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INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE REDEARTHEDUCATION READING PROJECT FUNDED BY COMIC RELIEF 2014-2017

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Mark Smith

Enable-Ed Director

Executive Summary

The evaluation captures the most significant changes made as a result of the 3-year Comic Relief funded (£161,799) Reading Project in the Masindi and Buliisa district of Uganda ending in July 2017.

The project aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning of reading in grades 1-4 in primary school. In addition, it aimed to create a sustainable model that could be rolled out to other areas and build the capacity of Redearth and its local partner as an independent NGO.

The project faced some significant challenges including a change of local partner and a reduction in schools who completed the project from the original 75 to 49 (although others were partially trained) because of a National Reading Programme delivered by another NGO, RTI. This reduction in schools has inevitably led to a reduction in project beneficiaries. However, none of this should be seen as a criticism of the grant holder, Redearth Education, as they did everything to try and prevent it. One unexpected outcome has been that Redearth has worked in a new district Buliisa which national educational data shows is more marginalized and in greater need. In addition, the schools which Redearth worked in in Masindi District were also more challenging as they were multi-lingual with children often speaking a different first language than the teacher.

In terms of learning outcomes (measured by use of the national EGRA test), the project has clearly impacted children's reading in the target schools and the progress children are making is significantly greater than in control schools where there has been no other intervention and slightly better than that of control schools who have been part of the RTI national reading programme intervention. The area which the impact is greatest is in reducing illiteracy rates with the illiteracy rates in Redearth project schools falling by 20 percentage points more than in the RTI national reading programme schools.

There still remains a significant issue with equity in terms of children remaining illiterate although this appears to rapidly decline the longer the school is in the project. This should also be seen in the context of large classes (100 plus) and that literacy levels in project schools appear to be significantly higher than control schools where no intervention has taken place and also those of the national RTI reading programme.

The project seems to have made slightly more impact on males than females and there is a quite a variance in results between different schools. However, what is most interesting is the intervention appears to have successfully closed the gap between the education of disadvantaged children and those of their peers.

In terms of quality of teaching, there has been a clear shift in methodology with teachers using a phonics based approach to reading and using more teaching aids and group work. This is resulting in more engaged learners and, according to teachers, it benefits the weaker learners. However, what is most impressive is how much this methodology has empowered teachers to develop their own teaching skills, make more informative decisions and apply new methodology in other subjects. Although there is no quantitative data, it is the opinion of the evaluators, that this has increased both the teachers' pedagogical capacity and their own motivation and job satisfaction. It is this sense of empowerment which, the evaluators believe, makes the changes - in terms of teaching and learning - sustainable.

Through the hard work of the project founders, the project (given its small size) has had quite a remarkable impact in the national reading debate. The Ugandan Ministry of Education have endorsed it as project to scale up and have advocated that RTI must learn from it for their national reading programme and there is now dialogue with how this will happen. This includes RTI requesting that RedEarth work with them to develop a phonics based element to the further roll out of the programme. The potential impact of this is immense as the learning from this relatively small Comic Relief funded project may impact nationally. It will need careful planning and the results will obviously only be visible in the long term. However, the evaluators could not stress more strongly the need in the future for more robust data as to the impact the programme has; otherwise Redearth's influence on the programming debate will be lessened.

Over the course of the duration of the project, Redearth has grown from an NGO run by UK volunteers to an independent Ugandan organisation with 22 employees able to run, in the main, autonomously. This shift has most significantly happened in the last 12 months with the catalyst being the employment of a dynamic operations manager, part funded by Comic Relief. Like any fast-growing organisation (in particular with limited unrestricted reserves), there remains a small risk of insolvency as funding for key projects ends and both organisations identify mitigating this risk as a priority over the next year.

The project has worked to ensure that it has achieved value for money and this is measured in the report using the OECD-DAC criteria of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.

The report also aims to identify the difference that Comic Relief funding made which otherwise would not have happened. In terms of schools, this was best summarised from focus group discussions with headteachers and teachers who used a concentric circle tool to identify the most significant changes the project has made to their school. These are listed below as, in the opinion of the evaluators, this list **best epitomises** the difference the project has made.

- Improvement in pupil's knowledge and use of letter sounds to support reading
- Improved learning environment in and outside the classroom
- Increased teachers' ability to teach reading lessons
- Improvement in students' ability to read
- Increased teaching and learning aids made and used
- More active pupil involvement in lessons
- Improvement in teachers' own knowledge and use of sounds
- Increase in teachers' motivation and positive attitude to teaching
- More motivated learners

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1. Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to independently assess the impact of Redearth Education's 3-year Comic Relief project (total grant £161,799) aimed at improving the teaching and learning of reading in Western Uganda. The evaluation centres around key learning questions based on the proposed outcomes of the project.

- To what extent has the project improved children's literacy and have these improvements been equitable?
- To what extent has the project improved the teaching of literacy?
- To what extent have Redearth developed a model that has the potential to be scaled up or replicated by other organisations?
- In what ways has the Comic Relief grant supported Redearth and its local partner to build their capacity as an NGO?

By looking at the key learning questions, the evaluation seeks to make key recommendations as to potential future programming and organisational growth for both Redearth and its local partner.

In addition to this, the evaluation also aims to comment and reflect on:

- How well the project applied value for money principles of effectiveness, economy, efficiency and equity (OECD-DAC criteria for value for money)
- How relevant was the project?
- How sustainable are any changes?
- What has happened because of Comic Relief funding that wouldn't have otherwise happened?
- What were the unintended outcomes?

Finally, the evaluation team carried out the evaluation in partnership with the project manager and MEL officer of the local partner maximising every opportunity to build their capacity and learning.

2. Background to the evaluators

This project was the first multi-year project that Redearth Education had carried out funded by a large institutional funder. The final evaluation was budgeted for £2000 which in hindsight Redearth recognises was significantly too low. However, a trustee of Redearth is the director of a small community interest company Enable-Ed. Enable-Ed has carried out a number of final evaluations of

other projects including those funded by Comic Relief and DFID. Enable-Ed agreed to carry out the evaluation within the budget. To ensure integrity and independence, Enable-Ed obtained the voluntary services of an additional independent consultant who is an educational specialist.

3. Background to Project

A USAID Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in 2010 found that around 60% of sampled grade 2 students nationally were completely illiterate. The key recommendations of the report were to

- Focus on reading and reading instruction
- Start early in P1 and P2 (Grade 1 & 2)
- Teach letter sounds(phonics)

In the proposed project area (Masindi District) participatory planning/needs analysis (2013) showed that

- Reading levels were lower than national levels (the average child at P2 (from sample of 60) could read 2 words in local language compared to 3.2 nationally)
- In P4, of 55 children sampled, 17(31%) couldn't read a single word in local language.
- Although literacy was on the timetable, teachers did not feel they had the skills to teach it and were doing so in a very teacher-centred way
- There was no teaching of letter sounds
- There was a lack of learning aids to support reading
- Many of the teachers themselves did not know the letter sounds
- Very few schools had access to books to develop reading

Source Initial Proposal to Comic Relief 12/12/2013

4. Organisational Context

Redearth Education was started in June 2006 and was run on an entirely volunteer basis by their 3 directors with a vision for all children in the developing world to receive a quality education while unlocking their potential for educational success and future prosperity. In its first 5 years, it primarily worked in the District of Masindi in Central Western Uganda with the aim of developing the quality of teaching and learning in government primary schools in Masindi (a total of 98 government primary schools in the district). All work was carried out by UK volunteers.

In 2011, Redearth supported the setting up and registration of a local partner TACLE to support its work. The TACLE board was made up of various education professionals with a desire to improve education in the Masindi district (District Education Officials, School Inspectors, Head of the local Teacher Training College, Headteachers and Teachers). In 2012, Comic Relief provided a one-year grant to run a pilot programme with TACLE in order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of reading in 6 schools (2 rural, 2 semi-rural and 2 urban). The grant resulted in the employment of the first member of staff for TACLE (a project manager) who worked alongside Redearth in delivering the project. As a result of the success of the pilot, a 3-year grant of £161,799 was provided by Comic Relief to scale up the project across 75 schools in the Masindi district.

Comic Relief's pilot and 3-year grant were the first institutional funding received by Redearth Education. In the year (2011) preceding the initial pilot grant, Redearth had an income of £19,967 from its own fundraising and fundraising from trust funds and foundations. It was therefore a very small organisation. Even on receipt of the 3-year grant from Comic Relief, Redearth and TACLE were very small organisations with a combined staff of one project manager in Uganda and the UK volunteers.

5. Project Details

The three-year project had the proposed outcomes of

- All P1-P4 children in 75 participating schools (25 per annum) improve their reading levels by at least 50%
- Improvement in the quality of teaching of reading in all 75 participating schools
- Increase in the number of teaching and learning aids used in the teaching of reading in all participating schools
- The project becomes sustainable and in a form able to be replicated or scaled up by other NGOs
- The capacity of Redearth and its local partner TACLE is developed to carry out large scale projects

The project proposed to improve the teaching and learning of reading through

- 10 days training of the 25 schools (all P1-P4 teachers) over the year that included:
    - Pronouncing of letter sounds of the alphabet
    - Developing an understanding of what it is like to be a child learning to read
    - Sound discrimination

- Blending and segmenting
- Identifying decodable & non-decodable words in English
- Using learning aids
- Making learning aids from local materials
- Structured reading lessons
- Storytelling and the use of stories for teaching reading

- Follow up visits into schools (every 3 weeks)
- Setting up of resource making days and the provision of resource making kit to schools
- Experience Sharing visits to schools
- Training of district inspectors in observation of reading
- The testing of all children (baseline, midline and endline) in order to measure impact.

In addition, the project funded the local partner to employ

- A part time project manager (the rest of their time was employed directly by Redearth to manage a second education project)
- 2 field workers to provide educational support to school
- An officer who carried out the combined role of Monitoring and Evaluation and Accounts
- A part time administrative assistant.

The project also provided Redearth UK with a part time (1/2 day a week) UK administrator.

The work in the schools ran alongside a second Redearth project aimed at improving teaching and learning across all subjects entitled the Achievement Award. This follows a similar methodology as the Reading Project of training and monitoring visits and each year schools and every teacher in the school is assessed as to what stage of the award they are on (Foundation 1&2, Bronze 1&2, Silver, Gold). There is significant overlap in the projects; for example, both develop the learning environment and group work although the work in the reading project is specifically in the context of reading lessons.

6. Project History

The project had a number of challenges. Firstly, (and this was not known at the project outset) US NGO RTI rolled out, in partnership with the Ugandan Ministry of Education, a School Health and Reading Programme in the target district (one of 30 districts). The methodology behind this programme was significantly different to Redearth's as children were taught to read in syllables (this is popular in the US) rather than letter sounds (phonics-popular in the UK) and children are taught to

read in mother tongue and English at the same time whereas Redearth's programme develops mother tongue first. Given the two different methodologies, the programme could not run hand in hand in the same school. Initially Redearth sought and got an agreement with RTI to share the schools in the district but RTI rescinded on the agreement and moved into the Redearth year 1 schools. Schools were not given the choice of which programme to work with but directed by the Ministry. Redearth were therefore forced to move their programme to:

1) Schools which RTI were not willing to work with. The RTI programme provided text books in local language. However, some schools were multi-lingual with children speaking a variety of first languages (often, due to refugees, for example from South Sudan). By nature, reading levels in these schools are more challenging to impact as the medium of instruction is not spoken by significant proportions of the students.
2) A new district Buliisa. This is very remote and children speak a first language (Lugungu) which is unique to the district; therefore, making it inefficient for RTI to publish books in Lugungu. Buliisa is an educationally marginalised area with a primary completion rate of 47.3% for males and 40.3% for females compared to 60% nationally; an average pupil teacher ratio of 103:1 (77:1 National) and the only district in Uganda with no graduates as primary school teachers.

Overall, the forced change in schools and the additional cost of working in a remote area resulted in the project being completed in significantly fewer schools than was originally planned (49 schools compared to the original plan of 75 schools, although others were partially trained). This also reduced the total number of beneficiaries to 21,625.

In addition, the project also had challenges around its local partner. The local partner for the pilot project was TACLE. This was their first project and their only employee was the field worker. The 3-year project began with TACLE again being the partner- with the only employees being those employed as part of the project. Under the project plan, the Board Members were going, on a voluntary basis, to manage the project. However, what became apparent was that the board members' other commitments prevented them from effectively doing this and building the capacity of the organisation. It was therefore agreed by both the TACLE board and Redearth Education (and Comic Relief) to dissolve the partnership and move the project partner to Redearth Education Uganda. They are an independent organisation, registered in Uganda with their own Ugandan Board of Trustees. The "failure" of TACLE, in the view of the independent evaluator, cannot be blamed on anyone but was possibly inevitable due to there being no operations manager to fully develop the organisation.

7. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation included a week's field visit in August 2017 and then additional data collections carried out by Redearth Education, on the request of the evaluation team in order to increase the sample size and answer specific learning questions which were carried out in September and October 2017. The methodology and tools used to assess each of the key learning questions are outlined in the discussion around the findings in the following sections. This section of the report therefore solely outlines the sample size of the evaluation.

Table 1: Sample Size of Evaluation relative to Total Project Size

	Total in Project	Total sampled in Evaluation	Evaluation Total as % of Project Total	Methodology Activity
Schools	49 project 8 control	6 project 2 control	12% project 25% control	Learning Walk in School
Teachers	265 project 40 control	23 project 6 control	8% project 15% control	Teacher FGD, Survey
Students	21,625	544	3%	EGRA (& additional comprehension test) Children's FGD (43 children)

The evaluation team were satisfied that the schools visited and students tested reflected the range of success of the project. The total students in which data was available is discussed in more detail in section 8 of the report.

Outcome 1: improve children's literacy

The key learning questions identified are

1) To what extent has the project impacted on children's literacy?
2) To what extent has that impact been equitable across all children in the project?

To answer that the evaluation has looked at snapshots of all available data across 3 groups of schools in the project.

1) A group of schools in the Buliisa area which started in year 3 of the project and Redearth has been working since 2016. The progress in reading in these schools is then compared to that in 2 control schools where no direct reading intervention by any NGO was taking place. This enabled a snapshot of the difference the programme was making or what has happened, in terms of children's literacy levels, because of Comic Relief funding that wouldn't have otherwise happened.

