Teaching Children to Read in Sierra Leone

EFSL/CTF/Edu4change

A Report on the Baseline Assessment of Children's Early Literacy Abilities in Selected Primary Schools in Classes I, II, III

Sierra Leone
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Abstract

This paper reviews the findings of a baseline study of children's literacy levels in grades I, II and III and of the performance and needs of teachers in teaching reading in the early grades. It was designed by Edu4Change 1 (in collaboration with their education partners EFSL and CTF) and conducted in February, 2013 in Sierra Leone. The results of this study are meant to improve primary grade reading in schools by developing teacher training interventions and reading materials and by selecting reading experts.

For this study 18 schools were selected in Sierra Leone: 6 in Bo, 2 in Pujehun, 2 in Moyamba, 5 in Western Rural Area (Grafton) and 3 in Bombali District (1 in Makeni and 2 in Kamakwie). These were both government assisted and non-government assisted schools. In total 324 primary school children of grades I, II and III have been tested, randomly selected from these 18 schools: 18 per school, 6 per class, gender ratio 3:3. Thereby, 54 teachers have done the language tests: 3 per school of grade I, II and III (26 male and 28 female teachers). Children and teachers have been tested by an adapted version of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Tool Kit (RTI, 2009).

The results show a low average performance in all assessments of children in grade I, II and III and teachers. The teachers have an overall average of 52.7% (with little difference between male and female teachers), boys of grade I 31.1% and girls 34.4%, boys of grade II and girls 44.5%, and boys of grade III 62% and girls 64.1%. Considering the results of the children this study shows that pupils in grades I, II and III do not understand the alphabet concept of associating a letter to its sound set and are unable to make words with letters. They perform lowly on oral reading fluency.

The results of teachers show that their proficiency of English is low and that they are not used to do meaningful language (writing/reading) activities in classes, with no significant difference between untrained and qualified teachers (both groups are represented in each school). The teachers further seem to know little about language teaching, subject content, stages of literacy development and classroom management.
Finally, the educational environment is not optimal: the average classroom is 60 (59.7) children per class. Pencils, papers and notebooks are rare enough to be considered too precious for use with experimentation or drawing. The textbook ratio is 1:4 and the methods used in the classrooms are old. There are no libraries, language texts or reading books.

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  Edu4Change was formed as a result of a strategic alliance made by Driestar Educatief a Dutch Christian Teacher Training College and Wood en Daad a Christian non-governmental organisation both committed in working to contribute to the improvement of quality education in schools in developing countries like Sierra Leone through language education and development.

INTRODUCTION

A. Background Information

This report presents and discusses findings of the baseline study of children's literacy abilities in selected primary schools conducted in February, 2013 in Sierra Leone. It was designed and supported by Edu4change in collaboration with their education partners EFSL and CTF. Edu4change was formed as a result of a strategic alliance made by Driestar Educatief a Dutch Christian Teacher Training College and Wood en Daad a Christian non-governmental organisation both committed in working to contribute to the improvement of quality education in schools in developing countries like Sierra Leone through language education and development.

The goal of the baseline assessment was to learn about the literacy levels of children in grades 1, 2, 3, and also the performance and needs of teachers in teaching reading in the early grades. Children and teachers' responses contained in this report will lead us to more knowledgeable and effective teaching. The results will also guide the development of enhanced teaching strategies, better focused instructional emphasis and reading materials, and the selection of reading experts. The assessment findings will further inform the strategies and activities for implementation of the education programme of Woord en Daad and Driestar Educatief, and its education partners in Sierra Leone.

The timing for these assessments is at the national framework of Sierra Leone's drive to use the teaching of reading as key to achieved goal 6 of Education for All (EFA). Goal 6 of EFA focuses on the improvement of quality education in all its aspects, aiming for a situation where people can achieve excellence. Currently, however, the performance trajectory of nearly all Sierra Leonean students culminates in failure. According to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in the 2012 "All Children Reading Africa" workshops conducted in Kigali, Rwanda, 25% to 75% of children in developing countries like Sierra Leone are failing to read in a timely manner to attain quality education. Without any doubt, the main reason for the mass failure of Sierra Leonean children to attain mastery of reading skills is the application of very weak reading abilities in the learning process. Students' education is built on a foundation that cannot sustain the demands of quality education. Their weak abilities affect performance across all subject areas and through schooling years at every level. School learning depends on abilities to make meaning and applications from reading books to grow ideas, make connections between varied contents, and develop understandings and knowledge.

B. Why Focus on Teaching of Reading?

The foundation for reading is built in the first three years of schooling. During that time, teachers are the pillars of support to children's needs in their journey to literacy. The foundation must be strong enough to support many years of learning afterwards. The foundation must be developed by a qualified, courageous and dedicated teacher in the early years for the child to read easily and independently in later years.

The core features of the assessments concerned children's understanding of how the alphabet works. These entailed several related understandings and abilities. Early readers must know that a spoken language is made of little sounds. Using signs for reading and writing depends on realizing that each letter or group of letters, makes sounds, and the sounds are words. They need to learn specific connections between each letter and the sounds it can make. They learn that the sound of a letter can change depending on what is around it (Yule, 1996). Young readers learn how letters are clustered and the rules that guide the groupings of letters. They learn about and begin recognizing patterns of letters in such meaningful groupings as syllables, words and sentences. Thus the findings in this report will help us know about children's knowledge and abilities in these areas.

Print materials on other hand offer a way to share information, experiences, ideas and stories. A person who reads is part of a conversation that is in print language. The findings will help us learn about children's readiness for participation in such conversations. But, the assessments are just a starting point. The skills mentioned are at the foundation of reading abilities. The mortar however, is a meaningful, authentic participation in all the uses of print from entry level learning to the highest levels of learning. While children develop reading abilities and understandings, we need to develop the context and meaning making abilities for reading in Sierra Leone and for Sierra Leone (J. Kuyvenhoven 2012). Children in the early grades need to find out that reading and writing are meaningful participatory events; important to their social, economic, spiritual, political and other need; and this need can only be supported by a trained, dedicated and creative teacher.

Effective planning and implementing a holistic response is a monumental task that needs to engage the entire framework responsible for children's education. That aside, sustaining such a vision is even more difficult because the effects of a strongly focused and coordinated instructional response would not be fully felt for at least 5-6 years when children who have experienced intervention do the National Primary School Examination (NPSE). Even then, it will be more before they meet their West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Education partners engaged in this process need to remember that this is not a short term project. It demands strong and enduring commitment, bolstered by knowledgeably responsive teacher education work and the support of all those responsible for the promotion of quality education.

However, it is worth noting that assessments and their outcomes are not the only recipe for success. That is, improving performance on any one of these measures will not assure higher levels of success. In fact, focus on a few parts may have a reverse effect[2].Thus assessment results should be fully incorporated or integrated with the complexity of a reading practice. An effective intervention-instructional response unleashes the independent aspects for successful teaching and learning. To that end, this assessment was done to learn about the specific pedagogical weaknesses of early reading instruction.

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[2]Current standardized assessments that emphasize phonemic awareness and word making skills in the US have been increased performance in those areas. However, educators note concurrently Falling in performance in areas like comprehension and writing abilities (Hirch, Taylor, Stahl)

C. Assessment Tools Selection

The assessments tools analyzed in this report were designed specifically to learn about children's earliest reading and writing activities; and the needs and competence of teachers in teaching children in the early grades. They are adapted from the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Tool Kit (RTI, 2009) developed for use in situation like ours. Readers familiar with EGRA Tools will recognize all the tools used in this baseline study. The adaption of the assessment tools was also influenced by the children's commonly used texts, syllabi, and other primary school Language Arts curricular materials that support and guide teaching of language arts in Sierra Leone. Additionally, these assessments tools have been field tested in similar baseline assessment projects such as CRC Kabala (2009), IRC/CODE (201O) and UNICEF (2011) we conducted in Sierra Leone. Thus, these assessment tests will help us identify the specific features of children's early reading abilities in the selected primary schools.

The adaptation of the tools was further depended on the reading levels of learners to be assessed, and assessors used the tools to learn about the course of development the reader was following. In this case, the project focused on the early reader. Thus, the assessment was done to find out if children understood how the alphabet works, and whether or not they can recognize letters and match with their usual sounds. We checked for developing sight word lists and, we assessed their text-reading abilities with vocabulary counts and through questions. These last two assessments, combined with the writing task, indicated children's reading comprehension, the single most important ''outcome'' of a reading engagement. Taken together, the assessment tools' selection supported the projects' mandate to learn about the foundation particulars on which children's educational participation stands.

We used eleven assessment items to test children's reading abilities. These test items fall into four categories: [1] whether they know how the alphabet works, [2] whether they can read words, [3] their level of comprehension and [4] whether or not they can write. This report studies the interactions between those four areas as they contribute to a successful reading activity.

i. Assessment for classes I, II and III Children

1. **Children know how the alphabet works**
   a. They know that words or language is made of [little] sounds [Assessment 1: initial sounds]
   b. They know those sounds are represented by letters [Assessment 3: letter-sound associations]

c. They have memorized the letter and sound associations [Assessment 2: letter recognition and Assessment 3: recognized and naming the letters.]

2. Children know how to read words

a. They have a growing repertoire of sight words [Assessment 5: sight words list.]

b. They know how to use letters and patterns of letters to read [new] words [Assessment 4: onset and rime]

c. They can use a context to read words [Assessment 7: reading words in a passage]

3. Children know reading is a meaningful interaction: Comprehension.

a. They are learning the meaning of words [Assessment 7: Reading words in a passage; Assessment 8: comprehension questions; Assessment 9: writing]

b. They think while they read; they read to find out 'what happens [Assessment 7,8 and 9]

c. They use writing to communicate [Assessment 9: writing and Assessment 10: writing ones names.]

3. Children can write, actively communicate with print

a. They understand how writing works [Assessment 3: sign and sound associations; Assessment 9: writing]

b. They write their own names [Assessment 10: write your names.]

c. They can [try to] use writing to communicate a thought or something they have heard. [Assessment 9: write].

ii. Assessment Tools for Teachers

The tools were designed in relation to children's literacy needs. The tools constituted the following:

a. Language Abilities (languages used as support to teach children English)

b. Methodology assessment (types of methods and activities used in teaching)

c. Orthography assessment (knowledge about how the English alphabet works)

d. Vocabulary Assessment (basic morphological process-word building/patterns)

e. Listening comprehension Assessment (use of listening skills to retell/infer)

f. Reading comprehension Assessment (vocabulary, fluency, critical thinking)

g. Writing Assessment (use writing to communicate a thought/idea)

h. Teaching and learning materials (availability of reading and writing materials)

i. Age and qualification (age distribution of teachers and their qualification)

j. Background information of Teachers (name, sex, school and class taught)

D. Assessment Team Preparation

The assessment team consisted of language arts lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges with linguistic abilities to support inter-reliability of the assessment tools. Training of qualified people was to provide instructional guide for the successful collection of data. The team consisted of the following members:

Table 1. Team Members

Team Members	
Elizabeth Kosseh	John Bosco Kamara
Aske Bee Gbla	Emily Gogra
Albert Combey	Salieu Kalokoh
Abdul K. Kanu	Daniel PR fornah
Sahr Jimissa	Alphamusa Kamara
Edu4change Consultant: Alhajie S.Kanu	

The ten members of the assessment team gathered for three days of training.

The training included theoretical and practical educational development of college level educators' capacity for professional practices. Thus, both before and after the data collection, participating professionals gathered to develop their subject-expert knowledge and skills to include professional assessment for enhancing educational performance of themselves as researcher- lecturers and their student- teachers in training. The team met voluntarily for two other afternoons to increase their readiness.

The training consisted of the following emphasis:

- Introduction to research and professional knowledge about language assessment practices: designing and reviewing assessment tests and responding to results
- Familiarization with the project assessment tools and their rationale. Practice sessions in class; practice session with children in a local school (pre-test).
- Selection of assessment sites and assignments of team members. Logistical planning.

After 3 days of training, the team moved out to conduct the assessments of children's early reading abilities in class 1, 2, and 3 and teachers language competence, performance and needs at Grafton, Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun, Makeni and Kamakwie. The consultant visited all members of the assessment team while they worked with children and teachers to assess consistency of practice and accuracy of data recording. Additionally, the consultant participated to conduct assessments with children and teachers across the sites. The data entry officer of TALLE-RSL was hired to enter raw data into excel spreadsheets for detailed analysis. This work was monitored and checked by the consultant.

E. Participant Selection

I. Sampling number

The team conducted 324 children's assessments (Male: 162, Female: 162) at 18 selected rural schools to represent the total sample of the population set for the study. The assessment tests were conducted in February, second term of 2012/2013 academic year**. Thus the assessments indicate children's Learning Outcomes retained after a year in the previous year's studies.** Thus, Class 1 assessments were done with children who completed the first level of primary school and were currently in Class 2. Similarly, the class 2 assessments worked with children newly seated in Class 3; and similarly, Class 3 assessments were conducted with children who finished Class 3 successfully in June 2012.The testing of children's learning outcomes retained after a year in the previous year's studies was done for respondents to meet with the contents of the assessment tests.

