



# Food For Education: A Path Forward After 10 Years of Learnings

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February 2023

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# Meet the Speakers



**Ellie Morefield, MA**  
USDA



**Camillia "Cami"  
Freeland-Taylor, MA**  
USDA



**Anne Sellers, MA**  
Catholic Relief Services



**Uttara Balakrishnan,  
PhD**  
AIR



**Michaela  
Gulemetova, PhD**  
AIR



**Glynnis  
Melnicove, MPA**  
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**Pooja  
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**David  
Seidenfeld, PhD**  
AIR



**Daniel  
Zaas, MIDP**  
AIR

# Unpacking the Relationship Between Components of Food-for-Education Programming and Literacy Skills

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Michaela Gulemetova, PhD

Uttara Balakrishnan, PhD

Daniel Zaas, MIDP

# Motivation

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- Half of all children in low- and middle-income countries cannot read or comprehend age-appropriate text by age 10 (World Bank, 2019).
- The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to exacerbate this “learning poverty”
- Several evidence syntheses have found that multifaceted interventions have shown promising results (Evans & Acosta, 2021; McEwan, 2015)
- Questions remain about ***which components*** of these literacy interventions are most effective in improving literacy skills

# Research Question

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- What is the relationship between McGovern-Dole Food-for-Education literacy programming components and literacy skills?
  - Focus on McGovern-Dole programs in 4 countries: Liberia, Mali, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), and Cote d’Ivoire

Photo Credit: CRS Lao PDR



# McGovern-Dole Literacy Components

	Teacher training	Training for administrators and government officials	Support from pedagogical trainers	Teacher motivation	Teacher attendance	Extracurricular and community reading events	Capacity strengthening for monitoring and assessment	Advocacy - teacher training	Inclusive education	Provision of literacy materials	Materials by local authors	Engagement with school stakeholder groups	Engagement with caregiver groups	Radio programs
Lao PDR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Liberia			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Côte d'Ivoire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mali	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

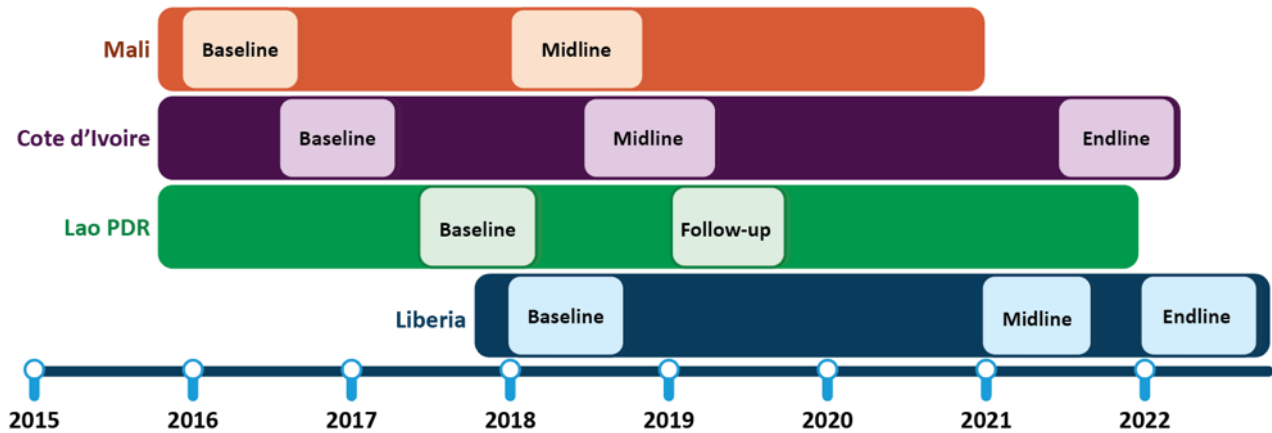
# Methodology and Evaluation Timeline

## Methodology Steps:

- Define outcome variables using early-grade reading assessment tools:  
(a) Oral language skills (b) Decoding/reading comprehension
- Scan existing data and arrive at a list of theory-driven proxy constructs
- Conduct descriptive analyses of literacy components to examine variations
- Run regression to examine correlations: literacy constructs (*independent variable*) on oral language skills and decoding/reading comprehension skills (*dependent variable*) for each country



## Evaluation Timeline





# Theory-Based Constructs

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## School Resources and Activities

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- Borrow books from school (C, La, Li)
- Access to textbooks in the classroom (C, La, Li)
- Access to cards/letters/objects to touch or handle (C, La)
- Access to posters/illustrated reading boards (C, La)
- Hear/read stories at school (La, Li, M)
- Play educational games at school (C, M)
- Ask questions about stories or lessons (La, M)