2) A group of schools in cohort 2, which the project has been working with since year 2 of the project. The progress in reading in these schools is then compared to that in 3 control schools where the RTI project is running. (This was not pre-planned but RTI chose to work in the original control schools). However, this does provide a snapshot as to the impact of the Redearth programme on children's literacy levels compared to another larger scale programme.
3) Three of the pilot schools which the project continued to work in in year one and have not since been part of the project (but have been part of the Redearth Achievement Award) This will provide a data snapshot of the longitudinal impact of the project.

The instrument used in the project to measure student literacy was the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). EGRA emerged from a synthesis of reading research in English conducted in the USA in the early years of this century which led to the identification of 'five essential components of effective reading instruction' (RTI 2009a, 12):

> *phonemic awareness* – instruction designed to teach children to identify and manipulate the sounds (phonemes) in words
>
> *phonics* – instruction designed to help readers understand and apply the knowledge of how letters are linked to sounds to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns
>
> *fluency* – instruction which reinforces the ability to read orally with speed, accuracy, and appropriate expression
>
> *vocabulary* – instruction which increases both oral and print knowledge of words
>
> *comprehension* – instruction that teaches students to actively engage with, and derive meaning from, the texts they read (ibid.)

In 2006, USAID and RTI International used this framework to develop assessments in other languages for the purpose of measuring literacy acquisition, especially in so-called developing countries (Bartlett et al. 2015). It has since been adapted and implemented in 50 countries and 70 languages worldwide. In comparison with large-scale educational assessments, EGRA is 'smaller, quicker, cheaper' (Wagner 2011), making it particularly attractive to small-scale projects (such as the project provider) who wish to track the effectiveness of interventions over a short time-scale. EGRA has the potential to be a useful diagnostic tool (ibid.), if analysis of the results is used to target support to low-performing groups, or inform the adaptation of curricula, instructional practices, or institutional policies. There are also concerns and limitations to this approach. As mentioned, the evidence-base for EGRA derives from reading research conducted on largely monolingual English-speaking children

in the USA. Recent research has challenged the 'five essential components of reading' model in other languages, such as Spanish (Bartlett et al. 2015, 310-311); and the relevance of this model to reading development in Uganda has not yet been fully investigated

The mode of assessment also poses concerns. 'One-on-one' tests may be unfamiliar to students, particularly in non-Western contexts; furthermore, the presence of an unknown adult assessor may be intimidating to students, affecting their capacity to respond. If assessments are developed without the participation of teachers or other local curriculum experts, then they may not reflect typical classroom activities or the taught curriculum (Mitchell 2015, 334), which poses a further challenge to the validity of the results. This the project particularly found to be case with comprehension (see later). Although the EGRA used for the project contained 5 components and mirrored that used in the pilot and the RTI national evaluation of children's reading (See https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/notice/T1428320983 (Piper 2009); for this data snapshot 3 components were looked at in English and local language.

Table 2: Components of EGRA Test used in the evaluation

Component	Assesses students' ability to…	Format of test
Letter sound identification (The project uses a phonic based system of teaching reading and therefore an essential pre-requisite to reading is the ability to sound out letters)	Identify the sounds of English letters and the syllables in local language	Students are timed and scored based on the number of correct sounds sounded per minute up to a maximum of 50 sounds.
Familiar Words (This was chosen as it is a measure of the children's ability to read and also the proportion of children not yet able to read)	Read individual words accurately in English and local language.	Students read as many words as possible in one minute. Students read from a list of 50 words of varying difficulty. Students are timed and scored based on the number of correct words per minute.
Reading comprehension	Answer correctly five questions about a short text the student has read.	Students read a short paragraph and answer basic comprehension questions (not timed). Students are scored out of five on the number of questions answered correctly.

All data collected was by Redearth field officers who had been trained in using the EGRA test. In the view of the evaluators there was no reason to doubt the reliability of the data. However, to further verify it, a 5-word test was carried out by the evaluation team in schools in each of the pre-mentioned 3 groups to measure the proportion of children literate and illiterate. All children in P2

and P4 were asked to read 5 words in local language and those who could read at least 2 were classed as literate for the purpose of this evaluation.

Finally, the results of the comprehension, the evaluation team reflected, did not necessarily reflect the ability of the students to comprehend something but more the ability of students to answer complex comprehension questions which did not mirror classroom practice. (Of the 5 questions, one was a simple retrieval of information from the text, one was a more complex why question and 3 were inference questions which is not specifically taught as part of the curriculum). Therefore, the evaluation team in partnership with Redearth, developed an alternative comprehension test in which students were required to read and carry out the commands in 5 instructional sentences. This test was carried out in 6 schools and 2 control schools. Both the results of the EGRA and the new comprehension test are reported on in this evaluation.

Redearth, in designing their data collection, used a pre- post intervention methodology and compared the results with those from a control group which were not part of the intervention. Given the use of the pre-test post-test design, the most effective way to measure impact is to look at the performance of the same learners in both baseline and end line. The obvious assumption behind this is that the learners remained in the project and the results were able to be collected. In order to maximise the latter for the end evaluation, a second data collection was carried out to target children who were not present at the time of the first collection. The number of children in each of the cohorts in which the analysis was based upon is contained in the table below.

Table 3: Sample Size for EGRA Test

Cohort	No of project schools where data was taken from	No of children with baseline and endline (June 2017) data in RedEarth project schools	No of children with baseline and endline (June 2017) data in control schools
Schools in the Buliisa area which entered the project in year 3	8	153 (73F 80M)	39 (22F 17M) (from 2 schools)
Schools in the Masindi area which entered the project in year 2	7	93 (53F 40M)	104 (52M 52F) (from 3 schools)
Schools in the original pilot project.	3	32 (23F 9M)	N/A

This was all data available. In the view of the evaluators, there are lessons to be learned with regards to the sample size and the amount of time and budget spent on monitoring and evaluation.

Again, this should always be seen in the context of the limited experience of both organisations; given this was their first major multi-year project.

However, in the opinion of the evaluator, the data set is large enough to be used as a snapshot to identify impact and trends at the time of the evaluation, rather than to draw robust statistical conclusions.

Results from Cohort 3 Buliisa Schools

Table 4 Results of EGRA Test of Cohort 3 Buliisa Schools (combined P2 and P3 pupils)

Test	Project Schools		Control Schools	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Average Letter Sound Identification English	1.79	14.72	2.2	1.8
Average Syllable Identification (Local Language)	1.57	12.59	3.5	10.8
Average no of words read in a minute (English)	1.3	8.87	2.2	7.5
Average no of words read in a minute (Local Language)	0.29	5.92	0.9	4.6
Average no of comprehension questions answered (English)	0	1.16	0.1	0.1
Average no of comprehension questions answered (local language)	0	0.12	0	0
% of children **not able** to read a single word and classed as illiterate (English)	80%	41%	79%	62%
% of children **not able** to read a single word and classed as illiterate (Local Language)	96%	60%	90%	72%

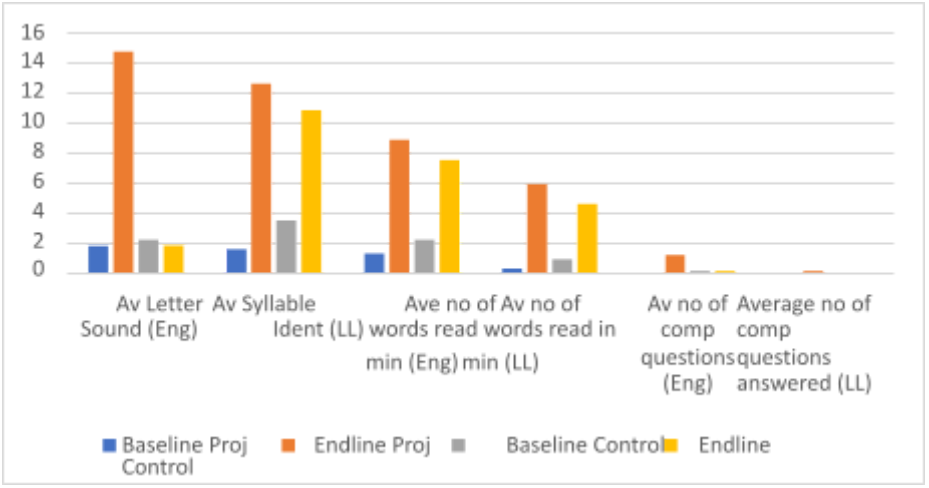


Figure 1 Mean scores in EGRA test in Cohort 3 (Buliisa) after one year of the reading project

The focus on teaching of phonics has clearly impacted with the average child in project schools being able to identify over eight times more sounds in English and syllables in local language than at baseline. In the control schools (where no phonics are taught) there has actually been a decrease in English sounds and the increase in syllables is not at the same rate as the project schools.

In both the control and project schools, the average child has improved their ability to read individual words in English and local language but the rate of increase in the project schools is much higher. For example, with regards to English, the average child is reading 6.8 times as many words in the project schools compared to 3.4 times in control schools. With local language, the average child in project schools is reading 20 times more familiar words but in control schools it is only 5 times.

As already stated, there are potential issues with regards to the comprehension test. However, in English by the endline, the average child could at least answer the one retrieval comprehension question. In the control schools only 4 out of 39 (10%) could answer a question

In terms of the percentage of illiterate children, in the project schools this had virtually halved (in English) but in control schools the number had reduced by just over 20 percent.

Results from Cohort 2 Masindi Schools (combined P2 and P3 pupils)

Cohort 2 have been in the project since year 2. The 3 control schools were part of the RTI intervention which was running at the same time. The project schools were schools which RTI had chosen not to work in. This was principally because the children spoke a variety of first languages. In addition, to the planned programme, Redearth carried out additional training around reading comprehension in English (delivered by a long-term UK volunteer). Looking at data from this cohort of schools, enables a snapshot comparison of the Redearth programme to be compared with a group of schools receiving another reading intervention.

Table 5 Baseline versus endline for Project and Control Schools in Cohort 2 (combined P2 and P3 pupils)

Test	Baseline Proj	Endline Proj	Baseline Control	Endline Control
Av Letter Sound (Eng)	3.7	22.9	2.1	3.8
Av Syllable Ident (LL)	2	21.2	6.1	27.1
Ave no of words read min (Eng)	1.8	18.1	1.3	15.9
Av no of words read in min (LL)	0.5	9.2	2.2	10.8
Av no of comp questions (Eng)	0	2.6	0	1.4
Average no of comp questions answered (LL)	0	0.1	0	0.1
% of children not able to read a single word and classed as illiterate (English)	74%	17%	65%	21%
% of children not able to read a single word and classed as illiterate (Local Language)	90%	39%	69%	40%

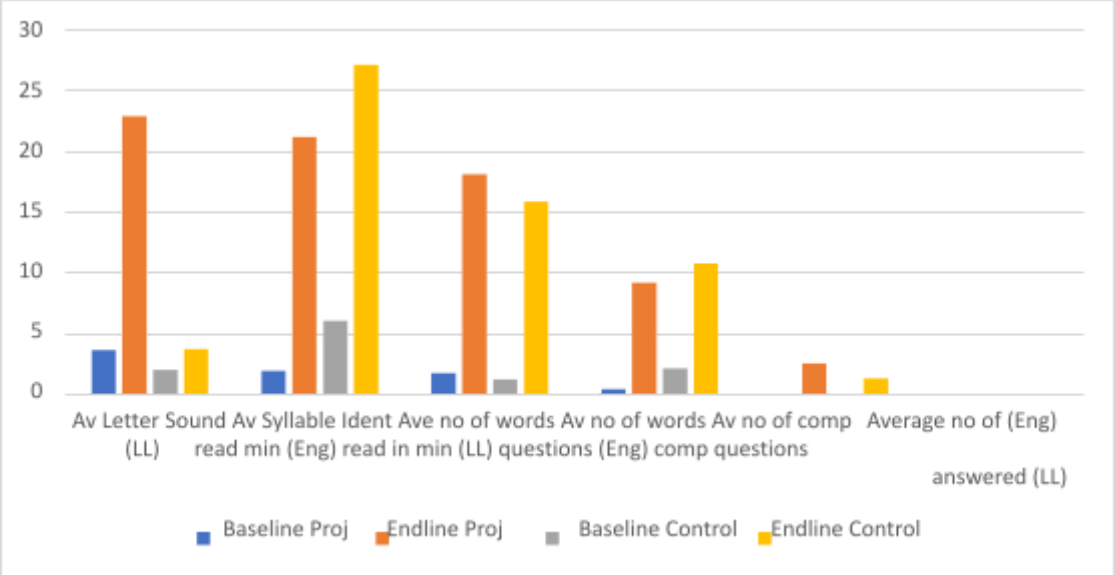


Figure 2 Mean scores at Baseline and Endline in EGRA Tests for Project and Control School in Cohort 2

Again, the focus of teaching phonics (which is not present in the RTI programme) has clearly impacted and over the 2 years the average child in project schools can identify nearly 6 times as many English sounds than the control schools. Both programmes appear to have impacted on the average number of words being able to be read in English with the average child being able to read 13% more in the Redearth programme schools. With regards to syllables in local language, the control schools started with a higher baseline (reflecting quite possibly the multi-lingual nature of the children in the Redearth programme schools) and by endline that gap had slightly widened. Similarly, with words read per minute in local language, the baseline in the Redearth schools was lower and the actual progress made, as measured by increase in words per minute of the average child, was almost identical. The additional intervention around comprehension in English seems to have impacted with the average child in the programme schools getting an additional 1.2 questions correct than in control schools. However, it is with regards to the illiteracy rate (as defined by percentage of children not being able to read a single word) where a significant difference can be seen between the two samples of schools. In the Redearth schools, the illiteracy rate has fallen by 57 percentage points in English as compared to 34 percentage points in the control schools and 51 percentage points in local language compared to 29 percentage points in control schools.

Results from Pilot Schools

The third cohort of schools which was looked at were children from 3 schools which were part of the original pilot and then work continued with them in year one of the project. In the remaining years

of the project, the schools were supported as part of the Redearth Achievement Award but there was no direct reading intervention programme. A group of 32 children were tracked from baseline in the pilot to June 2017. Although there was an intention to match the progress of these children against a group of children from a control school, the control group became so statistically small (less than 10) to make, in the opinion of the evaluators, any conclusions unreliable. However, what is of value is to use this group to compare the progress made across the 3 cohorts: Those with one year of input, those with 2 years of input and those with 2 years of input followed by 2 years in the Redearth Achievement Award.