Added to the children's sample was the Teachers. In this case, 3 teachers were selected in each of the 18 schools. But unlike the children's sample, the teachers' sample constituted 1 teacher from each of the 3 lower classes: Classes 1, 2, and 3.This summed up to 54 teachers, and however due to unequal distribution of teachers in the sampled schools, gender equity was not achieved as 26 Female and 28 male teachers constituted the representative population of teachers sampled.

ii.   Randomization of sample

For a more accurate representation of the cross section of children's abilities, we drew participants from the full diversity of abilities within a class (not all the top or lower level performing children that the assessment sampled was taken from across the class). Assessors used the class register and divide total children by (6). For instance, if there are 60 children in class it will be : 60/6 =10: then assessor counted names of children in the register selecting every 10th name. Unfortunately, this method was not applicable to all classes due to incomplete class register.

In this case; assessors used the living group of children by counting out the number of students present and gave out slips of paper (number 1-6) to children in the class. Teachers did not select students for assessment. And only teachers teaching classes 1, 2, and 3 were selected and tested.

In each class the randomized sample was further shaped by the selection of an equal number of girls and boys. From each class we selected 3 girls and 3 boys. A total of 18 pupils and 3 teachers were selected from each sampled schools for the collection of data. As the data shows, we were able to achieve the participant selection goals.

F. Assessment Methodology

The assessment was focused on testing classes 1, 2 and 3 children and teachers; and it was conducted in February 2013 with a sample of 324 children and 54 teachers. Ten (10) EFSL and eight (8) CTF rural schools in Grafton, Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun, Makeni and Kamakwie were selected and sampled. A team of Data collectors were trained for three days to use the tools by the Literacy Consultant of the Project. Children were randomly selected for testing using the balloting process to select the 6 students in each Class (classes 1,2, 3) summing up to 18 in each of the 18 schools. Gender equity for teachers was not observed due to the unequal distribution of teachers. So only teachers teaching grades 1, 2, and 3 were tested. The baseline assessment study was designed to help the project identify student's early reading skills and needs and knowledge of teachers in teaching reading in the lower grades. Children were tested for skills in:

- Phonemic and Alphabetic knowledge and abilities [Know how to use the   alphabet].
- Sight word recognition [Knows words and how they are 'made']
- Abilities to make meaning of a text [comprehension]
- Writing abilities [also indicates alphabetic/phonemic ability]

Teachers on the other hand were tested for skills and knowledge in:

- Methods used in teaching Reading.
- Orthography or alphabetic knowledge.
- Basic morphological processes- segmentation, word building, word patterns.
- Abilities to use listening and critical thinking skills to retell and infer.
- Working with a text for vocabulary, meaning, fluency and comprehension.
- Abilities to use writing to communicate thoughts about an idea or something

G. Assessment Limitations

Series of limitations were encountered during the assessment process. In the first place, most children come to school speaking Mende, Temne, Limba and Krio in the selected schools. Communication is challenging. Discussions about the relationships between language, reading and genuine communication are politically fraught. Most teachers used krio, the lingua franca and some local languages while using the English texts across all subjects. Their teacher training is done in English. In spite of government policy which mandates the use of mother tongue for subject instruction for the first three years, this is not enacted. Ironically, ministry personnel themselves speak publicly to insist only English be used.

Parents also want their children to be taught exclusively in English. But reading is taught with indigenous languages and English.

That aside, **the exercises and tasks were unusual experiences for most children in Sierra Leone**. For example, word sound segmentation is not done in the (vast) majority of classrooms (what is the first sound of "pot"?) in my many visits to schools (as teacher trainer), and my colleagues' experience, we have not seen this done once. As noted earlier, this understanding led us to take time with children and ensure that as much as possible they understand what was asked from them. We also led all assessment items with an example.

Also a high proportion of children in classes 1 and 11 rarely use pencils and paper. They use slates, and nearly half of children in class 1 and 11 decline to write, likely aware of their inability, they were reluctant to spoil the paper. Anecdotal reports from the CODE-IRC (2010) and UNICEF (2011) Baseline Assessment Studies of children's early reading abilities described a similar response in project schools. Additionally, copy work is a common pedagogy used by teachers in classes I, II and III in all primary schools in Sierra Leone; thus during the writing assessment children would frequently look in the air or the assessor's test papers in order to respond. They have good reason to do so. Common classroom practice is harsh on children who make mistakes. Children are not used to taking risks. Because this was an uncommon activity for the children, thus the scores do not reliably or always indicate what we think they mean. Perhaps the best example is the "sight word" assessment (instant recognition of a cluster of letters as a word). Many children applied a mnemonic of using spelling to call up the word: thus, when faced with a word, for example "boy" some children called: "b", "o", and "y".

Then, in a rather enthusiastic concluding flourish, the child would pronounce: "boy"! This is not sight word recognition by professional definition; in this case to indicate only sight word abilities, the time must be shorted and flash cards would offer a more dependable instrument. At the same time, we can conclude that children had the means to "call" the word list. But was not fully known is whether the words were meaningful vocabulary items. In other words, did children think and see a "boy" then they called it? This was the focus of the sight word test-children's association of meanings (concrete) to words (abstractions), but unfortunately it was not fully demonstrated by the children.

Teachers' classroom strategies of using Sierra Leonean languages like Krio, Kathema, Limba and Mende in teaching English affected greatly their comprehension in response to assessors' prompts or instructions in English during the assessment. Thus in some cases, teachers responded in krio or Kri-nglish (consultant coinage referring to teachers who responded to assessors' questions and prompts with a mixed version of Krio language [lingua franca] and English). Also some teachers have sight problems, and hence took longer time to work on the tests. However, assessors were forced in this case to use a little of Krio and extend time to smoothen the testing process of teachers.

II. Summary of Activity and Results

The team conducted an assessment of **324** pupils and **54** teachers at 18 schools selected for the study. At each school a random sampling of children were taken from class I, II and III (6 per class) based on equal gender representation and class teacher respectively. The assessments were conducted in February, 2013.In this report, the conducted assessment tests will show a dependable and generalized description on children and teachers' needs and learning outcomes on the literacy abilities tested during the study. On the current trajectory of performance, the majority of young readers will not develop the reading abilities needed to competently read their textbooks, interact thoughtfully with readings, or write responsively and freely. Teachers performance also show the huge challenges teachers face in teaching English in the lower grades. Below is a summary of the assessment results of classes I, II, and III children

A. Summary of Assessment Results of Classes I, II and III Children

It is evident that in almost all the assessment tests children showed that three years of schooling currently result in the lowest possible development of foundational reading skills. The overwhelming majority of children do not have what they need to participate in further meaningful literacy abilities.

This baseline assessment study examines the complexity of skills and understanding of early reading development. Table 2 below summarizes children's Learning 0utcomes derived from the assessment tests with figures to show their class average performance. Readers should consider that the young reader must attain 100% mastery of all abilities tested during the assessment to attain complete readiness to read. Unlike some content-based assessments, early reading-learners must achieve complete abilities and understanding in the areas outlined if they are to read

Table 2: Percentage Summary of Assessment Results of Class I, II and III children

Early Reading Ability Assessment Indicator	Average Performance: Ability Score Indicated in Percentage (%)		
	Class I	**Class II**	**Class III**
1. **Phonemic Awareness.** Children know that words are made of sounds. Can make and identify a word's first sound	6.1%	12.4%	15.4%
2. **Letter Naming.** Children recognize the letters of the alphabet.	64%	84.4%	94.5%
3. **Sign-Sound Relationship.** Children known the sounds that letters make	4.9%	10.3%	17.2%
3b. **Letter Id.d.** Children can identifies letters	60.4%	85.7%	96.8%
4. **Onset and Rime.** Children are able to use common word patterns to make or read new words, using letters they know. For example: "at" is rime that can give us "bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, rat etc"	-	25.7%	39.6%
5. **Sight Words Reading.** Children can read (automatically) the most common words use in their books, on the board and other printed sources. The words are presented in a list format.	18.5%	29.8%	57.3%
6a. **Reading Passage Words.**	12.8%	26.7%	43.9%
6b. **Reading Comprehension.**	27.8%	35.4%	42.8%
6c. **Time Used**	-	-	1.19%
6d. **WCPM**	-	-	17.1%
6e. **Fluency Level**	-	-	57.3%
7a. **Writing**	30.6%	42.8%	63.3%
7b. **Naming and Writing**	61.7%	85%	90.3%
8. **Oral English Interaction**	41%	54.6%	56.4%

Table 3: Median Scores Summary of Assessment Results of Class I, II and III Children

Early Reading Assessment Test Items	Performance: Median Score		
	Class I	Class II	Class III
1. **Phonemic Awareness.** Children know that words are made of sounds. Can make and identify a word's first sound	0	0	0
2. **Letter Naming.** Children recognize the letters of the alphabet.	19.5	24	25
3. **Sign-Sound Relationship.** Children known the sounds that letters make	0	0	0
3b. **Letter Id.d.** Children can identifies letters	7	13	14
4. **Onset and Rime.** Children are able to use common word patterns to make or read new words, using letters they know. For example: "at" is rime that can give us "bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, rat etc"	-	2	4
5. **Sight Words Reading.** Children can read (automatically) the most common words use in their books, on the board and other printed sources. The words are presented in a list format.	1	7	24.5
6a. **Reading Passage Words.**	0.5	2	19.5
6b. **Read Comprehension.**	1	2	2
6c. **Time Used**	-	-	1
6d. **WCPM**	-	-	12.5
6e. **Fluency Level**	-	-	2
7a. **Writing**	2	3	5
7b. **Naming and Writing**	2	3	3
8. **Oral English Interaction**	2	3	3

In Table 1 above results show that children leave the early primary levels of education with inadequate reading abilities. For example after three years, children average 15.4% success in the identification of word-sounds, they recognize 25 of the 26 letters and can match only 17.2% of the letters to their sounds. In table II, the two assessments for phonemic abilities show a median score 0 which indicates that majority of children do not understand how the alphabet works. If no urgent effective intervention is done, this phonemic inability will weaken the children's hope to attain quality literacy.

It is further evident in table 1 and 2 that by the end of Class III, children demonstrated nearly no ability to use common syllable patterns; for example, using consonants (b, f, c, h, m, r etc.) to make a word set with the pattern "_at". Assessors found children worked at "word family member", as a new phenomenon. From table 1 and 2, which summarized both percentage and median respectively, shows 39.6% ability using common syllable patterns and a median score of 4. Evidence from both tables above shows that children did not understand how to use word patterns and phonemic knowledge to attain mastery performance. This finding revealed that children have not learned to decode words, they learn by memorizing each word individually. Such a result severely limits their independent capacity for reading.

The tables also show that children's ability in the sight words assessment showed a steady growth over three classes (Class I, II and III) of both percentage and median scores. In Class I 18.5% and a median score of 1, while in Class II, 29.8% with a median score of 7 and in Class III 57.3% with a median score of 24.5, indicating almost 25 words of the 55 used in the test. However, in the passage words assessment wherein high-frequency words grouped within a small story text, the scores are much lower than words in lists. Passage words scored begin at 12.8% and a median score of 0.5 in Class I, while in Class II 26.7% with a median score of 2 and in Class III 43.9% with a median score of 19.5 indicating low levels of performance.

Moreover, the report shows that during the assessment, pupils demonstrated confusion to read words within a textual format. In contrast between sight words and passage words assessments, the report shows that children are far more successful with non-genuine reading task (reading without understanding) like reading list of letters and words. As the tables show the majority of children at all levels made little meaning from the reading passage.

Comprehension, an ability to read, understand and respond to print communications, is the main goal of quality literacy instruction. But after three years in school, children cannot read and fully understand what is written in their textbooks. This is further confirmed by the number of words read per minute which is linked to fluency. The number of words read as per median score stands as 12.5 which are about 13 words read in a median of I minute with fluency median score of level 2. This is a worrisome performance that point to show children's literacy urge to attain mastery in reading is seriously threatened.

The writing assessment which tested children how to communicate information and ideas using skills like letter formation, letter-sound relationship and word patterns also posed serious challenges to children in all grades. As the tables show, children in class 1 having completed one year in school could only scored 30.6% with a median 2. That aside the 54.6% score with median 3 in Oral English test by children in grade 3 further confirms that they do not have early level confidence in themselves to participate in reading, writing and speaking activities. This shows that children in the lower grades had little to no practice using text to engage or express meanings.