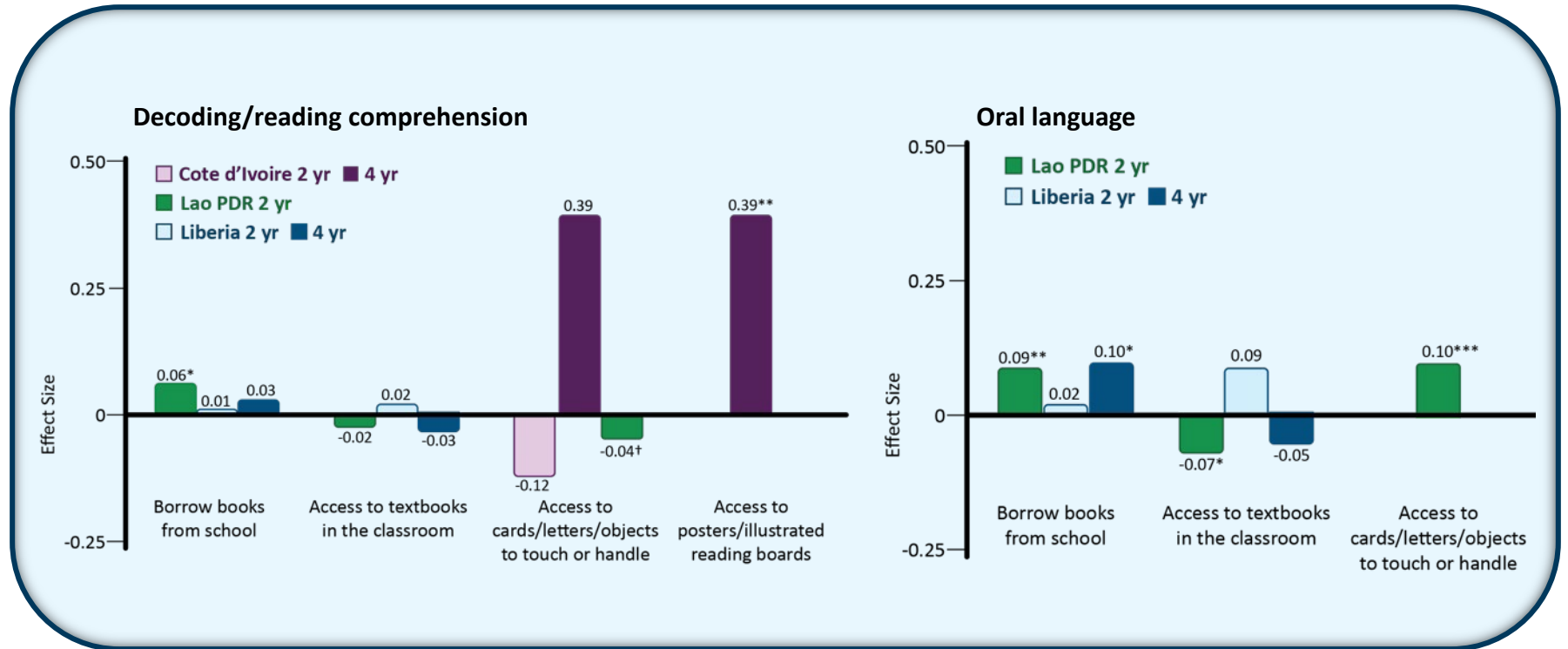
## Home Literacy Activities

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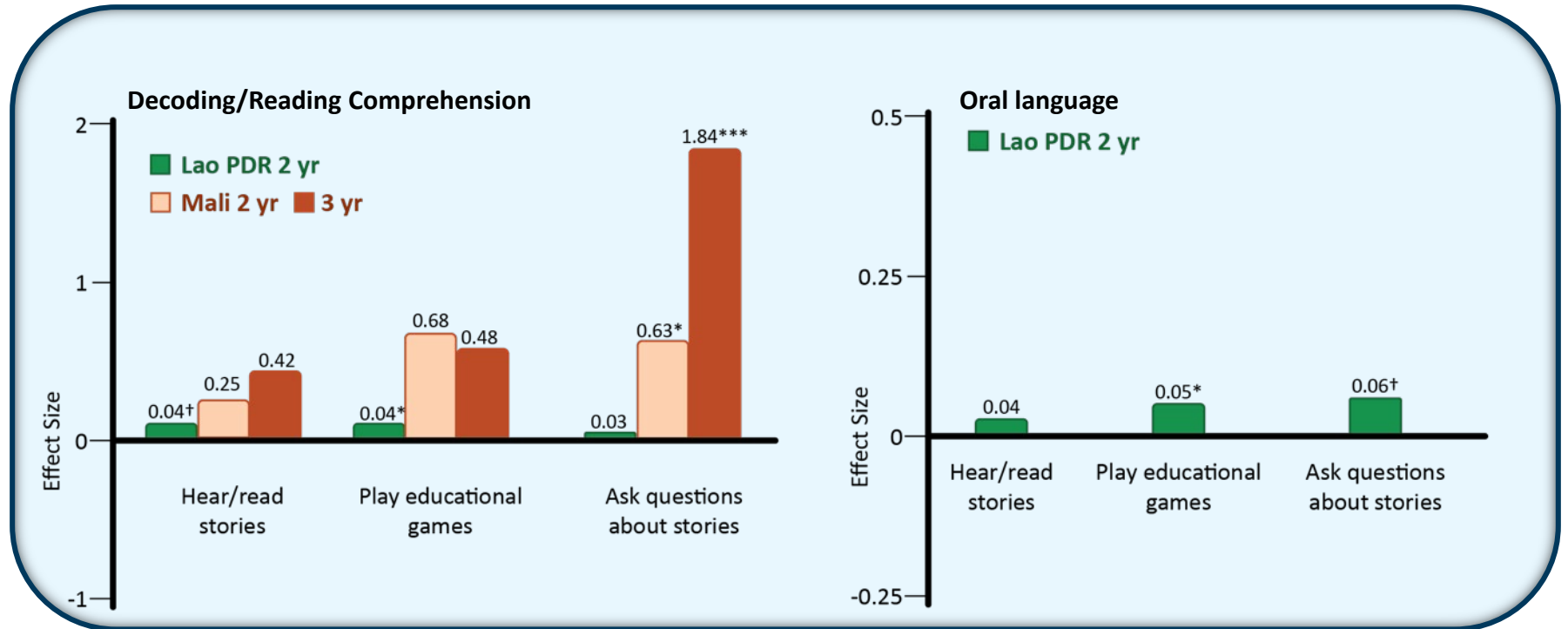
- Read outside of school (C, La, Li, M)
- Access to books at home (C, La, Li)