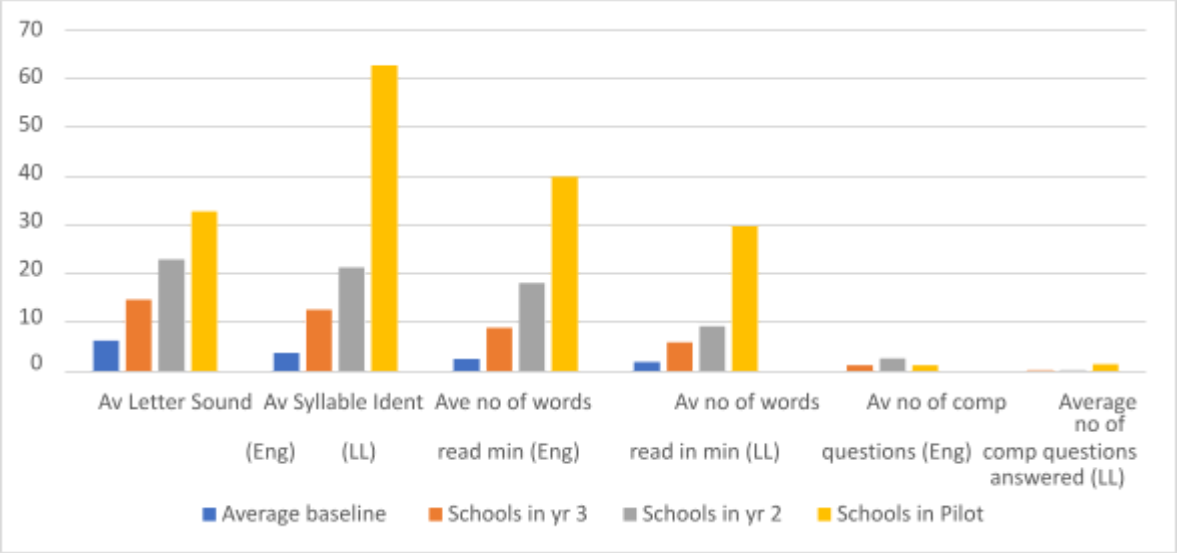


Figure 3 Comparison of Mean Score in reading tests across all 3 cohorts and an average baseline

The baseline was calculated from an average baseline of all 3 cohorts.

What is most apparent is for sounds, syllables and average number of words in English and local language there is a consistent upward trend across the 3 cohorts. Children in the pilot cohort are, when tested in June 2017, are on average 4 years older and by implication being more cognitively able so it is impossible, in the absence of a consistent control group, to directly attribute this trend solely to the Redearth programme. However, from this data snapshot there appears to be evidence of a model in which schools receive 2 years support in the reading programme and then this is sustained through the achievement award to be successful in having contributed to a sustained impact on reading levels.

The one area which the project appears from the EGRA data to have had less impact is with regards to reading comprehension. As already mentioned, a significant issue with this is with regards to the nature of the comprehension test in the EGRA test. To look at this further, the evaluation team developed, in partnership with Redearth, a further comprehension test in which children were given

5 commands (P2 Local Language, P4 English) and were required to read to them and respond appropriately. In Buliisa, 40 children were tested across two schools. The average P2 comprehension score was 2.7 (with 35% of children scoring 0) and P4 (in English) 2.55 (with again 35% of children scoring 0). What is clear is that the project appears to be clearly impacting on comprehension beyond that which is showing in EGRA data.

8. **To what extent has that impact been equitable across all children in the project?**

To examine this, the evaluators looked at the impact of the intervention disaggregated by gender, school location, grade, and economic background.

In addition, the evaluation looked at illiteracy rate across all pupils in the cohorts. This was defined by the percentage of children who were unable to read a single word in English or local language on the basis of the EGRA test. This could be argued to be the strongest measure of equity since it reflects whether any child is being "left behind" in the intervention.

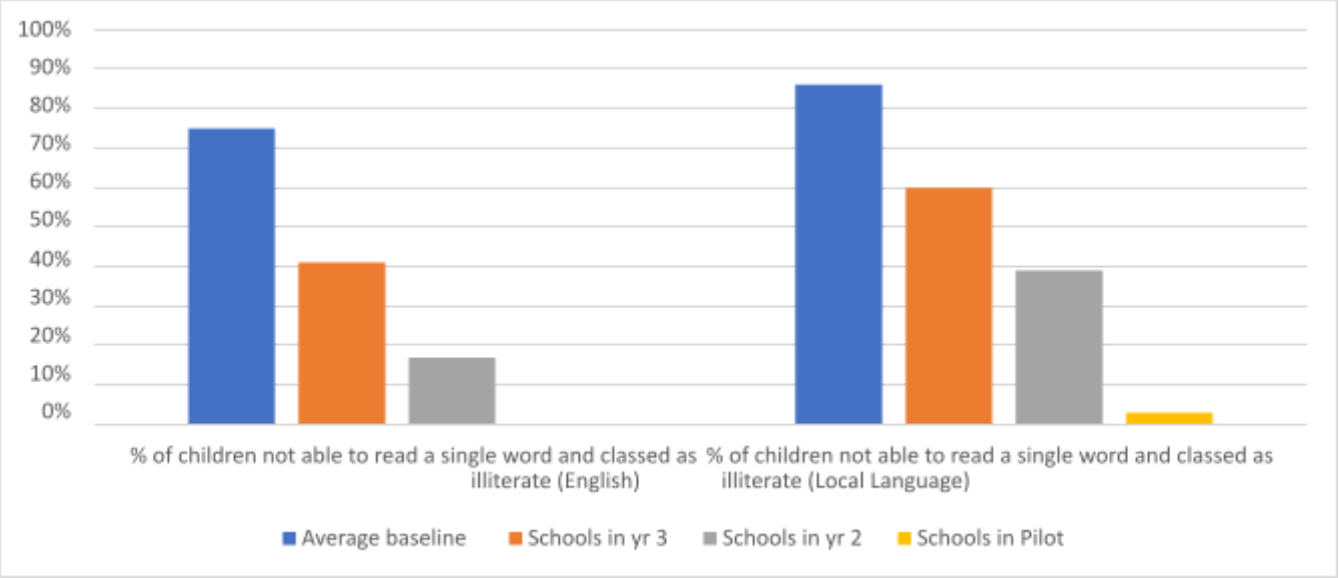


Figure 4 Comparison of illiteracy rate across all 3 cohorts and an average baseline.

The baseline was calculated by taking an average across all 3 cohorts. What is most apparent is the fall in the illiteracy rate across the cohorts as the schools were longer in the projects. The illiteracy rate for schools in year 3(Cohort 3) of the project remained high (40% English, 60% local language). This should be seen in the context of large classes of more than 100. In such a situation, it is difficult for teachers to monitor whether all children are learning. The project could consider a more effective way of monitoring this for all children (not just the sample) by, for example, using a 5-word

test in which all children could be assessed with. The evaluators would strongly recommend that a target for future reading programmes should be illiteracy rate.

For schools in cohort 2, who had been 2 years into the project, the illiteracy rate had fallen to 16% in English and 39% in local language. For the schools in the pilot, for children with baseline and endline data, the illiteracy rate at endline was a stunning 3% in local language and 0% (100% literate) in English. Again, this supports the hypothesis of a model in which schools receive 2 years support in the reading programme and then this is sustained through the Redearth Achievement Award to be successful in having a sustained impact on illiteracy. The one caveat to this is that the data was calculated was children who were present both at baseline and endline and it may have been that some children who could not read have dropped out of school. However, there is no way of verifying the extent to which this may be the case. As previously mentioned, the evaluators also carried out their own 5-word test in 2 schools from each cohort to verify the data and similar patterns emerged.

Disaggregation by Gender

The following figures show the results disaggregated by gender. Given the low comprehension scores, these have been removed from the analysis.

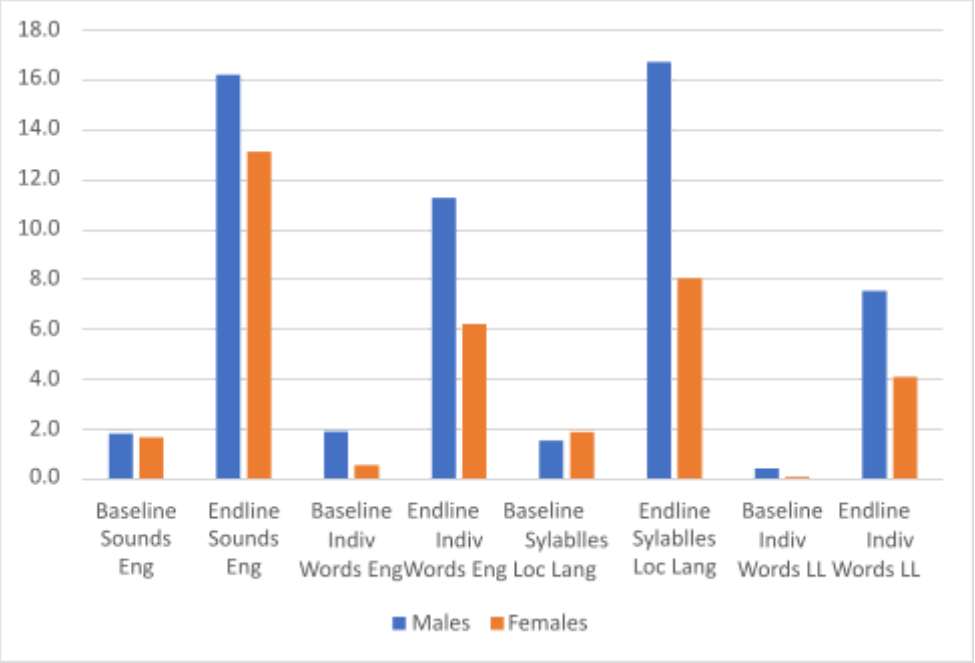


Figure 5 Mean EGRA score by Gender in programme schools in the Buliisa area (Cohort 3 of the project)

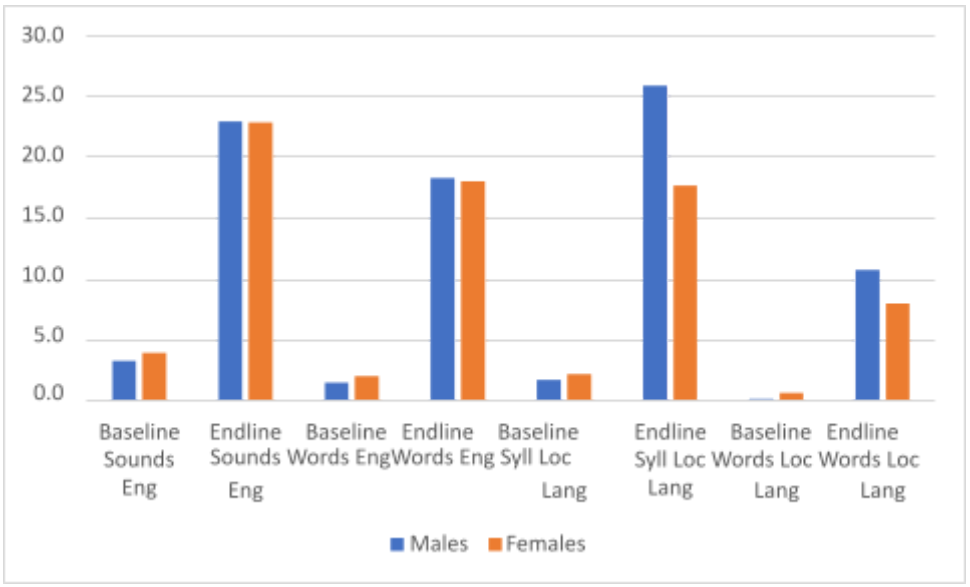


Figure 6 Mean EGRA Scores by gender in Cohort 2 (Masindi Schools)

For the 3 pilot schools, what is interesting is that one of the schools was a single sex girl's school.

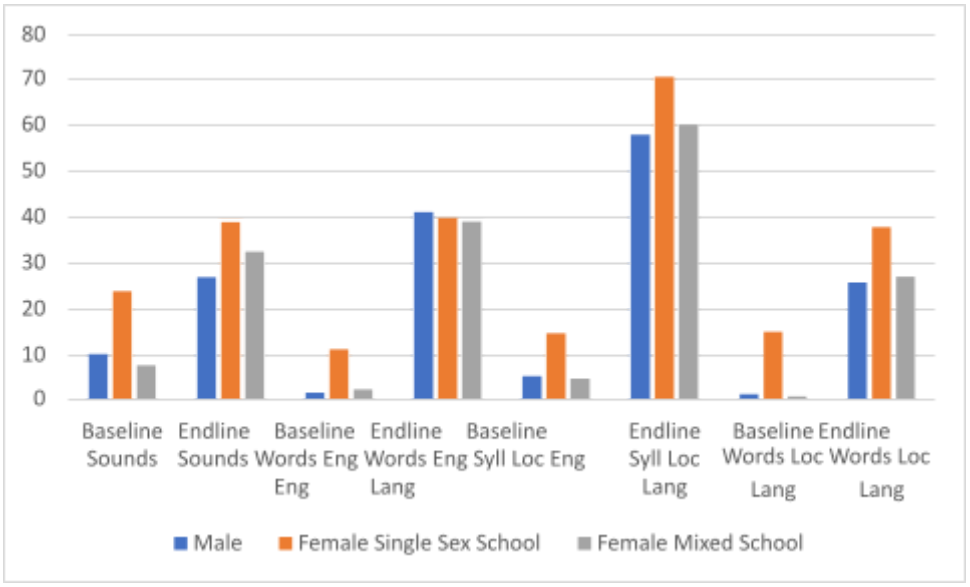


Figure 7 Mean EGRA Scores by gender in Pilot Schools

What can be clearly seen is that for Cohort 3 and 2, the programme appears to be having greater impact on males than females. In cohort 3, in nearly all sub-sections of the test, males started slightly higher at baseline and the gap subsequently grew. In cohort 2, males started lower at baseline and had caught up and in most sub-sections out-performed females. In the pilot schools, the girls in the single sex setting had a higher baseline and in local language ended with higher endlines. The improved scores for females in single sex might also be related to class size as in the single sex school average class size was 30-40 compared to 80 plus in the mixed schools. Males and females in mixed settings in the pilot schools did as well as each other.