B. Summary of Assessment Results of Class I, II and III Teachers

Primary school teachers especially those in the lower grades are the most important tool in building the foundation of education. If teachers are successful in building solid literacy skills, the children can learn successfully all their other school subjects. Emerging readers learned to talk without a teacher, but they cannot learn to read without a qualified, dedicated and creative teacher. Children depend on teachers' knowledge, skills and experiences. Thus teachers are the ladder by which children climb from lower level to higher level reading abilities. Good teachers have a model character with special abilities and understandings about their work; and as professionals they must possess the following: Know about teaching, subject content, stages of literacy development and classroom management. But when the foregone ingredients are inadequate in teachers as evident in the teachers sampled during the baseline study, children's success will be seriously threatened. Table 3 below is a summary of outcomes of teachers' assessment tests conducted from the selected schools:

Table 4 Percentage and Median Scores Summary of Assessment Results of Teachers

Assessment: Teacher Language and Teaching Abilities Indicator	Average Performance: Teachers Ability Scores Indicated in Percentage (%) & Median	
	Percentage	Median
1. Language Methods:	48.5%	8
2. Orthography/Phonemes:	42.3%	4
3. Vocabulary Knowledge:	45.6%	6
4. Listening Comprehension:	52%	2
5a. Reading Comprehension:	72.5%	6
5b. Correct Words:	9.9%	114
5c. Time Used:	2.07%	1
5d. WCPM:	40%	106
5e. Fluency Level:	80%	3
7a. Writing:	69.7%	2

The results in Table 3 above indicate that teachers test outcomes are below professional competence and performance to give quality support to children to attain mastery in their journey to literacy. In fact, the poor performance of pupils in areas like phonemic awareness/alphabetic knowledge, comprehension and writing can be closely linked to the teacher's scores of 48.5% with a median of 8 in language arts methods, which is translated to orthography, vocabulary on to comprehension. So for teachers to score 8 points of the 17 question in methods, 4 points of the 11 questions in orthography, could answer only 6 of the 13 questions and could read almost just 10% of correct words with a median of 114 with a WCPM of 40% and 106 median in one minute; and even the non mastery of the writing test show very weak language abilities in ensuring marked successes in teaching children. This further concludes that teachers' poor performance in most of the assessment tests hampers children's abilities in reading and writing activities

III. Baseline Assessment Results and Analysis of Class I, II and III Children

A. Assessment Results and Analysis of Class I, II and III Children

1. Phonemic Awareness Assessment Results

In the early grades of learning to read children need to learn that spoken words are composed of a limited number of identifiable, individual sounds or phonemes. This understanding, often referred to as *phonemic awareness*, is a very important factor of success in learning to read (Juel, 1988). Phonics involves building associations between written letters and speech phonemes. If a child has no concept of what a speech sound is, building associations will be difficult, if not impossible.

Figure 1: Phonemic Awareness Results
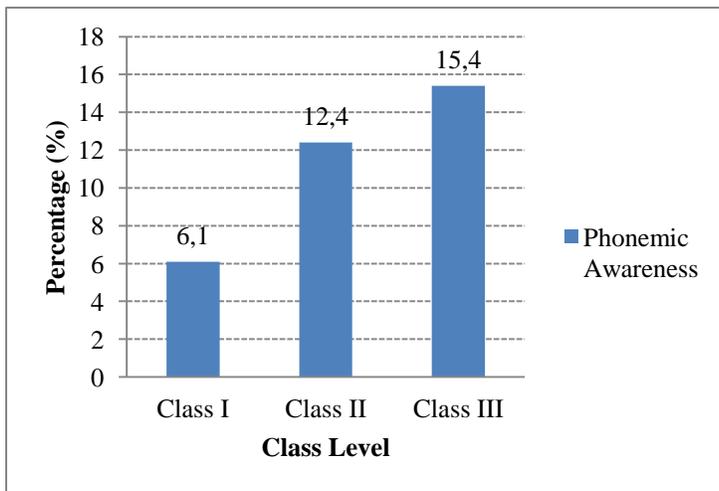
Results in Figure 1 show that children have almost no understanding of the phonemic awareness concept. The test asked children to identify the first sound of words. The assessor used a picture to centre the assessment. After giving an example in which the word and its initial sound was demonstrated three times, the assessor led the child through the assessment items. In every case, the child was given the word; its meaning further elaborated by the image (Assessment 1: Class I, II and III).From figure 1, phonemic awareness result in Class I, II, and III are conclusive. Children scored an average of 6.1% in Class I, 12.4% in Class II and 15.4% average in Class III. Between Class I and II the score doubles, but then again is not incremental in Class III. After three years of schooling, new readers have not acquired the concept critical to make words with letters.

2. **Letter Naming Assessment Results**

It has been established by research findings in the field of reading that there is a high correlation between knowledge of letter names and success in learning to read (Adams, 1990; Adams & Pikulski, 1996; Durrell, 1980; Ehri 1983; Venezky, 1975). Young children need to develop the concept that printed words are composed of letters; they then can be taught letter names if they don't come to school knowing them. While teaching children letter names does not in itself result in success in learning to read (Jenkins, Bausell, & Jenkins, 1972), it can facilitate memory for the forms or shapes of letters and can serve as a mnemonic for letter-sound associations or phonics (Adams, 1990). Most kindergarten children learn letter names without difficulty. Many teachers introduce letter names by teaching emerging readers to sing the alphabet song. Thus, children often learn the names first and then attach them to the letter forms. While knowing letter names appears to facilitate the development of word-recognition skills, it would be inappropriate to delay introducing other literacy activities (language expansion, shared reading, beginning writing activities, and so on) to children who have not yet learned letter names.

Figure 2: Letter Naming Assessment Results
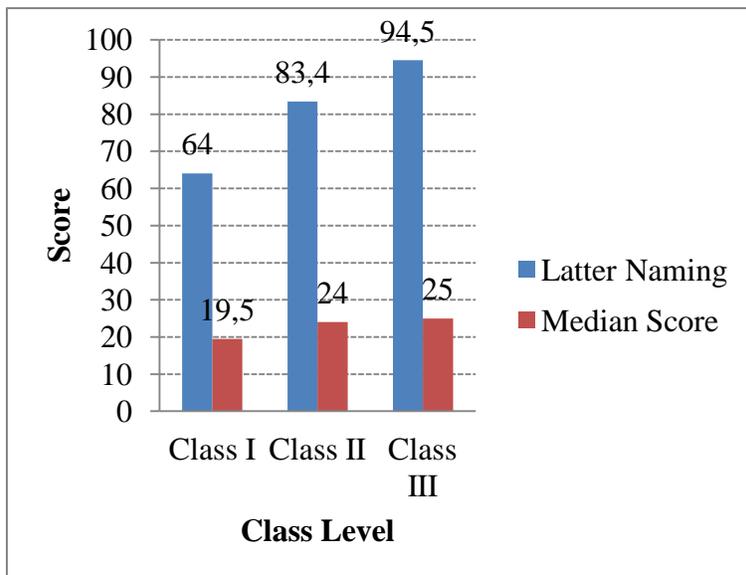
The results in Figur2 show that children are not mastering this key ability of learning to recognize the letters of the alphabet. Giving the latter naming test (Assessment 2: Class I, II and III). Class I children scored an average of 64%, Class II children scored 83.4% average and Class III children scored 94.5%. However, the median performance at the end of Class I, II and III shows an increase of 4.5 from Class I to Class II and 1 from Class II to Class III. It shows that the median overtakes the whole class average performance after three years, the average alphabet Learning Outcomes is 25 letters of the 26. This threatens children's mastery of the alphabet

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3   Letter Sound set and Letter identification

This test measured children's ability to match sounds with letters. It helps to know whether children understand the alphabetic concept and know how to use letters to make sounds and ultimately, words or utterances. The ability to manipulate signs and forms to represent thinking and talking is vital to reading and writing. But we noticed that previous assessment conclusions have noted the outcome of this test. Weak performance in letter recognition in combination with very low level phonemic awareness predisposes children's performance in this test.

Figure 3 Letter sound set and letter Identification

In Figure 3, letter sound set assessment test shows poor performance of children in Class I, II and III.
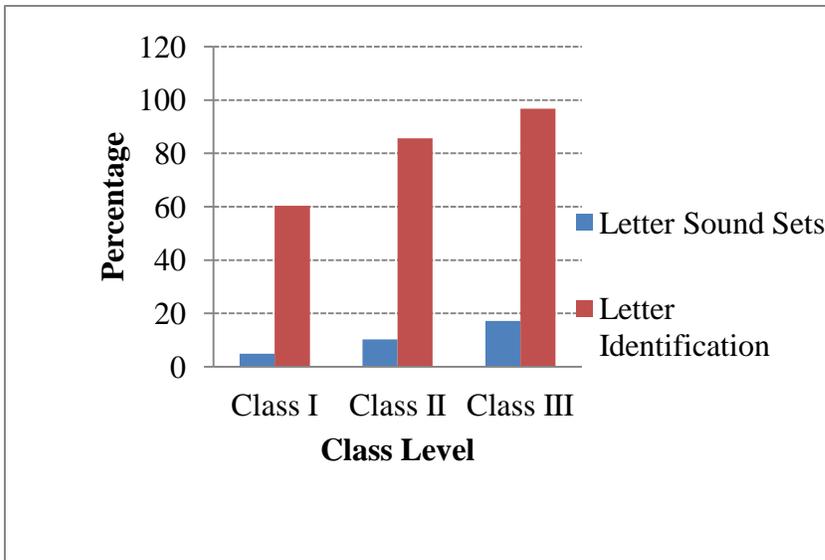
The percentage scored in Class I is 4.9% average, while in Class II is 10.3% and 17.2% average score in Class III. However, in letter naming assessment which is 3B, children in Class I showed 60.4% while Class II with 85.7 and 96.8% in Class III. Conclusively, although letter naming scores indicate fair performance, the median score 0 indicate very low performance across all grades in the letter sound test. This shows that children in the respective classes do not understand the alphabet concept of associating a letter to its sound set. As evident in this assessment, the two sets of assessments are closely aligned and suggest a high degree of poor performance in sound sets.

4.   Onset and Rime Assessment Results

The onset and rime (a word making pattern that uses a common syllable **-rime** with different initial consonants**-onset**. The result is word family) assessment was given only to Class II and III. Previous experiences and assessments showed that this is a more complex phonics skill and was not within the capacity of Class I children surveyed prior to the assessment.

This assessment test depends on children's knowledge that letters make bits of sounds; a cluster of letters makes a more pronouns able unit of sound. In this case the assessor pronounces the syllable /it/ three times. Then the assessor put different consonants in front of the syllable to demonstrate a word-making pattern as in /s-it/, /b-it/ and /p-it/.

Figure 4 Onset and Rime Assessment Results
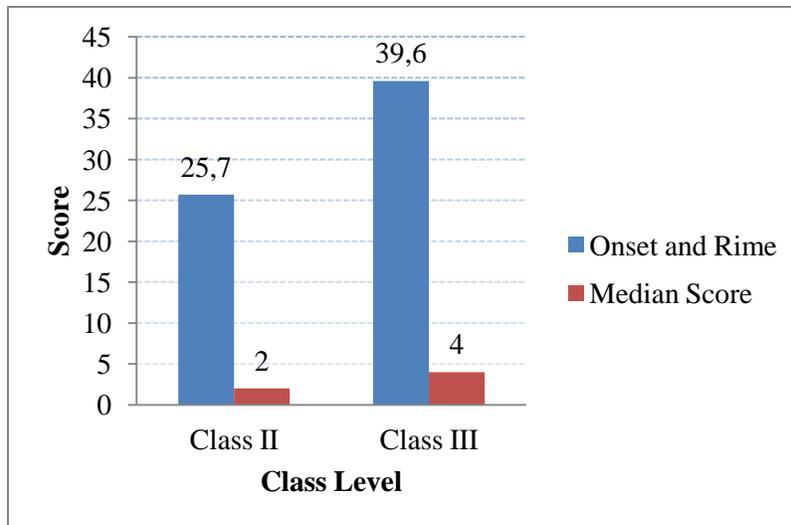
In figure 4, the outcome for this test is predictable. Performance in Class II stands at 25.7% average with 2 as median; and Class III scored an average of 39.6% with 4 as median. These are low levels and show weak abilities of children to read and make new words by using the sounds of letters together with common word patterns. The low level correlation between children's performance on the onset-rime test and the results summary of their linking signs and sounds puzzling. The consultant's participation in the conduct of the assessments offers an explanation. Children recognized several words during the presentation of different onsets and rimes. Thus, words like "pot", "bed" and "man" were identified even though the children could not linked names of letters to their sounds. Thus the onset and rime test acted more like a sight word test. This confirms the use of tools that offer potentials for triangulation and the value of high level participation in the conduct of assessment. Without the consultant's participation and subsequent assessment team post-test discussions and analysis the results might suggest a hopeful indicator that children have some knowledge about word-marking and reading abilities to manipulate letters and their sounds; patterns of letters to make word-sound patterns. So pupils' onset-rime test performance could only be linked to their sight word performance.

