolkits to aid workshop facilitators on the use of Bloom. As the software evolves—now including print accessibility and sign language capabilities—the books created have the potential to reach more children.
Strengthening the evidence base of EdTech for literacy

Focused on building the EdTech for literacy evidence base, ACR GCD funded multiple research initiatives, including landscape reviews, guidebooks, and evaluations on the application of technology-based solutions to improve child literacy. These resources provide guidance on when and how to use these solutions and outline an innovation’s potential for scale.
ACR GCD projects tested a wide range of technologies and implementation approaches to address students’ reading needs inside and outside of school. The project evaluations include results from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and an assessment of each project’s potential for scalability. A total of 8,695 students were assessed using EGRA including six newly adapted instruments for children who are blind/low vision and one for children who are deaf/hard of hearing.

Many grantees have used the research to support pitches to Ministries of Education and potential scaling partners. ACR GCD is using the research to inform its Round 3 strategy and programming.
Three summative reports highlight learnings across 11 ACR GCD projects in reading skills development, design, scalability, and cost. Two reports provide focused results and learnings for EdTech for child literacy projects targeting children who are blind/low vision and projects targeting family and community engagement.

Students participating in ACR GCD Round 2 grant projects improved their oral reading fluency and reading comprehension over peers in comparison groups.

8,695
students assessed using EGRA
Impact and technical evaluations of two games awarded through the EduApp4Syria competition—Antura and the Letters and Feed the Monster—were released in March 2018. ACR GCD also released a summary report in English and Arabic that outlines the impact of both games on the literacy skills and psychosocial well-being of Syrian refugee children. Both games were updated based on the findings of the impact evaluations.

A social media campaign to promote the reports resulted in tweets from the Norwegian Prime Minister. A webinar spotlighting the learnings from the reports attracted nearly 200 registrants.

EduApp4Syria smartphone apps improved oral reading fluency among Syrian refugee children by 50 percent.
To support the development and testing of digital games that teach reading skills, *The Guide to Developing Games for Early Grade Literacy in Developing Countries*—commissioned by ACR GCD and Digital Learning for Development (DL4D)—was published in March 2018. The guidebook outlines key principles for developing digital games for literacy, includes 12 case studies of leading games, and is a living document in that game developers can submit their games for inclusion in future iterations. The guidebook was among the most popular resources at events and on AllChildrenReading.org.

“The digital games can support young children with direct instruction that is engaging, targeted at their individual learning needs, and adaptive to their learning progress.”

-Digital Gaming Guidebook
Evoke Literacy

The Evoke Literacy Pilot Evaluation Report Executive Summary examines the effect of Evoke Literacy on youth participants’ 21st century and social innovation skills, knowledge of how children learn to read, and agency to solve problems in their community. Through a human-centered design process, two Evoke Literacy pilots engaged 121 youth in 21st century and social innovation skills building in an effort to improve early literacy in South African rural and urban communities. The pilots, conducted in partnerships with Pearson, Project Literacy, the World Bank, World Vision South Africa, and Pearson South Africa, were with in-school and out-of-school youth in 2017, and with urban school-based youth in 2018. This research will inform future investment and/or thought leadership in engaging youth in community literacy efforts using ICT.

ACCELERATION

The World Bank continues to invest in acceleration and scaling of the Evoke platform. World Vision South Africa is planning to integrate the offline Evoke Literacy activities into its youth programs.
RESEARCH & LEARNING AGENDA

Makhalidwe Athu Impact Evaluation

Conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago, this evaluation sought to understand the impact of Makhalidwe Athu, a pilot intervention aimed at improving the reading skills of young children in Zambia’s Eastern province using cell phones as a means to provide reading materials. The report describes the impact on reading outcomes and offers policy recommendations and ideas for future research.

Total Reading Approach for Children +

The Total Reading Approach for Children (TRAC) project was implemented in Cambodia by World Education, Inc. (WEI) as a Round 1-funded project. The results of this project were promising, thereby prompting World Vision International – Cambodia to scale the project to 138 schools across Cambodia under the name TRAC+. This report presents the findings of an independent evaluation of the integration of m-Learning in the Total Reading Approach for Children Plus (TRAC+) project.
Partnering to extend reach and impact

Our partnership with Pearson, World Federation of the Deaf, the Nyle DiMarco Foundation, and Deaf Child Worldwide continued this year through our Book Boost and Sign On for Literacy Prizes.