- Read to child (C, La, Li, M)
- See a family member read at home (La, Li)

*Note.* C = Côte d'Ivoire, La = Lao PDR, Li = Liberia, and M = Mali

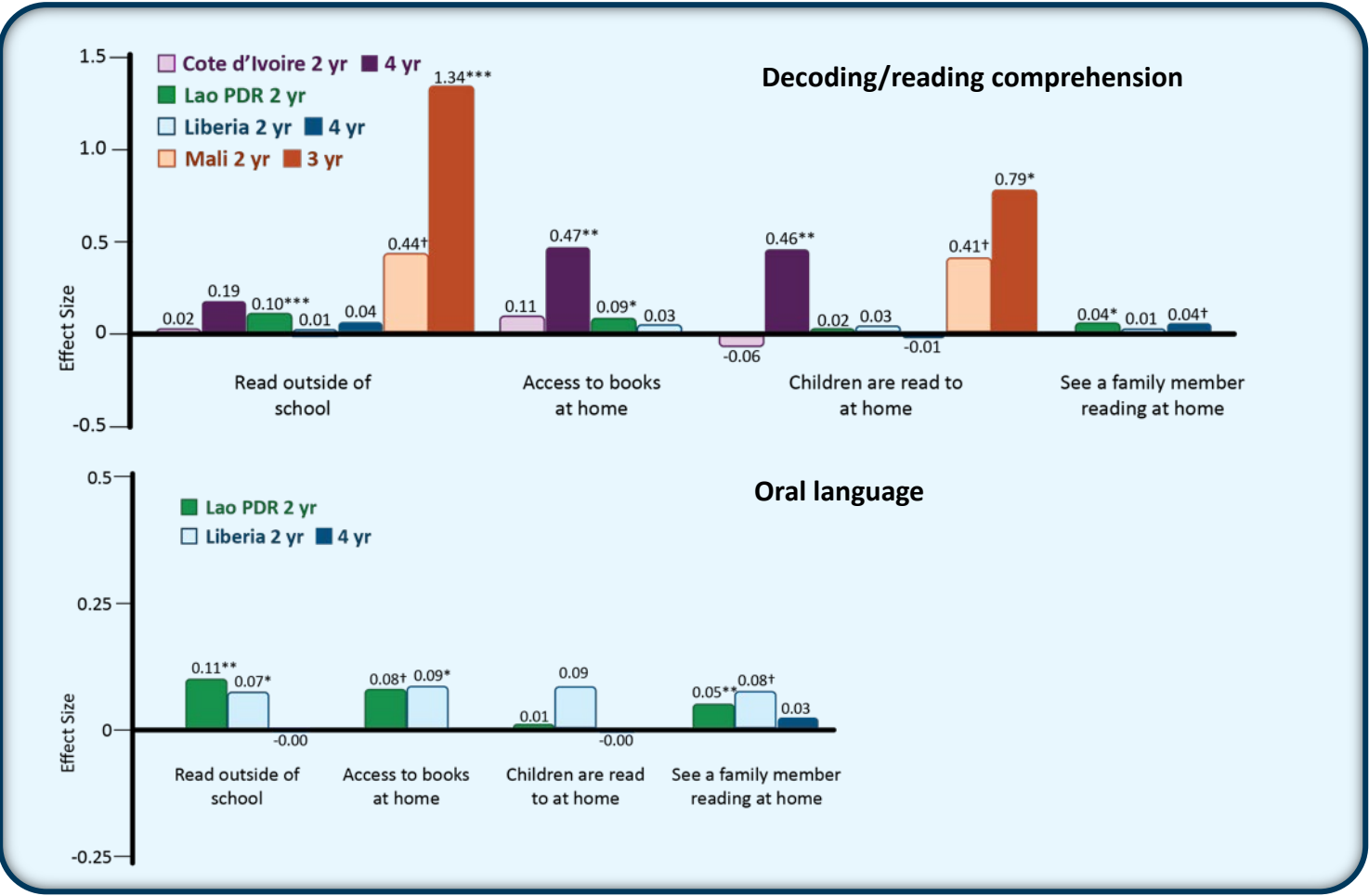
# Access to Grade-Appropriate Books and Reading Materials at School Matters