5. Sight Words Assessment Results

Sight words test assessed the ability of children to recognise words used frequently in their reading texts. In the process of learning to read, children develop abilities to use the alphabet, meet word clusters of letters they are learning. Their teachers write and show words on the chalk board and in text books so children learn spellings, initial letters and sounds, words and sentence patterns. These activities overlap alphabet learning. Teaching children words that appear frequently in print, give young readers a deeper understanding in working on decoding other words. The assessment test indicated their ability in this area and its constituted a list of words drawn from the Dolch list of most frequent English words combined with the most commonly printed words in their English Language Class I, II, and III text books.

Figure 5 Sight Word List Assessment Results
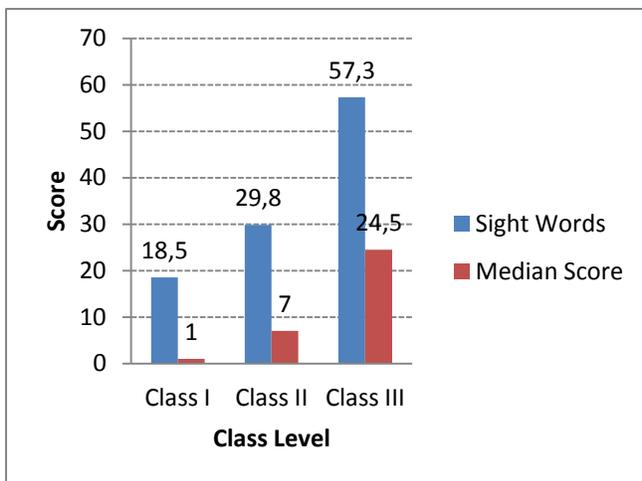
In figure 5 the test outcomes show low average performance in classes I and II with 18.5% and 29,8% respectively. Thus the median scores at all Class levels are low as evident in median 1 for Class1 and median 7 for Class 2. However Class 3 scored 24.5 as median indicating 16.5 gap difference with Classes I and II.

Most common prepositions and meaning-loaded words were used as sight words. From field observations children were more successful with common concrete nouns than words like "that", "that" and "this". Yet these three words were used over and over again during oral English work in the classroom. But unfortunately children did not recognize them. Children used mnemonic device like spelling to call words. For instance "man" the child will first call the letters "m"-"a"-"n" and finally call out the word with a rising flourish "man".

This is common classroom activity with words on the chalkboard which does not show correct sight word recognition. In this case although the scores show successes in the identification of some words the performance scores do not accurately indicate that the words are "sight words". Sight words are recognized as a single unit with some automaticity. So we can conclude that children's learning outcome of sight word abilities are at lower levels than indicated.

6.a Comprehension Passage Sight Words Assessment Results

Comprehension test constitute the final learning outcome of learning to read. It has the following parts: sight word reading, reading comprehension and fluency. In comprehension passage sight word reading, the assessor counted the words children read correctly from the passage. This was done because vocabulary reading is fundamental to understanding a passage. The most commonly found items and words (high frequency words) in early primary school text and readers were used. To ensure further a higher level of vocabulary familiarity, the passage topics were developed to resonate with Sierra Leone children's experiences. Additionally the stories were accompanied by illustration directly related to the story content. Thus it was anticipated that will be more successful reading a story-passage than a list of random words
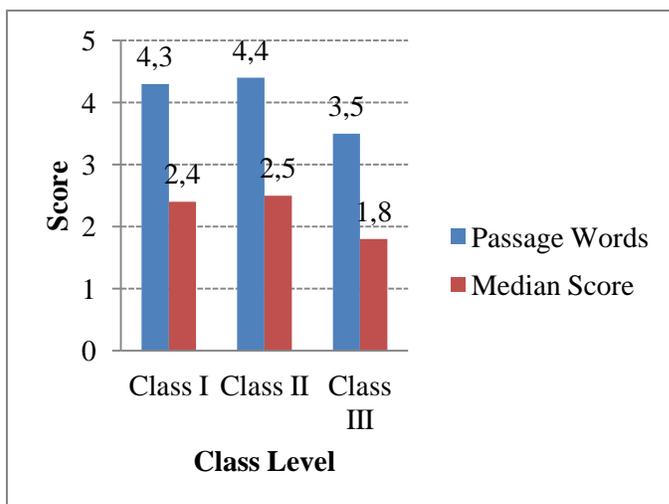
Figure 6 Comprehension Passage Sight Words Results

But this was not the case, as figure 6 shows children read fewer words from the passage than on the sight word list. At all levels the successes are low with a mixed bag of scores. Class I read 4.3 words and 2.4 median, Class 2 4.4 with 2.5 as median, and Class III read about 3 words with a median of 1.8. The scores do not show any steady increase, instead a rapid drop down in m Class 3.The results show that children lack basic print experiences. They are not learning to read words in context only ones that are listed on the chalkboard for chanting and memorization. At the end of three years children have not learned how to engage or read texts.

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6b Reading Comprehension Assessment Results

Reading Comprehension requires bringing all abilities like alphabetic knowledge, word lists and word patterns together into a single activity to thoughtfully make meaning of the words on the page. Five questions were designed to assess children's understanding of "what happened" in the story. Some children who could not read fully the story succeeded in answering questions from the story using picture clue.

Figure 7: Reading Comprehension Assessment Results

Figure 7 shows that Class I read words at an average of 27.8% with 1 as median, Class II got 35.4% average score with 2 as median and Class III scored 42.8% with median 2. These scores indicates that majority of the children in each class cannot answer any questions about the passage. The most troubling aspect is that
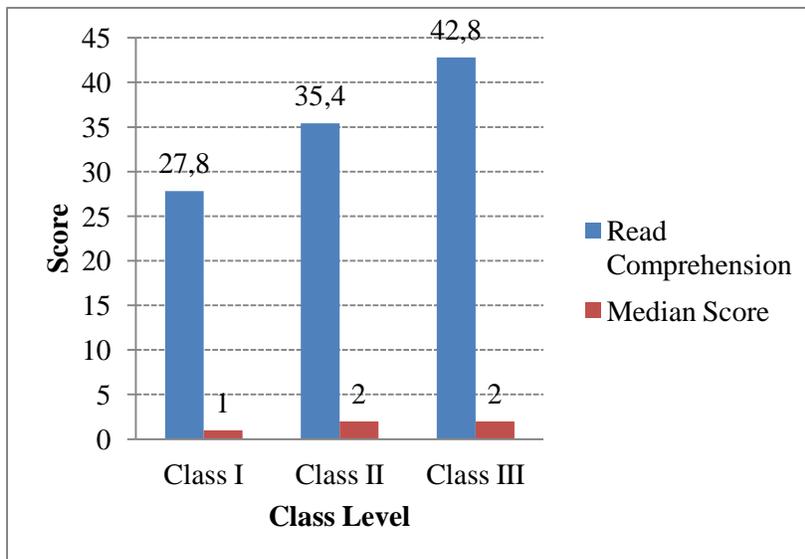
children have not learned to use illustrations to guide reading. Children at early levels must use pictures, icons, and images and colour to develop meaning making abilities. These results suggest that teachers are not using texts to help children learn to read. Thus after three years of schooling children are not learning to thoughtfully and actively engage with printed text.

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6.c Comprehension: Fluency Assessment Results

Fluency level is part of reading comprehension which focuses on the intonation or oral flow of a reader. Oral reading fluency has been shown to be predictive of later skills in reading and comprehension (Fuchs,Hosp,& Jenkins,2001).The importance of fluency as a predictive measure help us to know not only the speed level of a good or average reader but further inform us about the number of words read and time spent. Fluency in this context test the level of familiar vocabulary and correct pronunciation of sounds and observation of punctuation marks which shape the meaning of reading comprehension,

Figure 8: Fluency Level Assessment Results
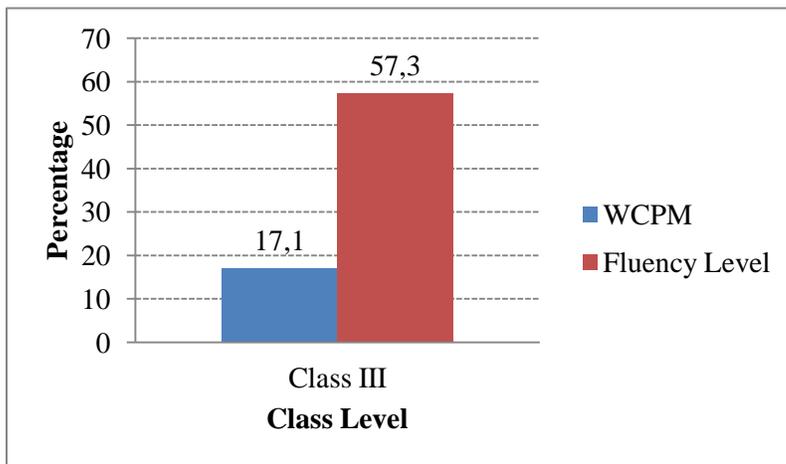
Fluency level assessment for children is only applicable in Class III as indicated in figure 8 which shows 17.1% average number of words read and median score of 57.3. The scores show low level performance. As a subset of the comprehension test which shows that as children's reading comprehension abilities are too poor, fluency level of children will not show any difference in performance.

7 Writing Assessment Results

Writing assessment test like comprehension requires a whole range of other reading skills (letter and sound identification, vocabulary and syntax or sentence structures and meaning, and motor skills and spelling development.) to enable children to engage meaningfully in using print to communicate. Children's work was assessed using a rubric (Richard Gentery). Performance levels were rated in stages 1-8 with scribbling as the first stage. Although children in other countries scribble comfortably in an effort to produce 'writing' at early stages, Sierra Leonean children did not.

Figure 9: Writing Stages Assessment Results
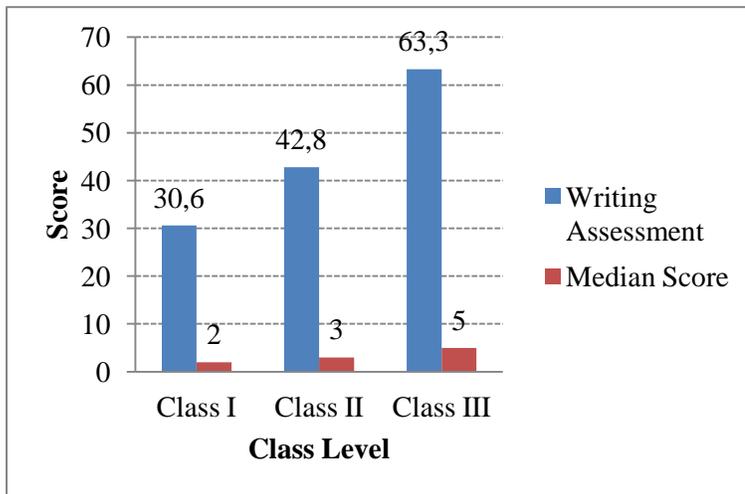
Results in figure 9 represent the Writing Assessment test in Class I, II and III. In this figure, children in Class I scored an average of 30.6% with median score of 2, an average of 42.8% with median score of 3 in Class II and 63.3% average score with median score of 5 in Class III. The results show that children at all levels were reluctant to write on the page without a model. They were worried about writing the wrong thing. At the end of Class I and II most children are not ready to write some words on paper. These results further confirm that children do not engage in creative writing activities in their classrooms.

8   Oral English Assessment Results

This test captured what kind or level of interaction children demonstrated during the assessment. It tested children's ability to use English Language to follow instructions, demonstrate phonemic awareness and read words. However this assessment did not fit in to validate what was tested as the focus of the baseline was on children's early reading abilities. Like in all Sierra Leonean classrooms, assessors used mixture of krio (the lingua franca) to explain what was expected from the children in working through all tests.

Figure 10: Oral English Assessment Results.
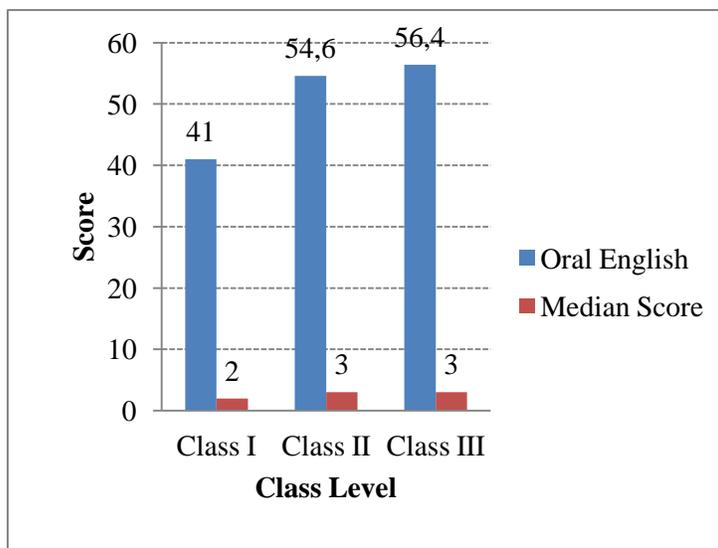
Figure 10 shows results of children's Oral English Assessment performance. It is the last assessment tool (Assessment 7 in Class I and 8 in Class II and III). It is graded in three levels sum up to 5 scores. From figure 10, shows that children scored 41% average with median score of 2 in Class I, 54.6% with median score of 3 in Class II and 56.4% with median score of 3 in Class III. These are promising results; children demonstrate a growing ability to use English over three years. Considering the circumstances of supporting materials and instructional models available, this outcome indicates high level capacity of children for learning.

