Project background

In mainland primary schools in Tanzania, children learn all subjects in Kiswahili; when they move on to secondary school the language of instruction shifts abruptly to English. While students have learned English as a second language in primary school, some children find it difficult to listen, read and write in English, and this has an inevitably negative impact on their performance. The transition from primary to secondary school is also one of the points at which girls in Tanzania are likely to attend less or drop out of school altogether.

Camfed Tanzania’s pioneering collaboration with Worldreader, Kiva and the Government of Tanzania aims to extend rural girls’ access to education and to help young women to successfully navigate the difficult transition between school and adulthood.

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The organisation’s English literacy e-reader project brought together the well-established community-led structures of the Camfed model with the innovative use of e-readers to address the change of language of instruction for students transitioning from primary to secondary school.

Project description

During the design phase of the project, Camfed collaborated with Worldreader and other stakeholders to develop an appropriate curriculum and to digitise learning materials to be used on the e-readers. Through Worldreader’s technology, Form 1 and Form 2 students could access tailored learning resources for mathematics, English and biology alongside supplementary reading materials, which helped to foster their enjoyment of reading and speaking in English.

Camfed recognised the challenges related to introducing a new technology in an environment where digital literacy levels of key stakeholders are low. English teachers and ‘learner guides’ were trained in the use and maintenance of the e-readers through Camfed’s cascade training model. Learner guides received additional training to support students in school and to help learners improve their English literacy skills while also successfully navigating the transition between primary and secondary school, using the subject-specific and wider reading materials loaded onto the e-readers. The learner guides were also on hand to build students’ confidence and abilities
by leading group activities such as singing and forming student study and discussion groups.

**PROJECT RESULTS**

Through funding from HDIF the project was implemented in 25 rural partner schools in Iringa region to support girls in their transition between primary and secondary education, testing the combined model for scalability across Tanzania.

- 4,500 students were reached directly with technology and support to improve learning outcomes.
- 500 vulnerable girls were reached with financial support to stay in school.
- 50 young rural women were trained as learner guides, providing opportunities to improve their education and employment prospects.
- 25 teachers benefited from access to technology and training.

**KEY LESSONS**

- Working in close collaboration with teachers, Tanzanian education authorities, community-based learner guides, Kiva and Worldreader enabled Camfed to gain strong traction in its activities in Tanzania. Being collaborative included adopting strategies for leveraging and contributing to a broader commons of resource, action and knowledge. This included, for example, publishing all educational materials under a Creative Commons licence by default, thereby enabling a much wider audience to access and benefit from them.

- The technology was carefully introduced within a well-established community infrastructure, with training and capacity-building in its use led by experienced and committed stakeholders. This allowed Camfed to gain further funding and recognition.

- Working within the existing school system strengthened government schools and ensured the project had both input from and exposure to relevant government departments.

**GENDER AND INNOVATION**

Extending rural girl’s access to education was at the heart of the project and resulted in 98 per cent of girls progressing from Form 1 to Form 2 in early 2017 – a significant achievement in a context where the national dropout rate was 27 per cent in 2013. Feedback from English teachers and learner guides suggests that girls who had previously been too timid to stand up in class and lacked a strong command of English had begun to participate in extra-curricular activities such as morning speeches.

By training young female secondary school graduates as learner guides, the project supported learning and employment prospects for young women, and helped to ensure the project has strong community buy-in.

**PRINCIPLES FOR DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Be collaborative:* Camfed’s collaborative approach was key to its success. For example, Camfed’s own community-led model with Worldreader’s technology created new ways of learning; collaboration with national and district education structures helped to embed e-readers into the government English orientation programme; Kiva loans strengthened community engagement; and learner guides provided both a link to local communities as well as valuable learning support to teachers and students.

*Build for sustainability:* Key to the initiative was that the technology was carefully introduced within a well-established community infrastructure, with training and capacity-building in its use led by experienced and committed stakeholders. Working within the existing school system strengthened government schools and ensures the project has strong community buy-in.

**NEXT STEPS**

Since the HDIF-funded project came to a close in December 2017, Camfed has managed to mobilise resources from other donors to continue with implementation of the innovation. By August 2018, the English literacy e-reader project has been scaled-up to reach 50 secondary schools in Tanga Region and Coast Region.

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