In addition, when illiteracy levels were looked at similar patterns could be seen

Table 6 Percentage of children classed as being illiterate (as defined as being unable to read a single word)

	% Illiteracy Rate Baseline Cohort 3	% Illiteracy Rate Endline Cohort 3	% Illiteracy Rate Baseline Cohort 2	% Illiteracy Rate Endline Cohort 2	% Illiteracy Rate Baseline Pilot	% Illiteracy Rate Endline Pilot
Males English	76%	31%	78%	15%	67%	0%
Females English	82%	51%	72%	19%	60% (Sng Sex) 60% (Mixed)	0% 0%
Males Loc Lang	95%	50%	93%	35%	78%	11%
Females Loc Lang	96%	70%	89%	42%	56% (Sng Sex) 79% (Mixed)	0% 0%

Illiteracy levels in cohort 3 and 2 were again comparable at baseline but by endline, in particular in cohort 3, were different (20 percentage points cohort 3 and 4-7 percentage points in cohort 2 with females being more likely to remain illiterate.). It is impossible to know definitely why the project had greater impact on males but in large classes there has been anecdotal research that boys may be more active.

Disaggregation by School

The project disaggregated data across different schools in both cohort 3 and cohort 2.

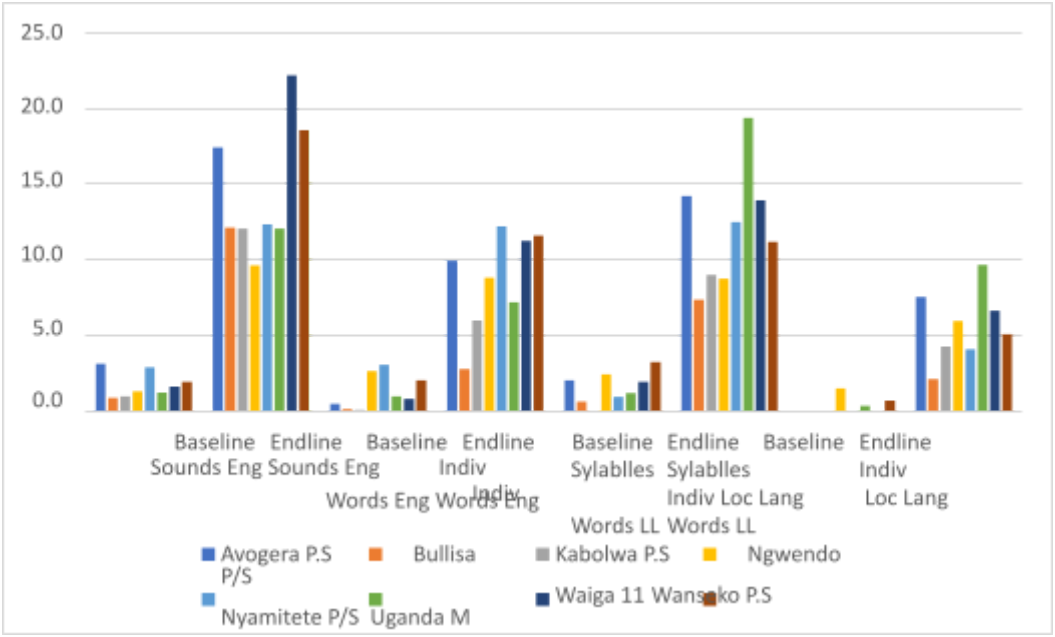


Figure 8: Mean EGRA score by school in programme schools in the Buliisa area (Cohort 3 of the project)

It can be seen that at baseline, there was not much difference between the schools sampled but at endline, results vary. It is interesting that different schools are stronger in different sub-sections of the test. In English in terms of words read, Nyamitete, Waiga and Wanseko primary schools scored highest whilst in local language it was Uganda M and Avogera. Without seeing the data, the evaluators asked the project manager to predict which schools the impact might be higher or lower on the basis of the school's motivation within the project. There did not seem to be strong correlation between the perceived motivation of the school and the learning outcomes and in fact one of the schools which the project manager highlighted motivation was strongest was Buliisa primary school and they had the lowest outcomes in endline reading.

The same analysis was done in cohort 2.

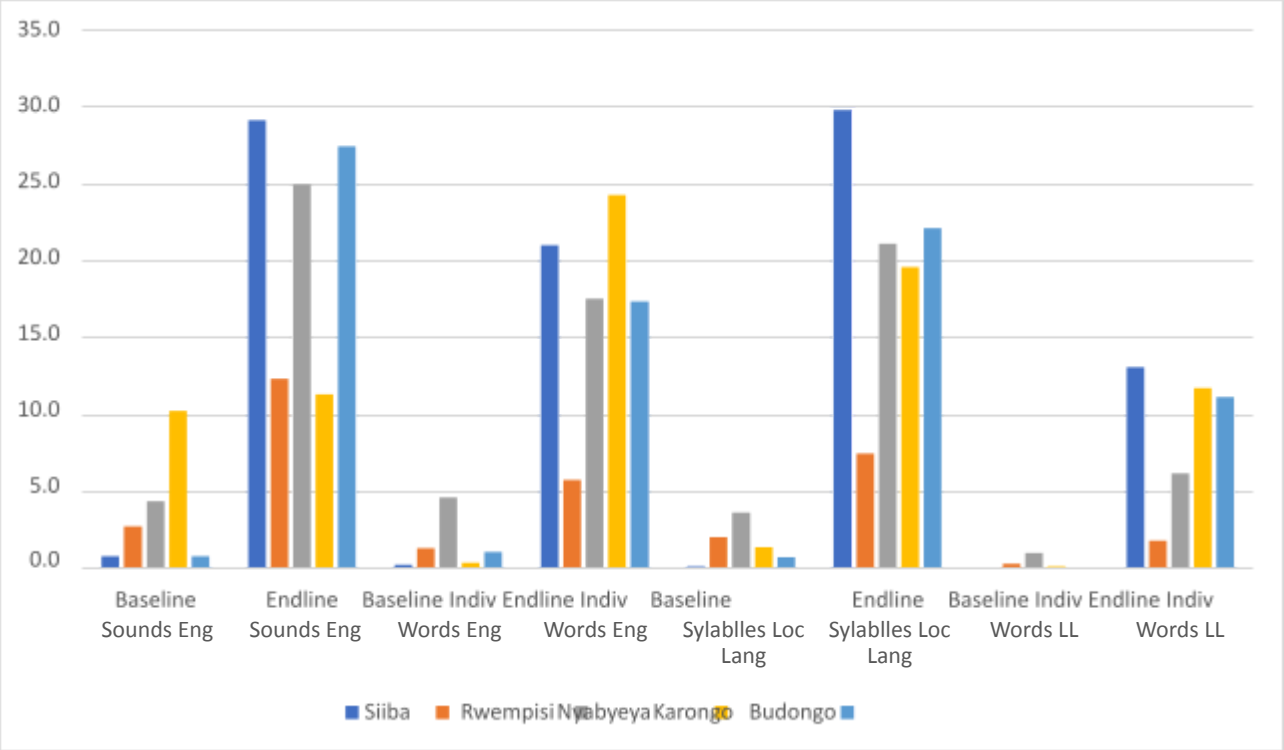


Figure 9 Mean EGRA score by school in programme schools in Cohort 2

Cohort 2 follows a similar pattern with variance between the schools. In particular one school, Rwempisi, the impact was much less. This the project team highlighted that in this school teachers were less motivated and the headteacher was less supportive. The evaluation team were unable to visit this school to investigate deeper.

Finally, across both cohorts, it is interesting to note that there seems to be a clear correlation between the learning of phonics and the ability to read words with the schools where phonic knowledge is stronger also have stronger word scores. This would be expected as learning phonics is

a pre-requisite to reading words but it does support the project's theory of change: if phonic knowledge can be developed then children will begin to be able to read.

Economic Circumstances of the Children

All children tested were also asked whether at home they had the following:

- Car
- Motorbike
- Bike
- TV
- Satellite Dish
- Electricity
- Solar
- Phone
- Radio

For each item, if a positive response was given then a score of one was given. The total score was then summed up. The evaluators then compared the results for those children who scored 3 or less with all others. The evaluators recognise the limitations of such analysis; however, we do believe it gives an simple indication as to whether the intervention may have supported the more economically disadvantaged.

For cohort 3, (Buliisa) 36% of children scored 3 or less and are classed in the graph as economically disadvantaged. In cohort 2, (Masindi area) it was 26%. The higher percentage in Buliisa is not surprising given economically it is perceived as a more marginalised area.

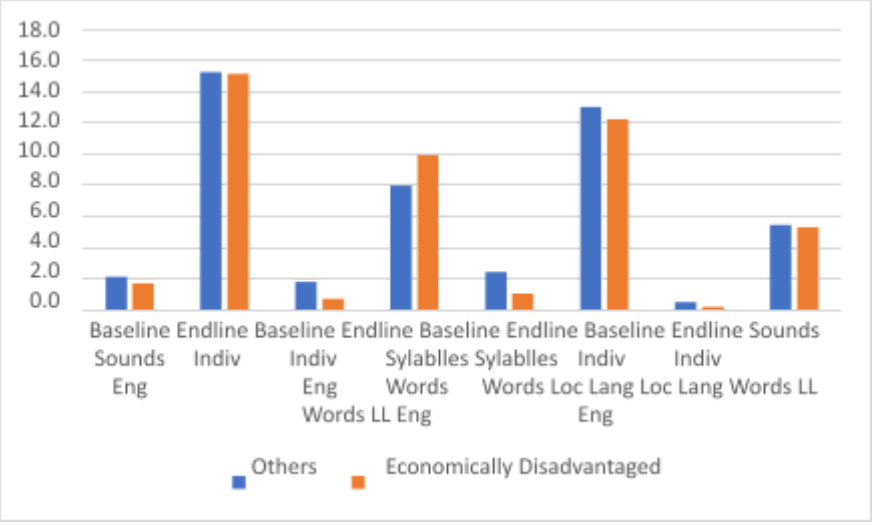


Figure 10 Mean EGRA Scores by economic circumstances of the children in Cohort 3

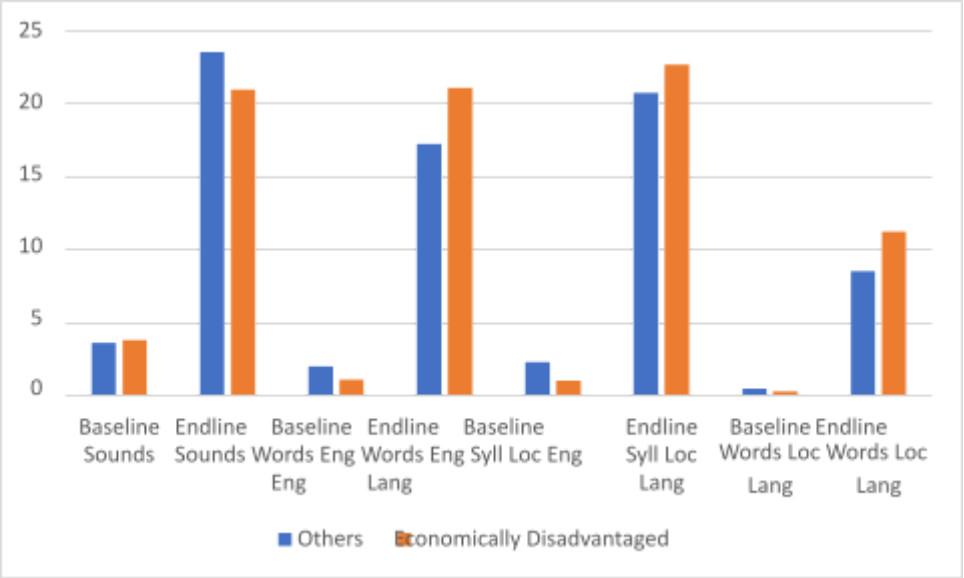


Figure 11 Mean EGRA Scores by economic circumstances of the children in Cohort 2 Masindi

Across both districts, in 15 of the 16 sub-sections those with an economic disadvantage started on average with a lower baseline. Yet, by the endline, they had caught up and in the Masindi area were outperforming the other group in 3 of the 4 sub-sections. This is, in the opinion of the evaluators, exceptionally encouraging as within most education systems worldwide there is a gap between attainment for those economically marginalised and others. At baseline, the evidence from this data snapshot is that this gap existed but by endline the gap had successfully been closed.

Disaggregation by Grade

The evaluators also looked at the impact of children in different grades in cohort 3. The programme targeted teaching and learning in grades 1-4.

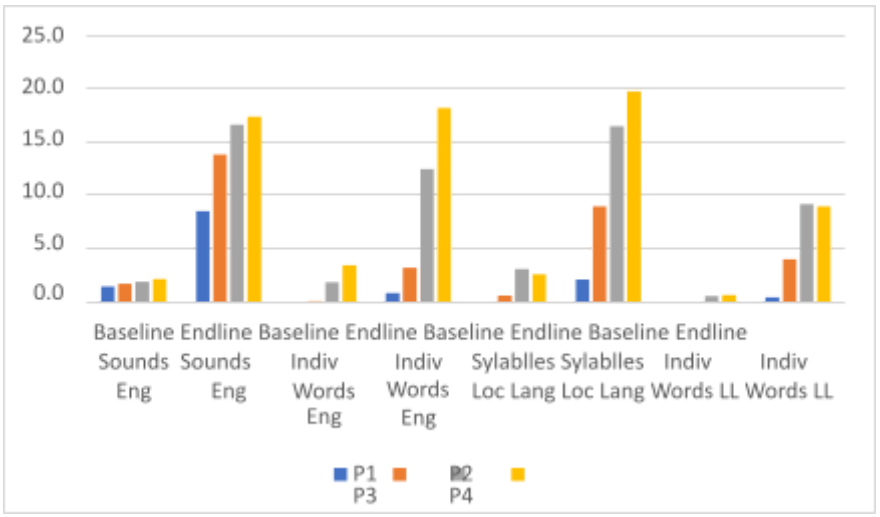


Figure 12 Mean score by grade at baseline in project schools in cohort 3 (after 1 year in reading project)

The above data is based on averages across 8 schools. What is most apparent is that the project has had most impact on children who were at baseline in P3 and P4. The evaluators would hypothesize that this might be related to the age of the children and with that the cognitive ability: older children are more likely to pick up new concepts quicker. In addition, average class sizes are much higher in P1 and P2 which is likely to reduce the impact of the teaching. Furthermore some children in P1 may be under age for school (research by USAID reports this as an increasing issue as many parents cannot afford nursery education) meaning that they may not have the maturity to benefit from the programme, and up to 1/3 of the cohort may be held back in P1 due to not having success, this further compounding the difficulties of large class sizes (In seven of the eight schools, in P1 the class size was above 100, whereas at P4 it was 4 out of 8)

Key Points from Learning Outcomes

The project has clearly impacted children's reading in the target schools and the progress children are making is significantly greater than in control schools where there has been no other intervention and slightly better than that of control schools where there has been a national reading programme intervention. The area which the impact is greatest is in reducing illiteracy rates with the illiteracy rates in Redearth project schools falling by more than 20 percentage points more than in the national reading programme schools. In addition, given the schools which are in the Redearth programme were perceived as unsuitable for the national programme as the range of local languages spoken in them made it hard to deliver successful intervention; this should be seen as a real achievement of the project.