We must note here that in this context, English is the language of instruction and of nearly all printed learning materials in Sierra Leone. So this makes Language Arts instruction to be much more complicated by children's learning to read and write in a second language. This complication is further exacerbated by teachers who do not distinguish between teaching language and teaching literacy (USAID Research, 2009, author). Thus in subsequent research, the consultant strongly recommends that the oral language assessment rubric include the children's abilities with Krio.

B. **Assessment and Gender for Class I, II and III Children**

Gender is a key factor in the triangulation of assessments and in presenting a balanced picture of events or facts. It plays a vital role in influencing learning outcomes. With reference to the data gathered for IRC/CODE baseline study it was discovered that girls' performance at the end of class 1 was about 3% lower than the boys' performance. However, by the time girls finished Class III, they were 13% behind the boys. But as indicated in table 8 below, this is not the case in this baseline study.

Table 5: Gender Percentage Summary of Assessment Results for Class I, II and III Children

Assessment: Early Reading Ability Indicator	Average Performance: Ability Score Indicated in Percentage (%)					
	Class I		Class II		Class III	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
6. Phonemic Awareness.	5%	7.2%	10.6%	14.3%	17.2%	13.5%
7. Letter Naming.	64.5%	63.5%	87.3%	81.5%	97.2%	93.9%
8. Sign-Sound Relationship.	5.4%	4.4%	11.1%	9.2%	20.6%	13.8%
3b. Letter Id.d.	58.5%	62.2%	87.4%	84%	98.8%	94.7%
9. Onset and Rime.	-	-	26.8%	24.5%	46%	33.2%
10. Sight Words Reading.	15.7%	21.3%	28.1%	31.4%	60.9%	53.7%
6a. Reading Passage Words.	11.2%	14.4%	28.3%	25.1%	47.3%	40.5%
6b. Read Comprehension.	26.2%	29.2%	35.2%	35.6%	43%	42.6%
6c. Time Used	-	-	-	-	-	-
6d. WCPM	-	-	-	-	-	-
6e. Fluency Level	-	-	-	-	59.8%	54.8%
7a. Writing	28.8%	32.6%	42.4%	43%	66.9%	59.8%
7b. Naming and Writing	57.3%	66%	82.5%	87%	90.7%	90%
8. Oral English Interaction	38.8%	43%	55.6%	53%	59.6%	54%

Table 8 above shows the collective average scores of girls competing with boys in all the tests ,and in fact in Class I and III girls performed higher than the boys almost in all areas.

The summary table above can be further discussed in figure 11 below showing average performance of assessment tests by boys and girls in sampled school. However WCPM and Time used were not computed in this summary and their exclusion will not negate the validity of this report.

Figure11: Average Performance of Assessment on Gender for Class I, II and III Children
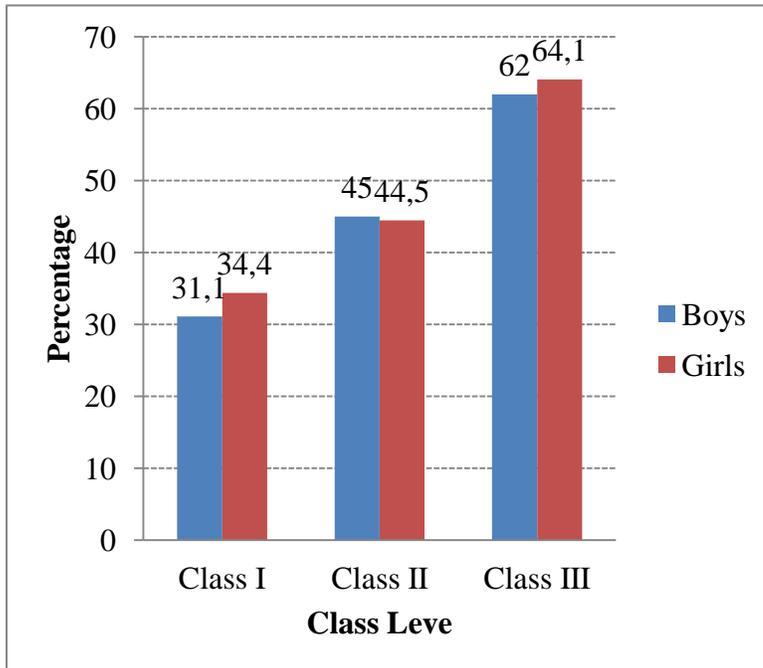
Figure 11 shows average performance in all the assessments for boys in Class I is 31.1% and 34.4% for girls. In Class I, the gender performance variation is 3.3% in favor of girls' performance. Class II scored an average of 45% boys' performance on all assessments and 44.5% for girls, with 0.5% variation in favour of boys' performance. In Class III, the average performance on all assessments is 62% for boys and 64.1% for girls with 2.1% variation in favour of girls' performance. Conclusively, the gender performance in all assessments in Class I, II and III shows better on girls' performance. This shows an interesting picture of results that will give hope and motivation toward Girl Child support to attain quality education.

But promoting quality and equity is a complex matter. This can be seen hypothetically; almost all house chores like cleaning, sweeping and fetching water before going to school are done by girls. They assist in preparing food and laundry. These activities inhibit their further study at home. Traditional social trends value boys' education at higher levels. Thus parents buy books and other materials for boys at higher rates than for girls. Classroom practice also needs examination.

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Do girls get equal access to desks and work space in the classroom as well as teachers' attention? In sum, home needs, social values and pedagogies are all part of the network of factors that affect performance.

This performance shows that girls have equal potentials to boys in the pursuance of quality education. So according equal educational support and opportunities to boys and girls will promote happiness and sustainable development.

IV. Baseline Assessment Performance Analysis of Teachers

As indicated in the summary of percentages and median scores of teachers, indeed teachers are the keys to unlock the doors for children to journey toward attaining quality education. They are the builders to construct solid foundation for emerging readers. So their inclusion in the baseline assessment process of the children they teach is relevant to the goal of the project. It is only through assessment that we can measure and know the link between the competence and needs of teachers and learning outcomes of the children they teach.

Figure 12: Assessments Performance Analysis of Teachers
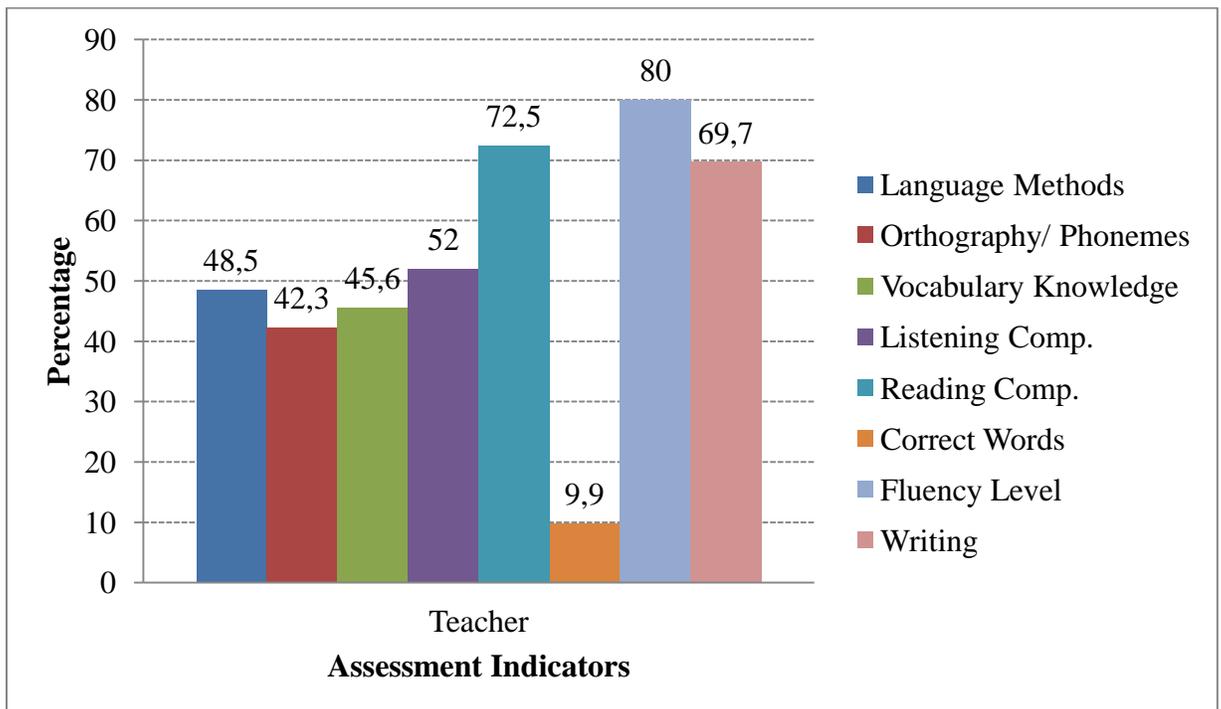
It could be seen from figure 12 above; that the baseline assessment done for pupils in primary schools (Class I, II and III) could not have been triangulated in a more qualitative way than assessing the teachers needs and knowledge on literacy abilities in the lower grades. Teachers help children to develop "early reading abilities". It is obvious that teachers' performance on assessment 5B-Correct Words Read shows low performance of 9.9% indicating a median score of 114 words of 116 words in the passage and high level performance on Fluency Level indicating 80% with a median score of level 3. Reading comprehension score of 72.5% is noted as a fair attempt.

But what is disturbing is the 48.5% in Language Arts Methods, 42.5% in Orthography, 45.6 in Vocabulary and even the 69.7% in writing. The performance in these four tests is low and can be linked to the poor performance of pupils in similar tests (phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, vocabulary and writing) In conclusion, the teachers' baseline assessments on all the tests as indicated in figure 12, shows an overall average of 52.7% performance which needs a boost to capacitate teachers in teaching Language Arts effectively in to emerging readers.
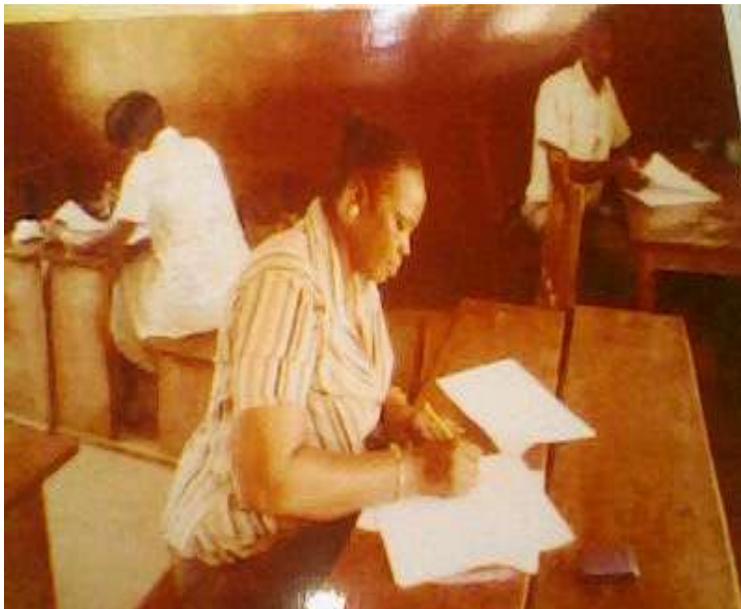
Time Used and WCPM Assessments Results

Time Used and WCPM are used to measure fluency and number of words read in a passage. The timing and word counting is within comprehension abilities of children. Thus the ability to read effectively goes with time used and the number of words read. Figure 13 below presents performance levels of Class III children and Teachers.