ACR GCD also maintains thriving relationships with multiple past collaborating organizations.
Partnerships

A variety of organizations have collaborated with us, strengthening our efforts and accelerating our progress toward advancing child literacy.
Curating and Stewarding EdTech Advocates and a Solver Community

Our communications efforts were focused on soliciting solver engagement in prizes, disseminating innovator highlights and research results, as well as ensuring ACR GCD’s prominence at sector events that raise our EdTech for literacy profile. Highlights included the announcement of prize winners, an expanding social media presence, initiating a website redesign process, conducting an audit of the ACR GCD brand, and securing and managing a celebrity spokesperson for the Sign On For Literacy prize.

CURATED SOLVER COMMUNITY
• 2,900+ newsletter listserv subscribers
• 3,000+ Twitter followers
• 480 Facebook followers

RAISED EDTECH FOR LITERACY LEADER PROFILE
• 20+ events (hosting or presenting)

INCREASED MESSAGING ON CHILD LITERACY AND IMPACT
• 5 press releases
• 13 media placements
• 13 blog posts
ACR GCD’s strategy development and communications benefited from an audit conducted by Forum One. The audit included in-depth interviews with members from each of four target audiences identified by ACR GCD partners, as well as detailed audience member personas, a competitor/share-of-voice analysis, and a SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

These elements informed the development of strategic recommendations for ACR GCD’s branding and communications initiatives as well as ACR GCD’s Round 3 strategy development.

**TARGET AUDIENCES**

- **FIELD STAFF**
  USAID, World Vision & DFAT staff working in the field office of a developing country

- **DOERS**
  Innovators & education implementers

- **MINISTRIES**
  Ministry of Education staff in developing countries

- **PARTNERS**
  Partners that provide credibility, funding, and/or scaling

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Target audience interviewees selected ACR GCD as the most innovative among 11 comparator organizations.

- ACR GCD is seen as a leader among target audience members in providing useful, relevant research on the impact of education technology.

- Target audience members emphasized the need for more data on how programs have performed and best practices for implementing programs.
Seeking a new website that embraces the latest principles in user experience design, leverages audience research from our brand audit and our competitor analysis, and positions ACR GCD as a leader in EdTech for literacy in developing countries, ACR GCD contracted digital marketing firm Social Driver to facilitate a website redesign.

Among the new features anticipated is a more user-friendly navigation; revamped search and filtering features; an increased focus on imagery, infographics and data; and an improved media and news section. The website is expected to launch in spring 2019.
To strengthen our brand and thought leadership, showcase our activities, engage solvers and partners, and disseminate solutions and research, All Children Reading hosted, presented at, and sponsored several events, including:

- Gates Grand Challenges Annual Meeting
  October 2-4, 2017 | Washington, D.C.

- mEducation Alliance Symposium
  October 5-6, 2017 | Washington, D.C.

- Guidelines for Creating Accessible eBooks
  December 5, 2017 | Webinar

- The Power of Digital Gaming for Literacy
  March 20, 2018 | Webinar

- World Literacy Summit
  March 26-27, 2018 | Oxford, United Kingdom

- How Technology Can Transform Child Literacy in Developing Countries
  September 11, 2018 | Webinar

- UNESCO Mobile Learning Week
  March 26-27, 2018 | Paris, France

- Grantee Learning Exchange
  October 4, 2017 | Washington, D.C.

- Sign On For Literacy prize launch
  November 8, 2017 | Facebook Live from Budapest, Hungary

- Guidelines for Creating Accessible Images
  December 12, 2017 | Webinar

- Leveraging Technology to Scale Early Grade Reading in Africa Workshop
  May 9-11, 2018 | Pretoria, South Africa
Internal Integration and Promotion

Seeking to ensure innovations and learning are woven into the programming and communications of each partner organization, several initiatives were conducted by World Vision for each partner organization, as outlined below.

**World Vision**

**Integration, Communications & Promotion**

Prize milestones and winners, project success stories, resources, and research results were shared through:

- WV International’s Education and Life Skills Community of Practice newsletter
- WorldVision.org
- World Vision ICT4D eNewsletter
- Agency staff meeting presentations
- WVUS intranet

**USAID & Australian Government**

**Integration**

- Provided multiple briefings to Julie Cram, the new Deputy Assistant Administrator E3, USAID, to inform the upcoming U.S. Government education strategy and USAID education policy.
- Served on Global Book Alliance steering committee.
- Partnered with USAID Africa Bureau to sponsor Leveraging Technology to Scale Early Grade Reading in Africa Regional Workshop in South Africa.

**Communications & Promotion**

- Provided social media and blog content promoting ACR GCD milestones, events, and global recognition days for sharing through communication channels.
- Promoted USAID events, funding opportunities, CoP initiatives, and reports.
- Convened bi-weekly communication coordination teleconferences with USAID, the Global Development Lab, and Wilks Communication Group.