Initially, the project proposed to work with a cohort of schools for one year before sustaining progress through the Redearth Achievement Award. Project learning was that schools needed 2 years of intervention before the shift into the award and the data snapshot supports this as an appropriate and effective model.

There still remains a significant issue with equity in terms of children remaining illiterate. This should be seen in the context of large classes (100 plus). Although there is evidence of literacy levels raising the longer a school remains in the project; children who are illiterate may drop out of school and therefore not show in the data sample.

The project seems to have made slightly more impact on males than females and children in upper grades (P3 and P4) have made more progress than P1 and P2 but the evaluators hypothesize that this could be related to other factors including student age and class size. What is most significant is the intervention appears to have successfully closed the gap between the education disadvantaged children and those of their peers.

The impact of the programme varies between schools and this the project hypothesizes is likely to be related to the motivation of teachers and of the school leadership. This could not be verified by the data provided and collecting data from a wider number schools would be really valuable to identify if there are correlating factors as to what makes a school more or less successful.

9. **Outcome 2:-To what extent has the project improved the teaching of literacy?**

The evaluation team observed and interviewed P1 and P4 teachers teaching in 6 project schools (2 pilot, 2 cohort 2 and 2 cohort 3) and also 2 control schools which were part of the national reading intervention. A total of 23 lessons were observed in the 6 project schools and 6 lessons in control schools. In addition, one of the evaluation team has extensive experience of observing schools in Uganda having recently completed a review of inclusive education across Uganda in which he observed teaching in over 30 primary schools in Uganda which gives a wider context to the quality of the teaching. Furthermore, the evaluation surveyed (see annex for survey) and had FGDs with 24 teachers and headteachers as to their perceptions as to how teaching has improved.

For the observations, the evaluators agreed with the project officers to focus on the following

- Teacher's knowledge of phonics and correcting phonics when students make a mistake

- The use of learning aids made from locally made materials to engage and support learning
- The use of group work
- A learning environment which supports reading

In addition, in each of the lessons four learners were randomly selected and watched throughout the lesson to assess if they were engaged in learning for at least 60% of the lesson.

Table 7: Summary of Lesson Observations

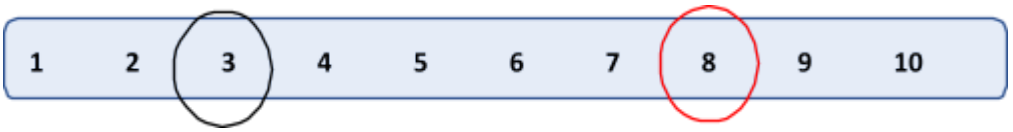
	Project Schools (23 lesson observations)	Control Schools (6 lesson observations)
Teacher's knowledge of phonics and correcting phonics when students make a mistake	In 96% of the lessons, teachers were displaying phonic knowledge and supporting learners to use their phonic knowledge when reading. In approximately half, if the learner made a mistake the teacher would actively correct them	Because of the nature of the RTI programme, there was a focus on syllables not letter sounds. Teachers were therefore not using individual sounds to support decoding
The use of learning aids made from locally made materials to engage and support learning	In 100% of the lessons, a learning aid made by the teacher was used. In 83% of the lessons, learners at one time in the lesson were using learning aids. These included for example, reading games in which children had to match words to pictures. In the best of lessons, the teacher differentiated the activities to support different learners. For example, in a P1 lesson observed (90 children), the most able children were reading books made by the teacher, a middle ability group was reading sentences, a lower group were playing a game with individual words and the least able were doing an activity using initial sounds	The RTI approach involves every child having a text book and doing teacher led activities around the text book. Without doubt, the text books (by having ready-made reading materials) were supporting the development of reading. However, there was no evidence of differentiation and all learners were following the books at the "class pace", furthermore, in the schools observed there was often 1 text book for 3-4 children
Use of group work	In 78% of the lessons, the children used group work during the lessons. This included learning in groups in activities. Because of large classes and limited teacher-made resources, groups were sometimes big and not all learners were able to be engaged in the activities all the time. However, what was clear to the evaluators was that group work was supporting learners to be engaged and enjoying their learning, developing speaking and listening skills and enabling more competent learners to support less able learners.	In 33% of lessons observed, there was some form of pair work; for example, tell your partner before the teacher. In no lessons was there any group work.

Learning Environment	In all the classes, there were learning resources on display to support reading	Fifty percent of the classes had learning resources in display

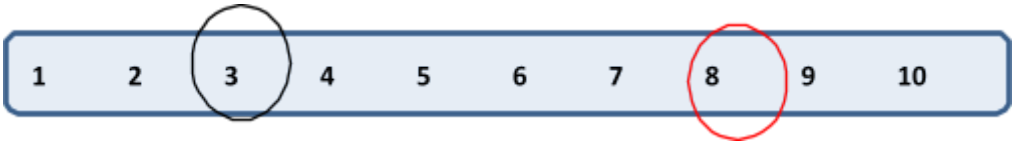
	made of local materials. In the majority of lessons, the teacher referred to these as part of the lessons. The vast majority of teachers were keeping their resources tidy and without doubt the provision by Redearth of a resource box was supporting this.	but only in one did the evaluator observe the learners using them in the lessons
Percentage of children engaged in lessons for at least 60% of the time	On the basis of observing 4 random learners in each lesson, in the opinion of the evaluators 68% of the learners were engaged in the majority of the lesson	Using the same method, 28% of learners were assessed as being engaged in the majority of the lesson.

The results of the teacher survey are displayed below. There was no baseline but the evaluators asked the teachers to think how they felt they were doing before the project started and how they felt now. The average before is circled in black and the average now score in red. After each question the evaluators discussed their findings with the teachers.

Teaching lessons which specifically aim to develop children's reading skills?

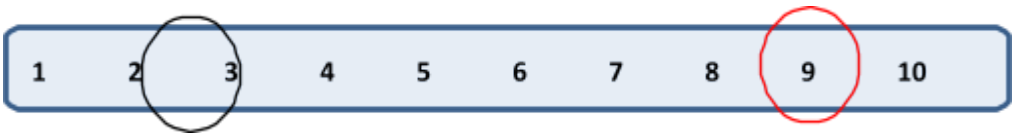


Lesson planning to develop reading?

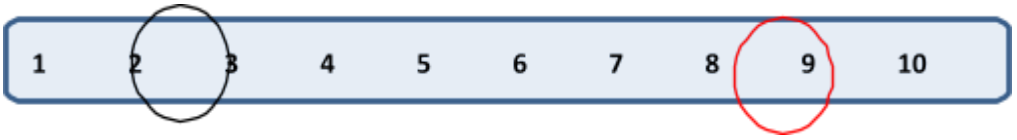


During the focus grouped discussion, teachers highlighted that knowing what they know now, before the project started they were not teaching children actually to read: more developing their sight reading or word recognition vocabulary. They felt that they were now "*teaching a skill*" rather than individual words. They also talked how in their teaching, "*all learners are busy.*" It was often mentioned that crucial to this was the initial development of the teacher's own skills in particular the training around phonics. They valued the feedback from the field workers in helping them put the training into practice in the classrooms as well as the experience sharing visits to other schools because these visits encouraged teachers by helping them to see the strategies from the training in real classrooms.

Your own knowledge of phonics and letter sounds?

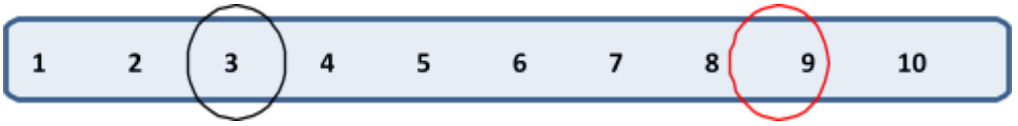


Teaching of Phonics to support the development of reading?



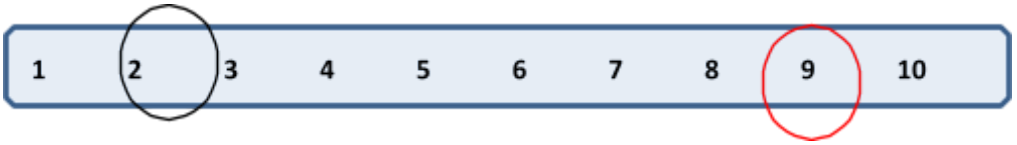
The teachers' own knowledge of and, as a result, the teaching of phonics repeatedly came across as the biggest change the project had made. What also was absolutely clear was the nature of this change. This went beyond something which the teachers had been told they had to introduce to something which they clearly had understood and enjoyed using fundamentally because they had seen the difference it was making to their learners. In each school, the teachers were asked as to what they would continue if the project stopped tomorrow and time and time again the answer was on the lines of "*the phonics - because it made a difference to the learners."* Teachers spoke with confidence about the skills needed to be able to read, such as segmenting and blending sounds and how the training and the guidance manuals from Redearth helped with their knowledge of this.

Your ability to make and use of **teaching aids** to support the teaching of reading?



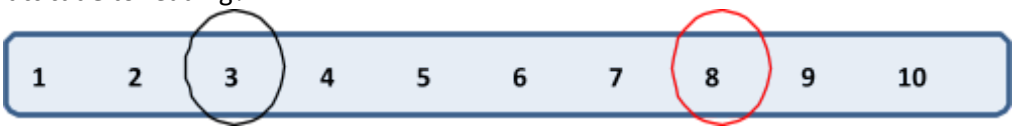
What teachers highlighted with regards to teaching aids was the ability to make them out of local recycled materials. This was a core part of the Redearth philosophy for sustainability, resources should be low-cost or no-cost. A number highlighted that children and community members were now bringing in materials to support in this; for example, old plastic bottles. Teachers also asserted how the reading project had taught them many more new uses of teaching aids beyond simple flash cards and posters. The use of bottle lines for blending sounds was often mentioned and also sound frames for segmenting. The teachers were proud of the resources they had made and how they could be re-used over and over to support children with practical activities and reading games before reading from texts. The enjoyed the creativity aspect of resource making and this is a motivating factor which will help them meet the continuing demand for new and varied resources.

The use of **group work** to teach reading in your classroom?



There also appeared to be a fundamental shift in teacher's attitude to group work. They were pleased to have an increase of talk in the lessons. Teachers spoke how they now realised how group work saved their time as they no longer had to deal with every individual but used more able or "*fast learners"* to support weaker learners by modelling to them and highlighting punctuation when reading aloud as a group. It was the inclusion of these weaker learners that the teachers talked about group work being most beneficial to. In some cases, children with disabilities were also mentioned as group work helped teachers see it was possible to teach these children in a mainstream classroom. In addition, to supporting the less-able learners, teachers also highlighted how group work had supported learners to co-operate better with each other and raise the learner's self-confidence. They also highlighted how it improved relations between teachers and children and better behaviour from the children because they are being praised and they are engaged in their learning.

Your student's **attitude** to reading?



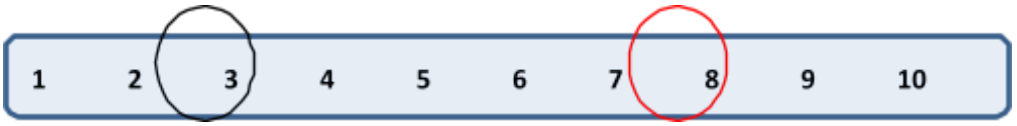
Teachers spoke how they felt that that students were enjoying lessons more. A number of teachers and also headteachers reported that this had impacted on attendance and for the whole school on reduced drop out. This is investigated in a little more detail in the unintended outcomes section.

As part of the evaluation, learners were also asked as to their perceptions around reading through both discussion and some participatory activities. Because of language and cultural barriers, responses were limited and also there was no baseline. (It was felt that learners, unlike the teachers, could not be asked to compare their attitudes before and after the project). In total 42 children took part in these activities.

- 93% said they really enjoyed their reading lessons and reading in general

- When asked what activity did they feel helped them most in their reading, 33% identified teacher led activities, 17% the reading games, 19% pair or group work and 31% doing activities alone.

Your ability to **differentiate** your teaching of reading to meet all your learner's needs?



Although the teachers felt they were stronger in differentiating, on the basis of the lesson observations only the best teachers were doing so to impact their learners. Again, this should be put in context of the large class sizes, the range of learner needs and the limited resources. Teachers spoke about their own experiences of being lectured not taught at school and how they had continued this practice as teachers until the Redearth methodology had changed this "*for the better"*.

An interesting aside is whether there is any evidence of whether improved teaching directly leads to improved learning outcomes. Each teacher in the project schools is assessed annually as part of the Achievement Award and therefore it would be possible to see if the teachers who receive higher awards have improved learning outcomes in their classes. Unfortunately, the statistical sample size and the format of the data makes it not possible to see if any correlation exists for the purposes of this evaluation. However, there are some indicators of links. For example, in the Buliisa district the school in which all teachers were bronze level was Waiga 11 and in terms of English the percentage of children who were illiterate was 18% which was 23 percentage points lower than the district average.