Figure 13: Time Used and WCPM Assessments Results
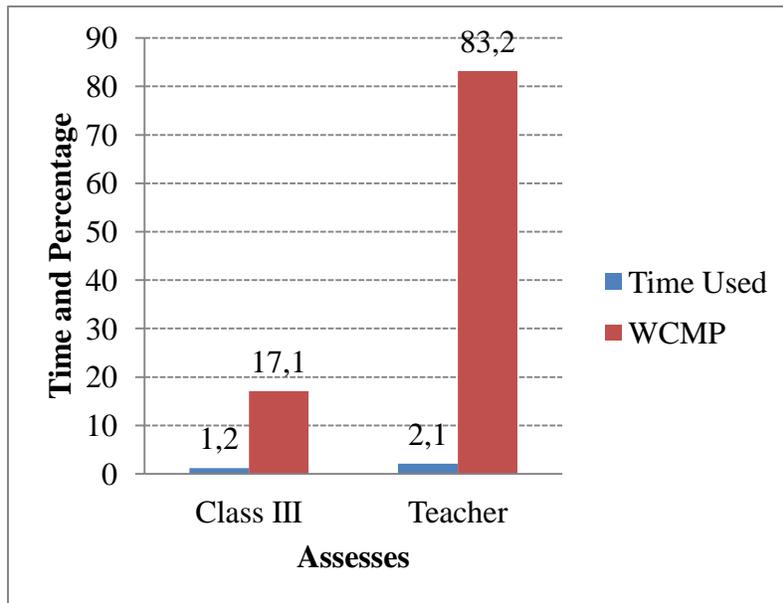
In figure 13, the average percentage of WCMP for teachers is 83.2% with 2.1% Time Used. On the other hand, Class III performance is 17.1% of WCMP indicating a median of about 13 word read and 1.2% Time Used with a median of 1. But a critical look at the two performances of teachers and children show troubling interpretation on teachers' scores; spending 2 minutes in reading a passage of 116 words is not good for any professional teacher teaching reading in the lower grades. This could also be linked as a factor influencing the low reading levels of children taught by these teachers,

V. *Gender Percentage Summary of Assessment Results of Teachers*

The baseline assessment tools designed for teachers targeted gender equity but as indicated earlier, this was not achieved due to unequal teacher representation. So the assessment teams collected data in 18 schools located in rural communities. Each of the teachers was tested on all the tools, and 26 female and 28 male teachers teaching classes I ,II, III were tested. It is worth noting that 10 male teachers are teaching class I in 10 of the 18 schools; and only 8 teachers were found teaching Class 1.This is an interesting discovery especially in our context were male teachers prefer teaching the upper grades than the lowest of grades. Table 9 below presents a summary of gender performance results of teachers in all the five assessments:

Assessment: Early Reading Ability Indicator	Average Performance: Ability Score Indicated in Percentage (%)	
	Teacher	
	Male	**Female**
1. Language Methods:	47.8%	48.9%
2. Orthography/Phonemes:	45.8%	39.5%
3. Vocabulary Knowledge:	46.5%	44.9%
4. Listening Comprehension:	50.7%	52.7%
5a. Reading Comprehension:	67.4%	76.3%
5b. Correct Words:	92.6%	97.2%
5c. Time Used:	-	-
5d. WCPM:	-	-
5e. Fluency Level:	78.3%	18.5%
6. Writing:	66.7%	72%

From table 9, the performance level scores of females are : Language methods 48.9%, Listening Comprehension 52.7%, Reading Comprehension 76.3%, Correct Words read 97.2% and Writing 72% surpass their male counterparts. The only outstanding score of males is on Fluency level. The performance of females and males can be further captured in figure 11 below:

Figure14. Average Performance of Assessment on Gender of Teachers
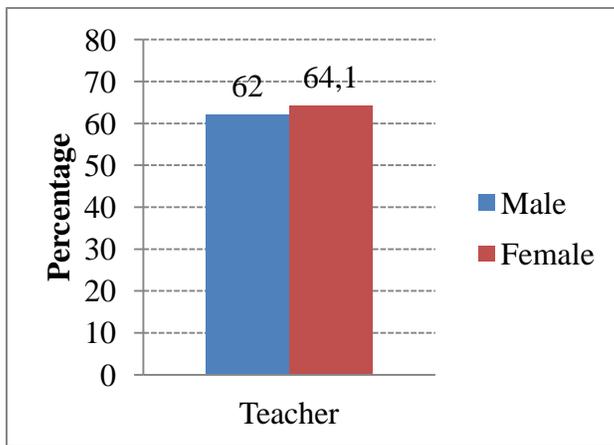
Figure 11 shows the assessments on gender for teachers. It shows an average of 64.1% performance of female teachers in all assessments and 62% performance for male teacher. This results confirms that females out performed males with 2.1% difference. This performance is unique and could be linked to the children's performance which also showcased girls out-performing the boys.

VI. Class level Performance of Teachers

Teachers tested with equal sampling in Classes I, II and III, which is 18 teachers in each class. Table 12 below shows the performance scores of teachers in each level indicating percentages. It gives us a comparative picture of teachers in the three levels. Note that the Time Used and WCPM were not compared to establish a balance of words read correctly and the level of fluency which is linked to the time spent in the reading the comprehension passage. Two areas: Reading Comprehension and Writing in the table show marked differences in terms of teachers' performance. Performance for Reading Comprehension in Class I is 76% and drops to 72% in Class II with a difference of 4%, and a performance drop point of 70% in Class III with a marked difference of 6%. Similarly, the performance on Writing for Class I and II is 70%, and in Class III it drops to 69% with a minimal difference of just 1%. Performance difference in Language methods, Orthography, Listening comprehension test is not as notable as Vocabulary Knowledge with 48% Class I and a drop in Classes II of 41% and Class III 47%. This shows a mixed-bag performance indicating the different abilities of teachers in all three Classes.

Table 7: Teachers' Assessment on Class Level Percentage Performance

Assessment: Early Reading Ability Indicator	Average Performance: Ability Score Indicated in Percentage (%)		
	Teacher		
	Class I	Class II	Class III
1. Language Methods:	49%	48%	49%
2. Orthography/Phonemes:	43%	42%	41%
3. Vocabulary Knowledge:	48%	41%	47%
4. Listening Comprehension:	54%	54%	48%
5a. Reading Comprehension:	76%	72%	70%
5b. Correct Words:	96%	94%	96%
5c. Time Used:	-	-	-
5d. WCPM:	-	-	-
5e. Fluency Level:	82%	79%	79%
6. Writing:	70%	70%	69%

VII. Teachers' Assessment Percentage on Qualification Performance

The teachers that were tested were ranked into two distinct groups, namely the trained and qualified with teaching certificates, and the second group was the unqualified. Both groups constituted the teaching staff in all the selected schools. Table 11 shows a comparison of performance of both groups of teachers. Although both groups scored the same percentages on orthography/phonemes with 42%; unqualified teachers performed better on fluency with 81% above the 80% of qualified teachers, but with a minimal difference of just 1%. Qualified teachers on the other hand did better in all other tests than the unqualified. This is further shown in the average performance of teachers in figure 15.

Table 8: Teachers' Assessment Percentage on Qualification Performance

Assessment: Early Reading Ability Indicator	Average Performance: Ability Score Indicated in Percentage (%)	
	Teacher	
	Qualified	**Unqualified**
1. Language Methods:	49%	47%
2. Orthography/Phonemes:	42%	42%
3. Vocabulary Knowledge:	46%	44%
4. Listening Comprehension:	54%	44%
5a. Reading Comprehension:	73%	72%
5b. Correct Words:	96%	93%
5c. Time Used:	3%	4%
5d. WCPM:	1.44%	1.18%
5e. Fluency Level:	80%	81%
6. Writing:	71%	67%

Figure 15: Average Performance of Assessments of Qualified and Unqualified Teachers
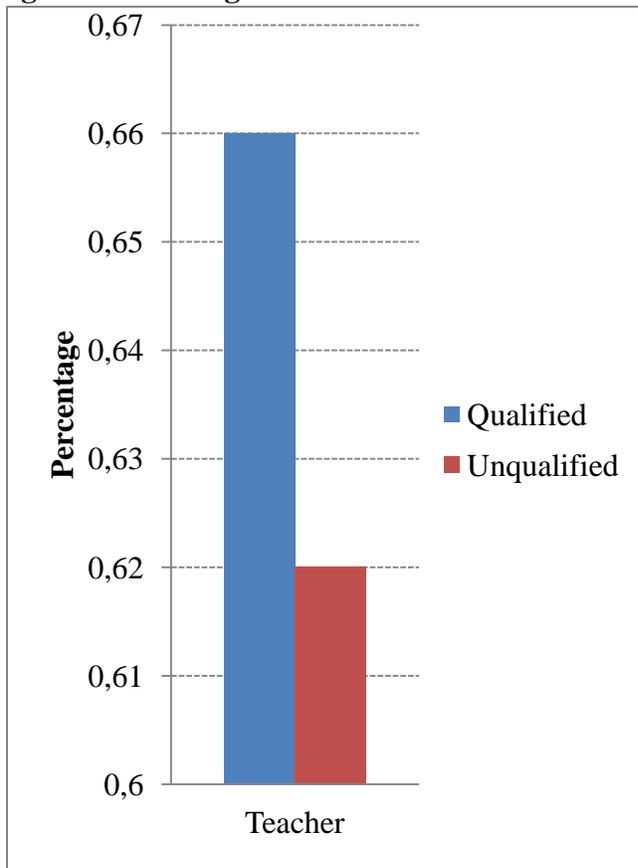
Figure 15 shows the average percentage of qualified teachers' performance level at 0.66% while unqualified teachers' performance is 0.61%. However, the general performances of teachers by qualification did not show marked performance to indicate mastery of literacy skills relevant in the effective teaching of English in the lower grades. Although on overall analysis, qualified teachers showed higher performance than unqualified teachers, yet the much that is expected is 100% score in all the tests, Thus teachers teaching in the lower grades should be given quality pre-service or in-service trainings that will capacitate them in teaching English effectively in primary schools.

VIII. Age Frequency of Teachers

The ages of teachers play a key role in determining effectiveness in the teaching and learning process of children especially in the lower grades. Teaching children in the lower grades is a challenging task; it requires not only qualification but things like energy, alertness, creativity, dedication and above all child-centred strategies (strategies that involve children to see, hear, feel, think and do) are needed to propel success in teaching young learners. So lower grade teachers should not be very old in confronting the challenges of the teacher-children play and learner-centred methods. Table 12 below shows age frequency of teachers tested during the baseline assessment. Results show that 31 teachers are between the ages of 21-40 years and 23 teachers are between the ages 41-65. The 40 teachers between ages 21-45 have more time in the teaching service than those with age 56-65; and by 15 years 14 teachers would have reached age 65 the official retirement age.

The results show that the teaching staff in the assessed schools comprised young and old teachers. It is a good mixed bag of professional experiences and abilities of teachers in their teaching activities. On the other hand, several problems can be foreseen: Within 15 years 14 teachers in the lower grades will retire, and government's reluctance in teacher recruitment will further posed more challenges to school heads which will militate against effective classroom performance.

Table 9: *Age Frequency of Teachers*

Age Interval	No. of Teachers (*fχ*)	Percentage (%)
21 − 25	5	9.26%
26 − 30	8	14.81%
31 − 35	12	22.22%
36 − 40	6	11.11%
41 − 45	9	16.67%
46 − 50	9	16.67%
51 − 55	2	3.70%
56 − 60	2	3.70%
61 − 65	1	1.85%
	Σ*fχ* = **54**	**100%**

IX. Language Abilities of Classes I, II, and III Teachers

The baseline assessment study captured the language abilities of teachers to learn about how they use other languages in teaching children in the lower grades. Table 10 shows that 26 teachers used krio indicating 48.1%, 15 used Mende, 4 used Limba and 1 used Kathemne. On the whole, most teachers used Krio and Mende while few used Limba and Kathemne in classroom instruction.

Table 10: Language Abilities of Teachers

No.	Language Spoken	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Krio	26	48.1%
2	Limba	4	7.4%
3	Kathemne	1	1.9%
2	Mende	15	27.8%
5	Other Language	8	14.8%

The language abilities of teachers shown above indicate an exceptional and nationally linguistic expertise to effectively teach children to read. That aside, it is worth noting that schools in Sierra Leone are characterized by population that are linguistically rich in diversity, that is, schools are built in communities dominated by a major indigenous language such as in places like Moyamba, Bo and Pujehun, Mende is dominant; in Kamakwie , Limba is dominant; and in Makeni, Kathema and Grafton Krio are the dominant languages. Although English is the official language of instruction in all schools and colleges in Sierra Leone, and some teachers even speak two to three local languages; teachers use more of Krio to help children understand better English concepts.

However, without access to current improved child-centered pedagogical understandings of how multilingual abilities can be transformed into effective methodology, much of this great potential remains unrealized at both the teacher training level as well as in thousands primary school classrooms. Teachers' multilingual capacity can serve the need for teaching children in multilingual classroom.
We note negative attitudes towards the rich linguistic abilities of children and teachers. L1 (mother tongue) use in the classroom should not be described as "interference" and "a problem, but rather considered an asset and treasured heritage. This shows that a teacher's ability to work with the linguistic diversity rather than in conflict or prejudice would tremendously enhance the teaching of reading skills.

