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SOUTH AFRICA

Testing Results-Based Approaches for Book Development and Procurement

Introduction

South Africa has a respectable literacy rate of 87 percent for older children, but the number masks underlying problems. Roughly four-fifths of 10-year-olds are not proficient in reading. A majority of households don't own any books. And few adults or children read for pleasure.

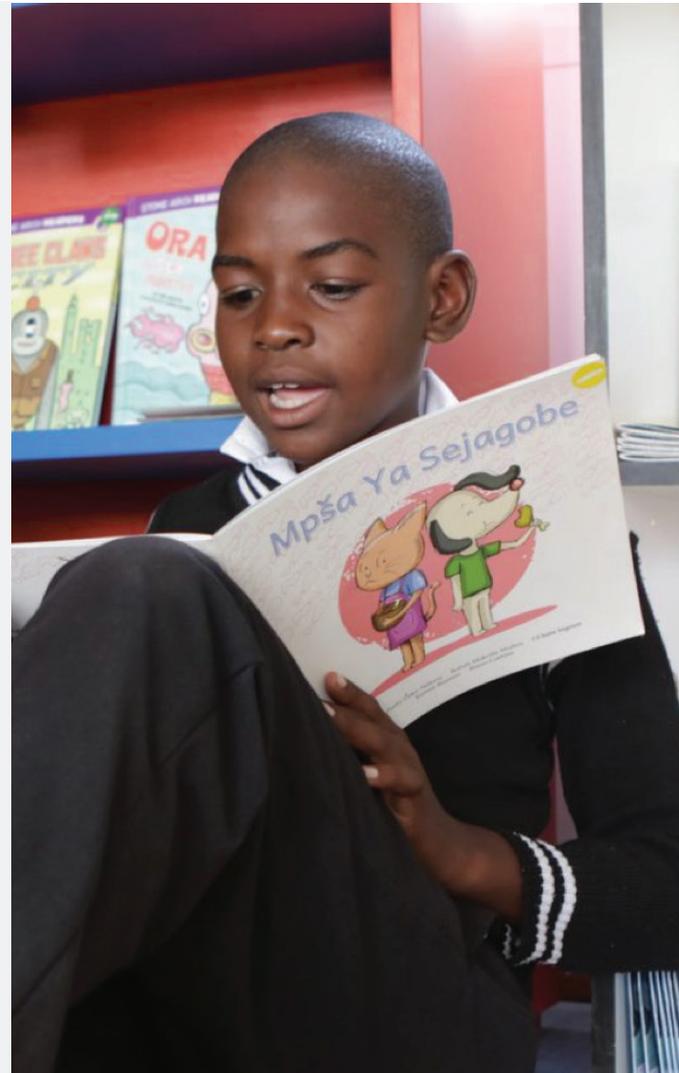
Reading for pleasure can strengthen a child's reading skills and gains in related areas. South Africa lacks quality storybooks in local languages, with the supply chain emphasizing production of textbooks, and storybooks tending to be published in English and Afrikaans. Limited budgets and complex procurement processes make it difficult for officials to purchase enough of the right books at the right time for schools, and discourage publishers from broadening the number of languages in which they publish.

Results-based financing can help address these challenges by identifying bottlenecks in the book supply chain, from book forecasting and creation to publication, distribution, and use, and incentivizing key players to improve performance. In South Africa, the Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund supported a results-based initiative aimed at increasing the availability, accessibility, and affordability of quality storybooks in local languages.

Intervention

REACH partnered with the Global Book Alliance to raise awareness about how storybooks promote literacy and to increase the availability of quality, African-language storybooks. Overseen by Room to Read, the project included two initiatives. The first involved developing national standards for storybooks and translations, with input from officials, publishers, academics, and experts. The standards offer guidance to authors, publishers, schools, and consumers on what constitutes a high-quality storybook.

The project also worked with publishers and writers to create, publish, and distribute storybooks in five African languages. Room to Read selected five publishers, which each then



The Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund under the World Bank Group seeks to help countries strengthen their education services by focusing initiatives on results. The IMPACT series describes how results-based projects funded by REACH influence learning, education systems, and policy making.

selected four writers to draft stories in their designated language, creating 20 original storybooks. A series of workshops kick-started the effort, including a four-day workshop for writers, three sessions with publishers, and a 12-hour workshop bringing together designers, illustrators, writers, and publishers to work on the 20 books.

The project used results-based financing to motivate the writers and publishers to produce the books at an affordable price and in a timely fashion. Writers were paid upon completion of their work, while publishers got an initial “signing payment” equal to 90 percent of total payment, with the remainder issued upon fulfillment of responsibilities. Results-based financing was incorporated into a pooled procurement model adopted by publishers. By bundling orders into one combined print run, they benefited from reduced costs and shared equally in profits, incentivizing them to find more customers.

Under an open licensing arrangement, book copyright holders made the content available for sharing, remixing, or commercialization. This allowed quality storybooks to reach a larger audience while increasing exposure for writers and publishers.

Impact

The project brought together public and private sector players in the book supply chain to create 120 separate storybooks (20 original titles in five African languages and English). Initially, 101,000 copies of these books were distributed to 225 Room to Read project schools across the country. The Department of Education purchased 35,000 additional books for 280 more schools. These schools combined have an estimated 40,000 students.

The project helped build capacity of smaller publishers and writers in South Africa to publish African-language storybooks and helped new writers get published. The project introduced innovative models to the industry, such as open licensing and pooled procurement, which decreased costs for publishers while making storybooks more affordable and accessible to customers.

Children showed increased engagement and familiarity with storybooks within a few months, with data from 16 libraries showing that children checked out Room to Read storybooks 300 times more than other storybooks in one month.

The creation of national storybook and translation standards has had an impact at home and abroad. South Africa’s National Reading Coalition is using these standards to promote a culture of reading in the country. In Tanzania, Room to Read is helping to develop the country’s own storybook guidelines. Uganda has also expressed interest in establishing its own guidelines and has produced 25 new books by local authors and illustrators, drawing from the South Africa model.

A Sample of Books Produced



Twenty original storybooks were produced at the workshop in 12 hours.

RESULTS IN EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN (REACH) RESOURCES

For more information on the REACH Cameroon intervention please refer to the RBF Education EVIDENCE note, “Can School Grants and Teacher Incentives be Used to Increase School Access and Improve Quality?” on the REACH web page.

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