It is of value to comment on the pedagogy underlying the shift in teaching methodology and compare it to the RTI programme as there are fundamental differences. RTI's reading programme is driven through the provision of a text book and the development of a simple methodological process which is used in every lesson so both the teachers and the learners get used to it. This process and the provision of reading materials is, the data is showing, improving reading levels. The Redearth programme does not have a text book and does not provide a fixed methodology which needs to be used in every lesson. Moreover, it seeks to build a teacher's understanding of the reading process so they can plan and make informed choices as to the best way of teaching reading to their group of

learners. This, on the basis of the focus group discussions with the teachers, has resulted in the empowering of the teachers and a shift in pedagogy which they fundamentally believe in. They are empowered to make decisions as to how best to teach the learners and this, the teachers say, has led to improved teaching across all subjects. The Redearth method is not aimed at raising teachers to a minimum standard instead develops their capacity to work to their potential. This may also partially explain as to why, therefore, there is varying impact between schools as it relies on the teachers "buying into" the process. What is interesting from the data is that although both programmes have raised the average level of reading, the Redearth programme appears to have had greater impact on illiteracy levels. This may be partly explained by stronger teachers being empowered to differentiate to support weaker learners in the Redearth programme rather than teaching all at the same pace regardless of need.

Key Points

Without doubt, there has been a shift in methodology with teachers using a phonics based approach to reading and using more teaching aids and group work. This is resulting in more engaged learners and, teachers report, benefits the weaker learners. However, what is most impressive is how much this methodology has empowered teachers to develop their own teaching skills, make more informative decisions and apply new methodology in other subjects. In more than one school, teachers who were judged to be stronger at teaching reading were working with new or inexperienced staff to provide a model of good practice, in addition new teachers visited the trained staff to learn from in-house training.

Although there is no quantitative data, it is the opinion of the evaluators, that this shift has increased both the teacher's pedagogical skills as well as their own motivation to improve and achieve greater job satisfaction.

10. Outcome 3: To what extent have Redearth developed a model that has the potential to be scaled up or replicated by other organisations?

To achieve this, in the view of the evaluators, two things had to happen

- The programme needed to be developed in a form that with support from Redearth other NGOs could potentially take on – there needed to be a defined programme blueprint with guidance materials and a local support and monitoring system
- The impact of the programme needed to be such that there was interest in key stakeholders in taking it on

- The programme needed to be cost effective

In the pilot and year one of the project, virtually all the central training was delivered primarily by UK long term volunteers with the Ugandan team supporting in delivering training in schools. As the project progressed, this balance shifted so by year three, the Buliisa cohort, the project was delivered entirely by Ugandan trainers. This, the evaluators believe, was a vital step in making the training replicable and more cost effective as it was no longer dependent on UK volunteers. Alongside this has been the development of a programme manual and training plan in which the training sessions and activities are clearly outlined.

With regards to the interest from other stakeholders in taking the programme on, on a simple micro level, Redearth has

1) Delivered training to 15 Build Africa staff around the teaching of phonics and sounds. No data is available yet as to how many schools this has then been disseminated to and the impact in these schools
2) Delivered reading training to 2 private schools who paid for this having heard of the success of the project. Redearth were not contracted for follow up monitoring so the extent to which this impacted on teaching and learning is not known.

Both of these interventions had the addition benefit of bringing in unrestricted funding to support the organisation.

However, it is on a regional and national level which the project has the **potential** to make the greatest impact. Over the project lifetime, Redearth (initially the UK volunteers and then with the appointment of the operations manager of Redearth Uganda) have consistently advocated to other organisations/stakeholders to come and see the programme. Fundamental to this has been the insistence of Redearth that visitors see the impact in teaching and learning at a school level.

During the project period, the following lists some of the organisations who have visited to see the impact of the reading project

Table 8: Summary of Visitors to Redearth Project

Date	Who came (Brief Details of the visit including why they came)
17/08/2017	RTI LARA 2 visitors to discuss reading programme and to begin process of 'harmonisation' as requested by MOES
14/08/2017	A group of 44 members comprising of 2 staff members of World Vision, 1 DEO Nakasogola, 1 Inspector, 1 CCT and Headteachers from World Vision supported

	schools in Nakasongola - to see how local materials are being used in the teaching and Learning
8/8/2017	RTI SHRP 1 visitor. As above.
10/10/2016	Ed Barnett from DFID to see and understand the work of Redearth Education in schools
08/08/2016	4 Members from Step by step Primary schools Kampala and Twins schools (GEMS) Kampala to visit Redearth education and look at work in schools and the centre
14/7/2016	Headteacher and teacher from Clarke Junior School Kampala, to see Reading and Good Practice Projects
1/07/2016	11 members of Ministry of Education and Sports led by Dr Tony Lusambu Assistant Commissioner Primary to visit schools in the project
1/05/2016	Sophie Mhoni from Link Community Development visited for 7 days to look at the reading programme and the making of learning aids to integrate into their programme in Malawi
21/03/2016	20 international development masters degree students visited to hear about Redearth programmes

At the moment, the impact of these visits will be able to be seen in the next 12-18 months. However, as a result,

1) Redearth was invited to the Ministry of Education to present their model to firstly the Basic Education Working Group and secondly to the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. This has led to the Ministry agreeing that Redearth programmes are suitable for scaling anywhere in the country. It also resulted in the request to both RTI and Redearth to join together and harmonise their programmes.
2) World Vision is currently considering using Redearth Education to train and support 22 of its schools in Nakasongola District
3) RTI/LARA/SHRP are currently in discussions with Redearth Education regarding how their programme can be integrated into the RTI model to ensure an appropriate emphasis on phonics teaching in schools. This includes sending representatives to the next round of reading training. In addition, Redearth have been invited to a 3-day consultative workshop in November with RTI and other key stakeholders. Both a Red-Earth UK Director and the Redearth Uganda operations manager will be attending. RTI are wanting to include the

phonic approach in developing a new model to submit to the National Curriculum Development Centre and want Redearth to share what they do. The model developed is to be rolled out to the Primary Teacher Training Colleges and will in the words of RTI 'be a strong and funded partnership'.

4) Redearth is also in initial discussions with STiR Education regarding a possible consortium approach to tackling reading
5) Redearth has applied to DFID for funding to continue the reading project in Buliisa. The outcome of this application will be heard in December 2017.

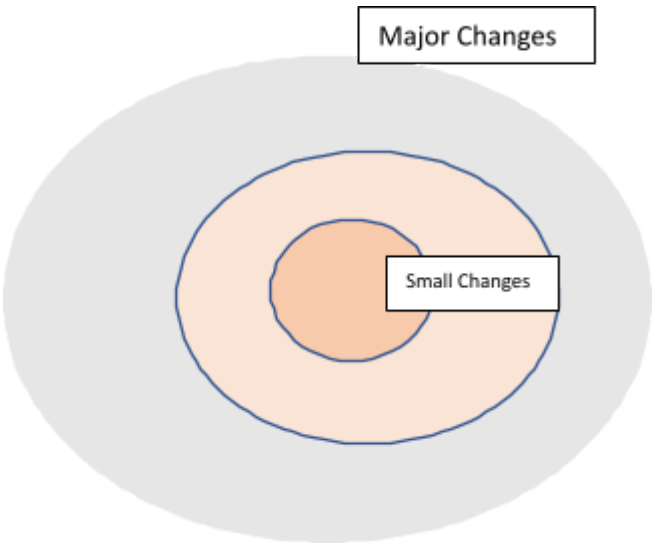
The impact of all the above will only be able to be assessed beyond the duration of the project. However, the evaluators believe it is **quite a remarkable achievement** for a project designed to work across one district in Uganda to have such a scale of potential impact on the national reading debate and this is a clear reflection on the hard work, drive and commitment of all their project staff.

Key Points

The extent to which Redearth have developed a model that has the potential to be scaled up or replicated by other organisations has been a huge success of the project. Through strong advocacy and the passion and ability to show the impact in schools, in teacher's pedagogy and learner's reading; they have brought the success of their project to national attention and are now taking part in the national debate on the future of literacy teaching in Uganda.

11. Outcome 4: In what ways has the Comic Relief grant supported Redearth and its local partner to build their capacity as an NGO ?

As part of the evaluation, the evaluators asked the key programme officers to identify the most significant changes as a result of the Comic Relief Project in both the organisation and their own capacity as individuals. Significant change methodology was used in which participants first independently and then through a focus group discussion placed these changes in the relevant concentric changes.



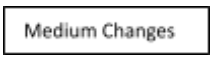


Figure 13 Template for Concentric Centric Circles to measure significant change

More than anything, the project has clearly impacted Redearth Uganda as an organisation. In identifying the changes over three and a half years, it is difficult to attribute specific elements directly to the Comic Relief funding. However, the difference Comic Relief made, according to both Redearth and in the opinion of the evaluator, was their willingness, more than other funders, to fund capacity building of the organisation which has made a significant difference.

The most significant changes in Redearth Uganda as an organisation identified by project staff were:

- The growth of the organisation. At project outset it had one employee but by the end of the project it has 22. This included 6 solely or part funded by Comic Relief (Operations Manager, MEL and Accounts Officer, Project Manager, Administrator and 2 field workers (In addition, Comic Relief part funded a part time UK administrator)
- The construction and completion of Redearth's training centre and office. This was not funded by Comic Relief, but the fact the training venue is established has reduced project training costs as a venue no longer has to be paid for. Comic Relief do contribute to the overheads such as the internet and other utility bills
- The purchase of necessary equipment (computers and motorbikes) which makes the day to day running of the project much more effective and efficient.
- The employment of the operations manager has made a significant difference to the organisational capacity in particular putting strong procedures and processes in place including
    - Appraisals for all staff
    - Robust financial management and control systems
    - Procurement Policies
    - Clear Administration structure
    - Ability to present to wider audiences
    - Development of the Redearth Uganda staff team

- The Ugandan Board of Redearth is much more active in overseeing the organisation.

- As an organisation, Redearth Uganda are beginning to generate their own funds through for example delivering of training. They are also beginning to network themselves and develop their own identity separate from Redearth UK.
- They are now able to fully deliver the programme themselves without the need of UK volunteers and this is what has happened with Cohort 3 of the project.

In the opinion of the evaluators, much of the above has been going on for a while but had been completely reliant on the Redearth UK volunteers. In particular in the last year (which coincided with the employment of the current operations manager), there has been a significant shift to Redearth Uganda becoming more independent creating its own organisational norms. This has been and still remains to be a challenge for Redearth UK to fully hand over but this process is clearly happening. It is interesting that the evaluator asked Redearth Uganda if the UK volunteers left and they had to manage alone, would they be able to survive? The answer was a definite yes in terms of the day to day running of the organisation with the need for further support in obtaining funding and for external monitoring visits. This is a huge step forward as one year earlier it was felt by the team this would not have been the case and also supports in identifying potential next steps as an organisation.

As part of the evaluation, the board of trustees of Redearth Uganda were also interviewed. In the opinion of the evaluators, Redearth Uganda trustees are now able to demonstrate a broad understanding of the work of the organisation. In discussions during the evaluation week they talked about the literacy project as a priority which would bring change for children's futures through retention at school, a tool for promoting learning through participatory teaching and part of their ambition to make quality education freely available for all children. They had a clear inclusive agenda which matched the priorities of Redearth UK.

Representing the board of various professionals, two of the trustees explained in detail about how the board was ready to take greater responsibility for the projects, describing Redearth UK as the 'gatekeepers' who had helped teachers, schools and Redearth Uganda to become a self-propelled, upright and informed workforce. Their view was that the Ugandan team could now sustain the project if the organisation remains results-orientated and they both acknowledged the importance of outcome based interventions.

The trustees see the challenges in the physical environment and in securing funds for further work, though they talked about how greater marketing of the project could lead to more financial opportunities. They could identify the strengths of their organisation and the evaluators would agree

with these, some of which were: improved literacy levels in the district, high quality training (and the

base), the relationships with headteachers and the local government ministers, the Redearth staff team, the dual approach of reading and the Achievement Award. They were concerned about how to retain the highly skilled staff team who may become enticed to move to 'greener pastures' and, as trustees, they recognised that succession would need to be considered.

Both evaluators agreed with their views that future priorities, in the absence of Redearth UK, would be project advocacy, further development of auditing and accountability processes and continued staff and trustee development. The trustees also understood the challenges of the relationships with other NGOs and the lack of flexibility in relation to their previous experience with RTI. Consideration of how to coordinate, rather than compete, with other NGOs in the local area, was also talked about as a future challenge.

Individual members of the Redearth staff team also spoke that through their experience of working in the project, they had grown themselves in particular in the soft skills of project management including such things as communication skills, time management, meeting deadlines, following procedures, regular reporting, management of staff and effective feedback. The one negative change they identified was that as the organisation has grown, it has resulted in them being able to spend less time with their families.

Key Points

Redearth UK, Redearth Uganda and the evaluators all share the view that Redearth Uganda's operational activities would continue if Redearth UK withdrew its current role; however, support for strategic planning is likely to be required in the short term. The benefits which the local partner NGO have gained from the Comic Relief funded reading project are significant, due to the scale and quality of the input from Redearth UK. This is visible through the clear vision and understanding of the local board trustees, however there is an absence of independent strategic planning which would be required for them to act successfully in future development projects.

12. How well the project applied value for money principles of effectiveness, economy, efficiency and equity. (OECD-DAC criteria for value for money)?

Economy (Getting things for the right price)

The project had various procedures and processes in place to ensure that the best value for money was achieved when spending funds. The employment of the operations manager resulted in the development of a far stronger procurement policy. This has involved setting up a finance and audit

sub-committee of 3 board members who have required service providers to put in bids for the relevant project services which run on a financial year. A minimum of 3 bids per item have to be received and the sub-committee makes the choice based on minimum requirements (as per government public procurement and disposal of asset policy) based on price and evidence of quality of service. This new policy has resulted in economy savings with regards to transport, fuel, motorcycle repair and provision of food for training.

The organisation does not provide a per diem for teachers attending training instead providing food (value for money achieved through the procurement policy) and transport. The cost of transport is provided on standard cost (per km) basis with distances from school calculated. The average cost based on the Redearth per km basis is USH5,000 for local schools and USH 17,000 for remote schools. Other NGOS (eg World Vision) have a fixed transport of USH20,000 for all. Thus, the Redearth policy results in a cost saving of between 3,000 to 15,000 per trainee and therefore for a day's training for 30 trainees USH100,000 to 450,000 or £25 to £100

Likewise, staff when going into the field (involving a night stay) do not get a fixed per diem and instead they are paid on an expenses basis, based on hotel and food. This results in an average cost per staff per night of USH55,000. Another local NGO was approached and stated they paid a fixed per diem of USH80,000 which is a cost saving to Redearth of USH25,000 (£6) for a night away in the field.