X. Qualification of Teachers

Teachers are professionals, and emerging readers depend on their knowledge, skills and experiences to move on from lower levels to higher levels of education. Teachers develop their professional competence through periods and processes of training on subject content and methodology, learn about how children learn and classroom management. Thus investigating the needs and professional competence and performance of teachers without getting to know about their qualifications will lead to missing a key factor that influence quality teaching. Thus table 11 below shows the qualifications of teachers assessed in the sampled schools.32 teachers were trained with Teachers Certificate (TC), 3 with Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) and 2 with Teachers Elementary Certificate (TEC) which qualify them to teach in the primary school. On other hand, 2 were trained but not qualified and only 10 teachers are untrained.

Table 11: Qualification of Teachers

No.	Qualification	No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTC)	3	5.6%
2	Teachers' Certificate (TC)	32	59%
3	Trained and Unqualified (TU)	2	3.7%
2	Untrained and Unqualified (UU)	1	1.9%
5	Diploma	1	1.9%
6	O' Level	6	11%
7	WASSEC	2	3.7%
	TEC	2	3.7%
	Both TC and HTC	3	5.6%
	Both HTC and Diploma	1	1.9%
	Both TC and Diploma	1	1.9%

Table 11 shows that all the schools have a mixed group of untrained and qualified teachers. This shows that the teachers in the selected schools stand as a vital resource to support the success of any intervention in the area of promoting the teaching of Language Arts to children in the lower grades.

XI. Features of Assessed Schools

A. Site Features

The schools selected for the baseline study were EFSL and CTF supported schools located in three rural communities, namely Western rural (Grafton-CTF schools), Southern region (Moyamba, Bo, Pujehun-EFSL schools) and Northern region-CTF schools). Five of the EFSL schools are government assisted (assist in the payment of salaries to teachers) and the other five are community schools (built by the community and await government approval). Only two CTF schools are government assisted and the six are community schools. That aside, 60% of the 54 teachers are still awaiting approval from government; thus called community teachers-getting meagre support from the community. But amidst all the challenges 42 of the 54 teachers, that is, almost 80% are trained and qualified to teach children in the lower grades, and their presence indicates hope in the improvement of children's performance and the selection and training of reading experts from all the schools to support the effective teaching and learning of English in the lower grades.

The assessment teams were welcomed warmly by teachers and heads of schools. This reception prepared the groundwork for the smooth execution of the assessment. During our post-test session meetings, teachers and primary school heads expressed their frustration and concern that children were "not learning to read" They further acknowledged their helplessness about their abilities to change the course on which children are learning. The team found teachers and children learning in challenging circumstances at all schools. The average classroom was 6o (59.7) children per children. Interestingly, we found that schools average 29 boys and 35 girls. The gender balance is changing at the lower levels. The team also noted very low-level material at all schools and there are significant problems with teachers' methodology in teaching children at the lower grades.

B. Teaching skills in Classes I, II, and III

The professional background of teachers plays a key role in teaching children early literacy skills. All the eighteen schools have at least three qualified teachers, and although 42 of the 54 teachers are trained and qualified they faced huge challenges in teaching literacy skills to emerging readers in the lower grades. The methodology skills they used in teaching English contain the following characteristics:

- Fragmentation of instruction. English (language arts) is taught in single strands. Thus reading activity is done in one class period; other periods may focus on oral work, writing, comprehension teaching, English Sentence Pattern and Structure (ESP&S) drills.
- Whole word learning and memorization is the main approach to learning to read. Children learn to read by spell chanting, copying and memorizing words; they do not work with letter-sound patterns.
- Copy work is characteristic of all instruction: reading and repetition, writing is copied; grammar is learned through oral drills and memorization.
- The texts and classroom methods show a reliance on English-Second Language (ESL) teaching and learning formats for learning to read (older version: 1930-1960)

It is important to note that what is not currently usual in Sierra Leone Language arts (English) contain the following:

- No (or very little) phonics instruction takes place Children do not learn how the alphabet works; they do not learn how to decode on their own.
- Children do almost no independent reading or writing. This strongly hinders comprehension development and fluency.
- Children are not led in topic-guided discussions. This hinders vocabulary growth and reading abilities that depend on children's personally held vocabulary
- Vocabulary development is minimal. The vocabulary introduced by teachers is very small, not nuanced and not applied more widely.
- Most troubling is the lack of emphasis by teachers for comprehension development during reading, copying, sentence drills or any other language arts activity.

C. Teaching and Learning Materials

Teaching and learning resources are the tools for successful language arts instruction. However, as indicated earlier, the team noted very low-level teaching and learning material support in all the eighteen schools. Although most children had a notebook, we did not see one child with a language arts text or reader. No presence of libraries, what was only evident in eight schools were a few collection of readers stocked in rickety old cupboards. Heads of such schools confirmed that the reading materials available are of poor and low quality with a ratio of 1:4. Other extra teaching and learning resources such as visual and audio visual aids were not available. Chalks and chalkboards were of low quality; and none of the teachers know about the application and usefulness of a computer or internet in enhancing their classroom work. It is possible to consider this very low-level teaching and learning material support in the schools as they strongly influence performance potentials in the promotion of quality education.

XII Conclusions

Reading is a single activity of meaning making in a print communication, but in this study, we separate its components to understand how teaching might be more effective. The foregone results and analysis presented series of challenges for both teachers and children in teaching and learning of language arts. These challenges require urgent intervention to helping teachers use meaningful contexts within which to learn and teach about letters, words, reading, writing, comprehension and critical thinking skills.

A. Alphabet knowledge (phonics abilities)

Although children recognize alphabet letters but not at a mastery level (identified only 25 letters at the end of Class III) . In all classes, this development is not matched with their ability to identify the first sound of a word, and to associate a letter sign to its sound. Thus, children are memorizing letter shapes and their names; and not matching letters with their usual sounds. Evidence does not suggest they are learning that letters make the sounds of words at the same time. Results further shows that teachers' orthographic knowledge is also not strong enough to teach children phonics effectively.

The correlation between the segmentation task and the letter-sound matching task outcomes indicates serious weaknesses. Children do not demonstrate understanding that the letter-sounds are related to spoken words. Note that eight of the ten picture items (segmentation) are on the letter and sounding matching charts (s, p, m, b, I, d, h, f). In fact, in some cases children who recognized letters and made their sounds could not do the same with a picture-word that began with the same sound.

This is connected with the fact that children and their teachers rely on the nationally common strategy for learning to read: visual memory and chanting which does not support children well in learning to read. This is connected to teachers' poor performance in the methodology test. Teaching Reading should not be based loosely on memorization but in real and integrated strategy that support effective teaching and learning. In this case, the teacher points to a letter and says it name. The class chants the letter. The teacher leads with a verse that calls the name and sound of the letter. Some songs include words that begin with the sound. However, during the exercise I have not once seen a teacher look at words-on-the-board or pictures to give meaning to the word-sounds they chant together. The exercise begins and ends with the letter on the alphabet strip and physical (joyful) activity of singing letter songs.

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That aside, there is no connection between the letters and word-meaning teachers used in teaching children. This problem needs urgent stimulate radical progress in letter name and sound recognition. Without this development, teaching reading will be a mere memory work activity.

B. Vocabulary Development (reading words)

Learning to read words also posed problems for both children and even teachers, especially sight words recognition. Children scored low performance in the sight word test. This low performance can be traced form teachers' usual pedagogy which teaches each word as a single graphic. Children learn to recognize whole words one at a time. Notably, single graphemes are cognitively less difficult to memorize than clusters: a word as a single graph (J. Kuyvenhoven 2012) It is not surprising children were more successful with the letters.

When we compare children's success reading words in a list with the outcomes of their passage-word reading, the difference is startling. Children were 1-3 times more successful reading abstracted word in a list than in a small story with a picture. The words in the list are high frequently in the 'Sierra Leone' language Arts text books. The names "Ali and Binti" for example, were used because they occur 42 times in the text. While children do not have these, teachers use them in their teaching. Daily, words from the text are put on the classroom blackboard.

The writing assessment outcomes show no evidence that children know the meaning of the words they write or "read" successfully during the sight Word Assessment. Children are learning to call out the whole words the meet by recognizing the entire graph (a sight word) or using a mnemonic (spell chant). But there is no real evidence that they feel the spark of meaning that should be conjured by that word in their minds. Result on number of words read is more worrisome that the great majority of children cannot read words below grade level text. This low performance can be linked to the teachers' weak methods and vocabulary skills.

C. Comprehension

At all levels children show low ability to read with understanding. They could not read the comprehension passage. There are several ramifications of this. Because classroom guides word-reading in list format, children struggle with directionally. Lists are vertical; texts arrange words horizontally. Children have not developed abilities to focus the separation of words from each other in a row.

In fact, children did know they could use contexts to help them read. In class 1, for example, the assessor read the title; the majority of children did not read the first line of text which repeats the title. In all three classes, the first comprehension question could be answered by looking at the picture. For example, in class 1, the question asked was: "where are Ali and Binti? (Under the tree with animals….) most children did not answer this question and the one whose answer was supplied by the illustration in all the comprehension texts.

D. Writing

The dismal performance of children in most of the tests items is translated in their weak writing abilities. The deviations scores across Classes I and II are very low and Class III is within stage 5 instead of stage 8. The reasons for this can be taken from other assessments. In the first, the segmentation assessment is the reciprocal task of writing words. Writing similarly demands the ability to separate the sounds of a word to know which letters are needed. The sight word reading assessment also predicts this result. Because words learned as whole units, young readers must recall a complex single word-graph. This is an enormously challenging cognitive activity. That children can do this at all, is a testament to their ability and determination. What compounded this low performance is the week writing skills demonstrated by teachers in the assessment.

Teacher training supervision and classroom observation also inform us that children do not write (enough) during a school day. Learning materials like Pencils, papers, notebooks are not within reach of students/pupils to engage or practice writing activities. Also there are too few models of meaningful writing activities to communicate an idea, a message or anything else.

Children are not participants in practices that use the language of print. Reading materials (readers and texts) are not enough they are within the ratio of 1:4 in all schools. Additionally some of the selected schools labelled as community schools are still awaiting Government assisted approval; and even some of the teachers (community teachers) are working in rough conditions with no payment from government.

XIII. Recommendations

The focus of this report was to unveiled the findings of the Baseline Assessment through analysis and share its meanings to stakeholders I am privileged to have played this role. Designing an instrumental response is the next step. At the same time, this report reveals the substantial hurdles on the way ahead. The next step depends on good understanding of what is going to happen in the project schools during the process of intervention. Urgent intervention is the only way to fan improvement for quality success. There is much to build on: Teachers should be supported to take up effective teaching of reading. They are excited about the assessment and are ready to be capacitated to help children read to learn.

 We saw a cadre of experienced and determined good teachers and desperate young learners awaiting support to attain excellence. School infrastructures and teaching and learning materials should be provided for teachers and children's educational advancement.

Teachers, if supported need to learn how to better contextualize their teaching. This takes both understanding and learned skills. The realization that the alphabet is not a line of named shapes; they are the fabric of words, of "talk" on paper will be nursed, developed and later sustain. To sustain any intervention, the following points should be noted:

i. The teaching and learning of Reading is not a task of memorization but of participation. Reading activity is not a recitation or repetition, but an engagement and interaction. Making such a conceptual shift is extremely difficult when a lifetime of school-reading experience is over. We underestimate the challenge this presents to us, as expert teacher and programmers; and if nothing is done project objectives will be at the risk of success.

ii.   As teachers will learn about reading as a meaningful interaction and active participation, they need a great deal of teaching reading from within something interesting to read with children. The development of this ability needs to be attended urgently. Learning to teach with text, integrating activity of meaning-making with more direct phonics instruction is high level practice. Teachers need robust and uncomplicated models; ones that allow flexible adaptations to circumstances, material availability, classroom levels and interest to stimulate learning in the lower grades.

iii.   There should be collaboration among experienced teaching of reading experts, project designers and teachers in the promotion of any intervention. Genuine relationships make deeper understanding and pedagogy-development possible.

iv.   Books, papers, pencils need to be in the hands of young readers. Fortunately, this is hope to happen when intervention commence soon. However, it will not happen on its own without pooling the support of Project stakeholders, teachers, students, school administration, parents and other community groups to promote the intervention for sustainability.

In proffering more guidelines toward the planning and execution of any intervention, we should further take into consideration the capacity building of teachers, the nature of the curriculum and syllabus, Material support and role of the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MEST) and instructional response. These guidelines are discussed as follows:

Professional development of Teachers.