For longer trips away, Redearth costs various options to find the most economical support. For example, when the reading project moved to the neighbouring Buliisa district, the cost of hotel accommodation for field offices was compared to renting a house for their use and the option of renting the house was found to be more economical saving approximately USH800,000 a month. (£200).

Efficiency-Doing the things the right way

As already explained, the RTI project resulted in Redearth losing many of the schools that they had initially started with and the resources (time and money) invested in these schools and teachers having very little long-term impact. The evaluators would argue this was not the fault of the project.

Therefore, with regards to efficiency, the evaluation is choosing to solely focus on the project's Pound Plus. 'Pound Plus' is used to describe and assess how project providers can show how they

maximise the value of donor investment in particular within a very constrained donor funding environment. It refers to *additional* income generated by providers *over and above* core income from the main donor budget (Comic Relief). This includes additional income generated as a direct result of the project (income for example from other funding sources), other in- kind donations which have meant that the costs attributed to the donor have been reduced and finally efficiencies which have resulted from the project which will result in direct cost savings in the future.

<u>Direct Income</u> (the additional income that was generated as a direct result of the Comic Relief initial grant).

It is difficult to directly attribute some successes in obtaining funding to Comic Relief but without doubt the Comic Relief brand and success in the reading project at least partially contributed to the following income. In addition, the principles of the Redearth reading project were embedded into the Redearth model nursery and as a result the children in the nursery are able to read letters and words before enrolling in P1. This has also led to additional income.

Table 9 Increases in direct Income that can be attributed to the Comic Relief Project

Private Schools	£720	2 private schools, on seeing the impact of the project asked for training on reading
Build Africa	£100	For teaching of sounds/phonics (2 days) for Build Africa staff who are delivering reading training in a number of schools
World Vision	£3000	Sponsoring 10 nursery teachers in schools with whom they work to improve the level of teaching and learning
Souter Trust	£2000	A grant of £2000 was obtained from the Souter Charitable Trust for work supporting other nurseries to develop reading
Total	**£5620**	

<u>Cost Savings</u>

(These are the contributions - in kind - made by the project providers and other NGOs and also volunteer time which resulted in direct cost savings to the project enabling the Comic Relief funds to go further).

Table 10 Cost Savings in the Reading Project

Redearth Directors	£52,500	The 2 Redearth Directors worked in Uganda voluntarily to manage and support Redearth Uganda to deliver the award. They spent approximately 50% of time on the project and we have assumed a conservative salary of £15,000 each. Over 3.5 years, this equates to 50% of £15000 x 2 directors x 3 ½ years
Redearth Volunteer Teachers	£31,500	Over the 3 1/2 years there were 3 UK volunteer teachers supporting the project. They were paid a stipend to cover their expenses (which they raised themselves before they came to Uganda) but gave their time for free. We have assumed a conservative equivalent salary of £6000 a teacher per year and again they were working on the project 50% of the time. Over 3 ½ years, this equates to 50% of £6000 x 3 teachers x3 1/2 years.
Training Venue	£1,000	Redearth provided the training venue for some of the sessions (with schools that were close to the centre) at no cost to the project. Over the 3 1/2 years, approximately 20 days training at the centre was provided. If a venue was hired it would cost £50 a day. This is a cost saving of 20 days x £50.
Cost sharing with Achievement Award Project	£2725	Redearth ran an Achievement Award project. Some schools were in both and this meant that efficiencies occurred in monitoring visits as both projects could be monitored on the same visit. This had the impact of reducing travel costs and saved an estimated £750 a year meaning a combined total of £2725 over the 3 ½ years

Donation of Books	£2250	Redearth were donated 1500 new books aimed to develop reading by a local author. The books are in a Ugandan context and are aimed for primary school children. These are being donated to the schools to support reading. We have costed the books at £1.50 a copy
Total	**£89,975**	

Efficiency Cost Savings

This is the notion that a project can develop efficiency cost savings which means that certain things no longer needed to be funded in the future or the impact of the project will create cost savings to the community. There has been research made into the economic value of children staying in school but to the evaluators' knowledge, no direct research into trying to ascertain an economic value of a child being literate. UNICEF (http://www.unesco.org/education/GMR2006/full/chapt5_eng.pdf) however argued that *while the number of years of schooling remains the most frequently used variable, recent studies tend also to use assessments of cognitive skills, typically literacy and numeracy test scores. These studies show that literacy has a positive impact on earnings, beyond the impact of the quantity of schooling; However*, because of an inability to put an actual figure to this, the evaluators have not included this in the pound plus calculations.

Therefore, the total pound plus of the project is estimated to be:

Direct Income	£5,620
Cost Savings	£89,975
Total	**£95,595**

Overall, based on the initial funding from Comic Relief of £161,799 the project generated additional income of £95,595 which equates to a 59% increase. For every £1 spent of Comic Relief money, £0.59 in addition was leveraged. Pound plus is not a standard assessment for development projects so comparable figures are difficult to find but it reflects the significant additional contribution leveraged on top of the Comic Relief funding.

Effectiveness

To measure this, the evaluators asked both Redearth Uganda and Redearth UK project workers to independently place different project activities onto a graph which measured impact (in terms of children's reading) and cost (either in terms of money or time). The two groups then came together to come up with an agreed decision as to where the activities sat on the graphs.

The interventions which have high impact but low cost could be perceived as outstanding value for money and those which are high cost and low impact; poor value of money.

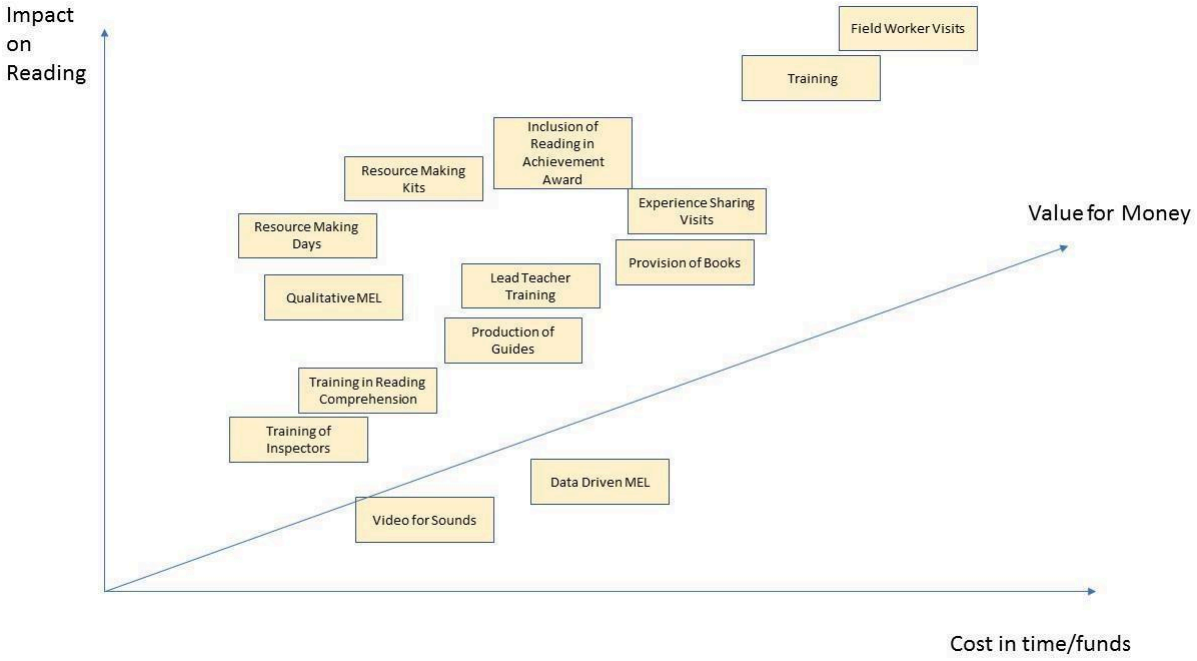


Figure 14 Graph measuring the perceived impact of activities against costs

What can be seen is that the vast majority of the activities were in the view of the team, value for money. There were only two activities which had less impact than desired. The first was the video for sounds which although teachers used, there were issues with sustainability. However, the learning from this has encouraged Redearth UK to visit India to look at improved video technology mobile systems as an aid for lead teachers to deliver training. In addition, the project recognised in hindsight that although data was collected in particular around EGRA, it was not extensively used to impact results; more as an aid for reporting. This was in stark contrast to the qualitative MEL especially around lesson observations in which Redearth continually used to develop and improve the quality of training.

The evaluators did not see the impact of the lead teachers but believe this was most likely due to the limitation of the evaluation with regards to time rather than the actual impact of the intervention. The results were triangulated through FGDs with headteachers and teachers. The only aspect which

was not mentioned in the FGDs was the production and provision of books and the evaluators would wish to see further evidence on the actual impact of this (and not on their potential to impact). The headteachers highlighted how experience sharing had resulted in changes in practice (for example through development of improved learning environments). Moreover, they in particular stressed the importance of the training and how practical it was and most of all the regularity, supportive nature and quality of the support visits by Redearth Uganda field workers. It is the view of the evaluators, that this is an absolute essential component of the programme and was key to ensuring the training was embedded into practice.

Equity

The equity of the intervention has already been extensively discussed in section 9 of the report. The project did not collect data around children with disabilities and the impact on their learning and this could be included in future programming. However, as part of the project Masindi Centre for the Handicapped were included. The project reported that the Masindi Centre for the Handicapped had a significant proportion of children who were profoundly deaf or partially hearing impaired. As they all have been taught the local English sign language alphabet, a programme was introduced to teach the English letter 'sounds' to the children by adding the appropriate sign i.e. 'phonics by hand', as a step towards teaching audible speech and lip-reading to the deaf. This resulted in the development of phonic awareness through signing. The evaluation team were unable, because of time, to visit the centre.

13. How relevant was the project (in the context of international development priorities and country needs)?

The project specifically aimed to target SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning. The UNESCO SDG report 4 for Uganda (http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/countryreview_sdg4_uga.pdf) identified 2 indicators that the project is directly contributing to.

- Proportion of children and young people (a) in Grade 2 or 3; (b) at the end of primary education; and (c) at the end of lower secondary education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex (Global Indicator 4.1.1)
- Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex (Global Indicator 4.6.1)

A further aspect of a project's relevance is to whether it is committed to 'leaving no one behind'. The interests of the poorest and most vulnerable populations are prioritised; this includes the world's most disadvantaged people; the poorest of the poor, and those people who are most excluded. An unintentional outcome of Redearth having to shift its schools is that they are actually targeting more marginalised communities in Buliisa (see statistics page 6). In addition, one of the clearest strengths of the project is that the impact the data is appearing to show in closing the gap between those economically disadvantaged and their peers.

14. How sustainable is the project?

A common definition of sustainability is 'the ability to continue a defined behaviour indefinitely'. In the specific case of the reading project, this would be whether

- Improvements in reading outcomes can be sustained without the project
- Improvements in improved quality of teaching can be sustained without the project
- Redearth's capacity is such that it can continue without Comic Relief funding.

Improvements in reading outcomes can be sustained without the project

Although in some respects this can only be measured longitudinally after the project has finished, the evaluators asked Redearth to take a snapshot and assess children in grade two in one of the pilot schools and compare the results with a control school. This, the evaluators feel, will be a strong indicator in the likelihood of the project sustaining as the pilot school has not been part of the reading project for the past two years, therefore children in the lowest two classes have not had teachers who have received direct input from Redearth in the time since these cohorts joined the school. The teachers in the school have not changed and therefore it is possible to see if outcomes have been sustained.

Table 11 Comparison between current P2 in a pilot school and a control school

	Average no of words read in minute English	% Illiteracy Rate English	Average no of words read in minute Loc Lang	% Illiteracy Rate Local Lang
Pilot School	16.7	0%	21.8	0%
Control School	2.7	40%	4.5	33%

The pilot school is a school that is still supported by Redearth through the Achievement Award and in this it is doing exceptionally well (Awarded Silver status for the last two years) but the teachers have received no additional training in reading since the end of the pilot project. The data shows

that not only has impact clearly been maintained but it has actually improved with 0% of children illiterate. Given this, it would appear, on the basis of the data snapshot, that improvements in literacy are likely to be sustained. This school organises its own resource making days and uses an identified stronger teacher to support other new and inexperienced teachers. However, a wider study would provide further evidence of this across the project. In addition, it would be of interest to see if teachers changed then whether the school could, through its own internal CPD systems, support a new teacher in developing the improved pedagogy.

Improvements in improved quality of teaching can be sustained without the project

In order to maintain the impact in learning, it would be necessary for the quality of teaching to be maintained. In the FGD the teachers indicated with absolute certainty that they would continue teaching reading through the phonics system and had fully bought into the system. It was felt by the evaluators that there had been a fundamental change that would result in changes in teaching being sustainable. Again, this could be assessed longitudinally in the future but an indicator was found with one teacher who was interviewed who left a project school and joined a new school and spoke how they had continued to use the Redearth methodology in the new setting. Obviously, this may be partially dependant on the support of senior leadership to allow this.

DFID (https://www.ukaiddirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/What-sustainability-means.pdf) argued that sustainable change in an education context needs to capture improvements at two levels:

- effective changes in each school and classroom that improve education quality and learning outcomes (The evidence from the project that this has occurred)
- effective changes at the system level (district, state, national) that support and encourage such changes in all of the schools. (As already highlighted on numerous occasions, the impact of the RTI national project initially at project outset endangered this, but the advocacy of Redearth since and the potential partnership with RTI really gives potential for this now to happen)

Redearth's capacity is such that it can continue without Comic Relief funding

As already outlined earlier, Redearth has grown significantly as a result of the funding. At the end of the project, there is no plan to lay off any of the seven staff partly or solely funded by Comic Relief and this above all else should be an indicator of the sustainability of the capacity of the organisation.

The challenge of any organisation (business or NGO) which grows so quickly is to ensure a regular income stream to prevent insolvency. This is even more the case of a NGO like Redearth which does not have significant fundraising capacity to develop unrestricted funding and is heavily reliant on donor grants. Although this has improved during the duration of the project as unrestricted funding has risen by threefold this is only enough to maintain the current staffing for six months.

Redearth UK and Uganda does not have a clear reserves policy; for example, to have funds to cover 6 months' worth of expenditure due to a lack of unrestricted funding. To reduce the risk, the trustees of Redearth UK have agreed that the founders can provide a liability free interest free loan if the organisation is at risk of insolvency. The evaluators agree that this is a suitable strategy in mitigating risk but would argue that this should not be seen as a substitute for developing robust reserves.

15. **What has happened because of Comic Relief funding that wouldn't have otherwise happened**?

The impact on learner outcomes and quality of teachers compared to control groups has been extensively covered in section 8 of this report. What is not completely apparent is the impact with regards to the general quality of teaching (such as group work, learning aids etc) that the Reading project has had independent of the Achievement Award since both projects run side by side. In the evaluator's opinion, it is the collaborative nature of these two projects which has been the key to the success and certainly the achievement award in supporting sustainability.

Focus Group Discussions were had in 5 schools and also with 6 headteachers in the Buliisa area using the concentric circle tool of greatest change outlined in section 12 (figure 13).

In total over 40 different responses were recorded as to significant changes the project had made. However, the ten most common themes (with obviously slightly different wording dependent on the individual) in order of popularity were

- Pupils' knowledge and use of the sounds
- Improved Learning Environment
- Teachers' ability to teach reading lessons
- Improvement in students' reading
- Making and using Teaching and Learning Aids

- Active Pupil Involvement in lessons

- Teachers' own knowledge and use of sounds
- Teachers' motivation and positive attitude to teaching
- Motivated Learners
- Use of games as a support to teaching and learning.

in the opinion of the main evaluator (who carried out the lesson observations and compared it to practice seen across Uganda), the observations made by teachers and headteachers above really do reflect the changes that have happened because of the project. Similar views were found in a conversation with the District Education Officer (DEO) in Buliisa. He was quite clear on how Redearth contributes to capacity building and empowerment of teachers in his district. His own monitoring has helped him to recognise that teachers' skills had to be developed in order for children's skills to be improved and that in doing so the improvements ae more likely to be sustained. His own conclusion matched that of headteachers, teachers and trustees of Redearth: the reading programme had changed the culture in schools – teachers are using aids to support learners who, in turn, are learning easily by hearing, seeing and doing before reading and writing. The DEO explained how his values and those of Redearth were similar and he hoped to continue to work with the organisation as he saw the clear link between reading and writing and economic prosperity.

It is interesting to also note the small and medium changes identified by headteachers and staff as these may be points to develop for future programming or also unintended outcomes.

- All pupils reading: When questioned further, the headteachers and some teachers pointed out that there still remained pupils who cannot read. The illiteracy levels would validate this
- The availability of reading material in the classrooms. There remains a significant concern about the lack of reading materials for children to practise reading.

The remaining 3 should be seen as unintentional positive outcomes

- Reduced Rate of Absenteeism amongst teachers and pupils (this would link into the improved motivation of teachers that teachers identified as a significant change)
- Teacher teamwork with other teachers reporting they are working more together for example in making learning aids
- Teacher Creativity: In particular around the production of new and innovative learning aids

16. What were the unintended outcomes?

A number of the unintended outcomes have been identified in section 16 above. One of the most significant of these identified by headteachers was that the improved engagement of learners

(evidenced in this evaluation) has resulted in improved attendance and reduced drop out. On the basis of the FGD with headteachers, 33% of headteachers identified this as a significant change that had occurred as a result of the project. Currently there is an absence of data to collaborate this and it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to do this. However, the evaluators would recommend that data is collected to see if there is evidence of this as this would be strong evidence supporting the Redearth Theory of Change. In addition, the qualitative FGD would suggest that a result of the project has been an improvement in teacher's job satisfaction. It would be of value to see if this has resulted in improved teacher attendance. Both these activities, the evaluators would suggest, could be efficiently verified through a case study at one or two schools rather than a whole project analysis.

In addition, the reading project methodology has been incorporated into the Redearth model nursery. The nursery runs for 3-5 year olds over three years. It primarily has two functions.

- It is fee-paying and generates money to support the Redearth centre.
- It aims to provide a model of outstanding teaching and learning to other surrounding nurseries.

The evaluators observed (and Redearth internal data validates this) that 5 year olds in their 3rd year can clearly independently read. The class sizes are small (average 25) but the results validate the methodology of the reading programme. Moreover, the nursery has been shown to visitors (WorldVision, RTI, Ministry of Education) who have been exceptionally impressed with the quality of children's reading.

17. Recommendations

The following are recommendations as to next steps for both the project and the organisations.

17.1 In the view of the evaluators, the project has made clear sustainable changes to teacher pedagogy which has improved the quality of reading outcomes in the target schools. The methodology has both empowered teachers and in lessons engaged learners. A clear strength is also that it has been successful in schools in difficult contexts (large class sizes and children speaking a variety of first languages) and succeeded in closing the literacy gap that exists between economically disadvantaged learners and their peers. As a project, therefore, the evaluators would thoroughly recommend that it could be replicated in other districts and scaled up. However, any decision to do this should be made with an understanding of the national reading context and strategy. The project was forced to move schools because of the RTI programme and this resulted in Redearth, through no fault of their own, losing many of the schools that they had initially started

with and the resources (time and money) invested in these schools and teachers having very little long-term impact. Therefore, any replication in a Uganda context will need to ensure that the RTI programme would not prevent the successful completion of the Redearth project cycle. Given this and the interest shown by RTI, the evaluators believe that for the future of the Reading Project could lie best in a stronger, formalised partnership with RTI and therefore that Redearth should continue to work to develop this partnership.

17.2 An absolutely key to the success of the project has been both the regular monitoring by and the expertise of the field workers. Therefore, any plans to replicate or scale up the project will need to ensure that this key element is in place and that there is sufficient capacity to maintain the current level of support for schools in the project.

17.3 Although the project has been clearly successful, there remains an issue with the proportion of children who remain illiterate. In the long term this appears to quite significantly reduce but this may be part due to children who cannot read dropping out of school. Thus, reducing the illiteracy rate should be a clear focus of any future project. The evaluators would suggest the following to support this

- A clear target of illiteracy rate in any future programme indicators
- All children in the project to be assessed on their literacy on a regular basis (for example twice a year) ideally by teachers (for example using a 5-word test). The information can be used in schools to ensure that children who are illiterate can be targeted. The evaluators recognise that this is exceptionally difficult in large classes with one teacher. The one possibility is that P1/2 teachers (who do not teach in the afternoon) can be used once or twice weekly to teach additional literacy to target children in grades P3 and P4. When the evaluators discussed this in a FGD with headteachers in Buliisa, they thought if it was once or twice a week then it would be a possibility. We would recommend this to be trialled with strong M&E to evaluate impact

17.4 In the opinion of the evaluators, there should be more of a focus on the provision of reading materials and support with teachers on how to use them. This was an issue raised by a number of headteachers in the FGDs. An element of the programme had been the production and distribution of books to schools. However, in none of the 23 lessons observed, did the evaluators see the

distributed books being used as part of the lessons. It was beyond the remit of the evaluation to find why but this should be investigated further.

17.5 Redearth could also look as part of the project to develop libraries. One of the schools visited had a library and there was evidence of the library being used by students. However, the books were in a mess and the library was badly lit. The project, in particular where there is a library present in a school, should include work in developing this in order to further enhance a reading culture in the school and potentially into the community.

17.6 The project needs to strengthen its monitoring and evaluation. As part of this, a greater proportion of project budget should be spent on this. A common figure quoted in development circles is between 10-13% of a project budget to be spent on MEL (see https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Investing_in_MEL.pdf). For this project the amount was 16%. However, more than 50% of this was the employment of a full time MEL officer. This officer also took on the role of managing finances. Although, given the size of Redearth, this made economic sense, it did result in much less resources used on MEL. In the initial proposal, data from all schools was planned to be collected to create a much bigger data set. This did not happen because, Redearth reported, of the time and resources involved in carrying out the EGRA test and as a result, the number of schools assessed was significantly reduced One obvious implication of this has been the small data set which was made available to the evaluation team to analyse. This has meant that, in reality, any analysis can only be seen as a snapshot rather than concrete proof of impact. The evaluators would argue therefore that the decision to reduce the number of schools where testing took place was a strategic mistake and it would have been more effective if the test had been simplified but still students in each school in the project tested. The focus of SDG 4 has been to shift educational programming from simply supporting children to access school to providing quality education and by implication quality learning. This is, in the opinion of the evaluators, the real strength of Redearth but, without robust and strong data as to the impact their programmes have on learning outcomes, their influence on programming debate will be severely limited. Clear indicators should be established from the outset and regular measures recorded, analysed and learning from this should then take place.

17.7 Throughout the duration of the project Redearth has grown significantly from having one employee to having over 20. The challenge of any organisation (business or NGO) which grows so quickly is to ensure a regular income stream to prevent insolvency. This is even more the case of a NGO which does not have significant fundraising capacity to develop unrestricted funding and is heavily reliant on donor grants. Redearth are looking to develop this and they should continue to do so. In addition, it should aim to develop a stronger reserves policy (both in the UK and Uganda) in order to mitigate the risk of insolvency. A key to the organisation's development has been the employment of key support officers (MEL, Accounts, Operation Manager, UK administration). These posts, in the opinion of the evaluators, are absolutely essential for the continued growth of the organisation and Redearth need to ensure the posts are fully funded. There are a number of ways of approaching this crucial issue (see https://www.mango.org.uk/Pool/G-Managing-overhead-costs.pdf) and each need to be looked at by the UK and Ugandan Board but it is essential that the issue is not ignored. Possible ways forward are

- Apportion core costs to specific projects i.e. full cost recovery Redearth Education needs to improve on their practice of doing this when developing budgets for new projects.
- If there is unwillingness from funders to do the above then many NGOs have agreed with funders to introduce a time sheet system. Each person in the central office keeps a time sheet and whenever they spend time on a project it is recorded on a half hour basis. Each person has an hourly rate based on their salary. The time sheets are collected weekly or monthly and the accountant adds up how much additional money is owed by each of the projects. Western donors (for example, it is common practice in DFID projects) are happy to do this. Examples of such time sheets can be provided by the evaluators to Redearth if required.
- Claim any additional money that donors may provide (for example exchange rate gains) for core or indirect costs
- Identify new sources of funding to cover core or indirect costs

References

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RTI International (2009a) *Early Grade Reading Toolkit*. http://bit.ly/2mQ2DFS (Accessed 17/03/17)

Wagner, D. A. (2011) *Smaller, quicker, cheaper: improving learning assessments for developing countries*. UNESCO.

Annexes: Tools used for Evaluation

A participatory child tool was also used but this is not included here as it contains photographs of children.

Other tools used are described in detail in the report

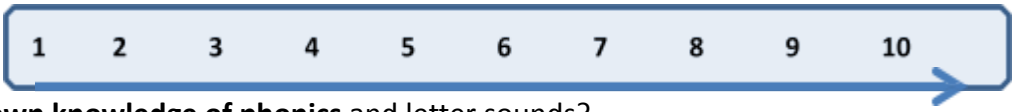
TEACHER QUESTIONAIRRE

Circle and mark a letter **B** for how you felt **before** the project and **A** for how you feel now **(after).**

How do you feel about:

1. **Teaching lessons** which specifically aim to develop children's reading skills?

2. **Lesson planning** to develop reading?

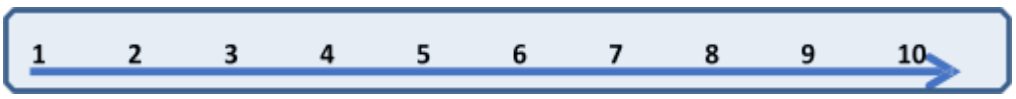


3. **Your own knowledge of phonics** and letter sounds?

4. **Teaching of Phonics** to support the development of reading?

5. Your ability to make and use of **teaching aids** to support the teaching of reading?

6. The use of **group work** to teach reading in your classroom?



7. Your student's **attitude** to reading?

8. The **ability to read** for your average student?

9. Your ability to **differentiate** your teaching of reading to meet all your learner's needs?

10. The **ability to read** for your slow learners /children with special needs?

1. Tell us how the project has changed your teaching.

2. Tell us how the project has changed your learners. Are there any groups (boys, girls, special needs, higher ability etc) who have particularly benefitted? How do you know? Why has this happened?

3. What do you like about the Redearth approach? Is there anything you dislike? How is this approach different to working with other organisations?

4. What are the difficulties in implementing the reading project?

5. How have you tried to overcome these?

6. How does the headteacher work with you on the project?

7. At the end of the project, do you think this approach to the teaching of reading will continue? Can you explain why?

8. What will you do to ensure this continues? (talk about: resources, training etc)

9. How can the reading project be improved?

Headteacher Interview

Headteacher Interview

Name of School:	Date of visit:

1. Tell us how the project has changed your school.

2. Tell us how the project has changed your learners. Are there any groups (boys, girls, special needs, higher ability etc) who have particularly benefitted? How do you know? Why has this happened?

3. What do you like about the Redearth approach? Is there anything you dislike? How is this approach different to working with other organisations?

4. What are the difficulties in implementing the reading project?

5. How have you tried to overcome these?

6. How does the local government work with your school on the project?

7. At the end of the project, do you think this approach to the teaching of reading will be sustained? Can you explain why?

8. How will you ensure this is sustained? (talk about: teacher changes, resources, training etc)

9. How can the reading project be improved?

Learning Walk Template

Name of school:	Date of evaluation visit:
Cohort for reading project:	Achievement award level:
Name of headteacher:	Classes observed: P1 / P2 / P3 / P4
Name of observer(s):	

	P1	P2	P3	P4
Number of children in class				
Does the teacher use the correct phonetic pronunciation?				
Do the children respond with the correct sounds and if not, does the teacher correct them?				
Does the teacher use resources and teaching aids to engage children in their learning?				
Are the children actively learning, for example by playing reading games and/or working in groups?				

Are children learning reading comprehension skills, are they learning to understand sentences as well as words?				
Are there resources displayed and stored well in the learning environment?				
Are all learners involved in learning? Child 1 Child 2 Child 3 Child 4				