Teachers need professional support to deepen and broaden their understanding of how children learn to read. Experts for the teaching of reading in the selected schools should be selected and developed locally, guided by the interests, conditions, values and hopes of the country. Collegial and mutual scaffolding is also needed to grow their own like their global colleagues' professional knowledge about reading. Access to professional journals, texts and other materials; donor-facilitated, extended conversations with expert-colleagues would strongly support sustained growth.

Curriculum and syllabus development.

Improved theoretical and practical pedagogies on the teaching of reading should be included into the curriculum of schools and teacher training colleges to sustained practice. Expert knowledge about how children learn to read needs to be reformulated under the direction of children's communities, circumstances, social-linguistic abilities, environments and so on. This task needs the support of parents and community groups; the government, classroom and college teachers, profession experts.

Material support development at every level.

Donor Partners in education should work together with the Ministry of Education's National Curriculum Development Department and other professional experts to support children's instructional needs in reviewing the curriculum to include improved contents and methods of teaching language arts. Establish school libraries with relevant and apt reading and writing materials needed by teachers and children for effective teaching and learning processes.

The Ministry of Education to be supported in its administrative and governing capacity.

The Ministry of Education should insist on conditions more amenable to young children's learning. Some of these conditions are in policies but not enforced. Class 1 and 11 registration (class roll) should not exceed the current policy recommendation of 41. More advisable: Class I, II and III teachers should use more of English as the medium of teaching children Reading.

XIV. Pedagogical Response

A. Effective Teaching of Reading in the Early Grades

I conclude to highlight the instructional responses that should guide classroom teaching in the light of assessment findings. These strategies should be considered and developed where workshops are held for in-service teachers; applied in teacher training initiatives; considered in the production of support materials and resources. As noted earlier, if all interested supporters work for the following principles, change will develop to benefit children who are learning to read so that they can learn.

Language Arts (LA) Instruction should be fully integrated. In other words, during a LA block, reading, listening, phonics, meaning-making, thinking and writing should all take place. In many, schools, the posted timetable shows such heading as "Writing, comprehension, poetry, literature, and oral arts" and so on, spread over the weak in 25 minute blocks. Such schools need to change their timetables. Donor-agencies can comfortable point out that the MEST's Harmonized Primary Syllabus (2005) already mandates this. It schedules a daily 1 hour block for "language art". Teachers need help to design and teach that block.

Teaching of reading should be a meaningfully contextualized activity. All learning to read work (from alphabet to word learning) should be centred by a shared text; by objects or print material items; or a topical discussion. Learning to read letters, words and other signage must always be linked to meanings and use. This understanding should be part of all teachers training. Help teachers learn to take a subject and develop it to teach reading skills.

B. Understanding How Works Print.

Children need to understand the relationships between talking and print. This is done by demonstration and creation of such connections. Some examples include:

1. Teachers bring in posters with children's songs on them and read them aloud. The class chants or sings the text slowly while the teacher points to the words exactly as they are given by the class, on the poster. The teacher shows that whatever can be said can be written. Whatever is written can be said.

2. Track text that is being read aloud. Anytime words or sentences are read from the board or chart in front of the class teachers track exactly under the words and/or parts of the word pronounced. This needs to become a regular in the first two-three years of schooling. Teachers need to learn this.

3. Teachers should engage in Read Aloud activities: read in a ''normal voice'' slowly and clearly from a book, chart, or something written on the blackboard. Teachers sometimes pause and ask the class to read a word they have reached. Teacher point at word randomly for children to read. If the class is not ready for words, the same principle can be used with letters, initial sounds.

   The Read Aloud activity is a child-centred practice which connects the spoken with written words but not a common practice. Most reading aloud practices entail the teacher reading a small section of the text aloud with the children. Teacher asks children to read individually, in groups and gender sets. This process continues from initiation to the conclusion of the text. Teachers need to learn how to read aloud in a normal conversational voice. However, current practices of recite and repeat fail to connect spoken with written words.

4. Teacher should teach words that "mean" very much to the children. Names of pupils and towns, relatives, goods, foods, tools. Items in a shop. This develops children's motivation to recognize print in their environment and learn about the (social) communication role print plays. Teachers read from products with print on them.

Finally, my teacher-education experiences suggest that pedagogical and program change should be made in manageable increments: increments that are established before another layer is laid. Knowledgeable guidance and continuity of practices will help teachers to extend and enhance their practices to increase the success of children in their journey to attain quality education.

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Appendices

A. Explanations of Percentage and Median Calculations:

Two statistical points were used as modes to calculate the data on Percentages and median levels as shown:

1. **Percentage (%):** The percentage is calculated by average of the assessment tool divided by its total score (for example: assessment 1. Phonemic Awareness; average = 0.61, total score = 10 Therefore, percentage = 0.61/10 Ans. 0.061 = 6.1% (**Ref. Class I)**

2. **Median Score:** As the name implies the middle number of a group of numbers; that is, half the numbers and half the values that are greater than the median, and half the numbers, half the values that are less than the median. For example the median of 2,3,3,5,7 and 10 is 4 (that is 2,3,**3,5,**7,10; add the two middle numbers and divide by 2; 3 + 5 = 8/2 = Ans. 4. Note, the inputted data on the Excel Spreadsheet, Excel Median Formula was used to calculate the median score of each assessment.

Terms of Reference for a
Baseline study for language and early literacy in primary schools in Sierra Leone
December 2012 - February 2013

These are the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the following research mission

Name of study	Baseline study for language and early literacy in primary schools
W&D Project number	251
Partner organization(s) involved	EFSL and CTF-SL
Contact persons EFSL/ CTF	Rev. Jonathan Titus Williams & Mr. Michael M. Kamara
Leading organization	EFSL
Financing Agency	Alliance Woord en Daad – Driestar Educatief (Woord en Daad lead party)
Contact Person Woord en Daad/ Driestar Educatief	Marike de Kloe / Carla van Hengel, MA
Consultant	Alhajie S. Kanu, assisted by Carla van Hengel
Date of Application	December 11, 2012

1. Background information

At the end of 2009, *Woord en Daad* and *Driestar Educatief*, a Dutch Christian teacher training college entered into a Strategic Alliance. Both organisations want to contribute to the improvement of the quality of schools and education in developing countries, together with partner organisations. Their project group is called Edu4Change and is mainly active in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.

One of the main priorities of Edu4Change of 2012 is the development of an intervention in language-development and language-education. Because language is a broad topic it is preliminary narrowed down to early literacy. In Sierra Leone the present adult literacy rate is 40%, which partly causes a weak reading culture and in rural schools only 17% of the students can recognize all 26 letters by the end of grade 3. Thereby, literacy seems to influence the social empowerment and is necessary for the development of a country. Because second language problems appear to influence the bad literacy situation in schools, we will also focus on this element in developing an intervention.

From December 2012 till February 2013 the focus will be on gathering information in Sierra Leone about the language/literacy level of children of grades 1, 2 and 3 and also of their teachers and on what teachers need to be able to work on an appropriate intervention.

The information is necessary to improve primary grade reading in schools where learning levels are very low. Information gathered from this baseline study can inform the strategies and activities for implementation of the education program of Woord en Daad and its implementing partners in Sierra Leone (incl. a subsidy proposal to institutional donors).

Baseline results on language level of teachers can provide insight and improvement on weak reading culture in schools, impact on student learning outcomes in primary grades, leading to quality of the educational institutions.

Basic literacy is important for individual growth, influences the social empowerment, national development and its critical for continued retention and success in future grades. Reading is critical and necessary precondition for skill development. Children who do not develop reading skills during primary grades are on a life time trajectory of limited educational progress and therefore limited economic opportunity

2. Objectives, expected results and activities
Objectives of the mission:

1. Mapping the current position of early literacy on the following subjects:
   a. Phonemic and alphabetic knowledge and abilities
      i. Identification of sounds in spoken words
      ii. Recognition of the alphabetic letters
      iii. Knowledge of letter sounds
   b. Sight word recognition
      i. Sight word vocabulary
      ii. Onset and rhyme abilities to make words using common patterns and consonants
      iii. Comprehensive reading
      iv. Writing
      v. Interaction with the assessor (oral comprehension)
   c. Abilities to meaning of a text
      i. Writing names
      ii. Writing a sentence (or more) in response to a prompt
2. Mapping the characteristics of schools from where reading experts may be selected
   a. The educational background of the teachers of grades 1, 2 and 3
   b. The teaching skills that are used by teachers of grades 1, 2 and 3
   c. The language level of the teachers of grades 1, 2 and 3
      i. Testing the knowledge of words, grammar and orthography
   d. The ages of teachers of grades 1, 2 and 3
   e. The use of (an)other language(s) except English by teachers of grades 1, 2 and 3
   f. The presence/absence of a library
3. Mapping if teachers need any of the following interventions to teach in grades 1, 2 and 3:
   a. Knowledge of teaching skills for early literacy
   b. Knowledge of teaching skills for L2-pupils
   c. More text books
   d. More reading books
   e. Extra teaching materials
   f. Improvement of their own language skills (for English)
   g. Improvement of their own reading skills

3. Target group:
1. Both government assisted and non government assisted schools in operational areas of partner organisations EFSL and CTF
2. EFSL targeted areas and schools: 10 schools in Bo (6), Pujehun (2) and Moyamba (2)
3. CTF targeted areas and schools: 8 schools in Western Rural Area (Grafton 5) and Bombali District (Makeni 1 and Kamakwie 2)
4. 324 primary school children of grades 1,2 and 3, randomly selected from these 18 schools: 18 per school, 6 per class, gender ratio 3:3
5. 54 teachers for language tests: 3 per school of grade 1,2 and 3

4. Expected results:
Sufficient information to define an appropriate intervention in Sierra Leone, including information about:

   a. the literacy levels of early grade pupils
   b. the requirements for primary grade teachers
   c. the characteristics of schools from which reading experts may be selected
   d. recommendations for selecting potential reading specialist in targeted schools
   e. analysis of language related problems in targeted schools

The results of the survey will also be used for the preparation of a subsidy proposal to an institutional donor.

Activities

1. Writing and discussing the ToR/ Research plan between EFSL/ CTF/ Woord en Daad/ Driestar Educatief and the consultant.
2. Selecting schools by CTF and EFSL
3. Defining methodology and tools by consultant. To be sent to Carla van Hengel for possible adaptations. There needs to be agreement on the methodology and tools by both parties before the research can start.
4. Training of assessment team
5. Conducting the research by the consultant and the assessment team
6. Analysing data by the consultant, with assistance of Carla van Hengel. There needs to be agreed on the analysis of the data by both parties.
7. Writing the draft report and validation of the report by EFSL/ CTF/ Woord en Daad and Driestar Educatief.
8. Writing a final report by the consultant, with assistance of Carla van Hengel.

5. Planning
Proposed schedule:

	Activity	December	January	February
A	Writing and discussing the ToR/research plan between EFSL/ CTF/ WD/ DE and the consultant	■		
B	Selecting schools by CTF and EFSL	■		
C	Defining methodology and tools by consultant, with possible adaptations and confirm of Carla van Hengel		■	
D	Training of assessment team		■	
E	Conducting the research by consultant and assessment team		■	■
F	Weekly reporting to Carla van Hengel		■	■
G	Analysing data by the Consultant, with assistance of Carla van Hengel			■
H	Writing the draft report and validation of the report by EFSL/ CTF/ WD/ DE			■
H	Writing a final report by the Consultant, with assistance of Carla van Hengel			■

6. Debriefing and reporting
The consultant reports on a weekly basis to Carla van Hengel with regards to:

1. The number of pupils/teachers who are tested
2. The questions or items which cause problems
3. The findings of the tests
4. The planning for the following week

After research the data will be analysed and used to write a final report. The report will be sent to EFSL/CTF/ Woord en Daad and Driestar Educatief for validation. After validation, the report will be finalised and sent to the same organisations.

7. Participants
Consultant: Alhajie S. Kanu (CV available)

Carla van Hengel (1986) studied Dutch language and culture at the University of Leiden (the Netherlands). She also completed the Master Dutch as a second language at the University of Amsterdam (2008). She graduated with the designation 'cum laude'.

From 2008 till 2011 Carla worked at Mister Dutch, a testing and integration agency. She worked there as a language expert, a naturalization examiner and later on as a manager. At Mister Dutch she tested and reported the language proficiency and the degree of literacy of immigrants in order to advise them an appropriate language course. At the same time she lectured Dutch as a second language and intercultural communication, which she is still doing, at Driestar Educatief. Carla is involved in the Edu4Change program for the language section.

8. Budget
Paying agency:

Woord en Daad (Edu4change 2012 budget)

- 40% of the total amount will be paid to EFSL after signing the terms of reference (ToR).
- an additional 30% will be paid after the methodology and research tools have been sent to and agreed on by Carla van Hengel
- The remaining 30% will be paid after the final report is received. Condition of this payment is that he report is of sufficient quality which is in accordance with the ToR and validated by EFSL/ CTF and Woord en Daad/ Driestar Educatief.