# Student-Teacher Interaction Is Positively Associated With Higher Literacy Skills



# Home Literacy Environment Is an Important Predictor of Children's Literacy Skills



# Implications

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Consider the students' primary language when developing instructional materials.

Manipulatives and supplementary materials are positively correlated with reading skills but must be culturally and linguistically appropriate.



Training and coaching sessions should encourage two-way student-teacher interactions.

Include reading activities outside of school and integrate parents and caregivers into the student learning process.



# References

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- Evans, D. K., & Mendez Acosta, A. (2021). Education in Africa: What are we learning? *Journal of African Economies*, 30(1), 13-54.
- McEwan, P. J. (2015). Improving learning in primary schools of developing countries: A meta-analysis of randomized experiments. *Review of Educational Research*, 85, 353–394
- World Bank. (2019). Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take? World Bank, Washington, DC.

# COVID-19 Disruptions and School Closures

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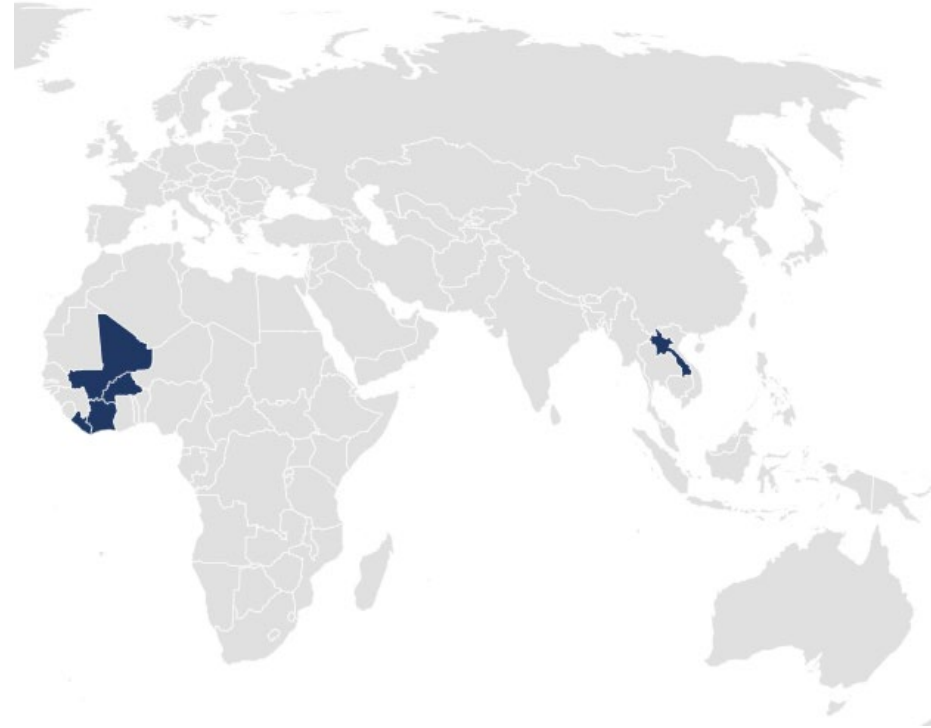
Daniel Zaas, MIDP

Glynnis Melnicove, MPA

# Research Questions

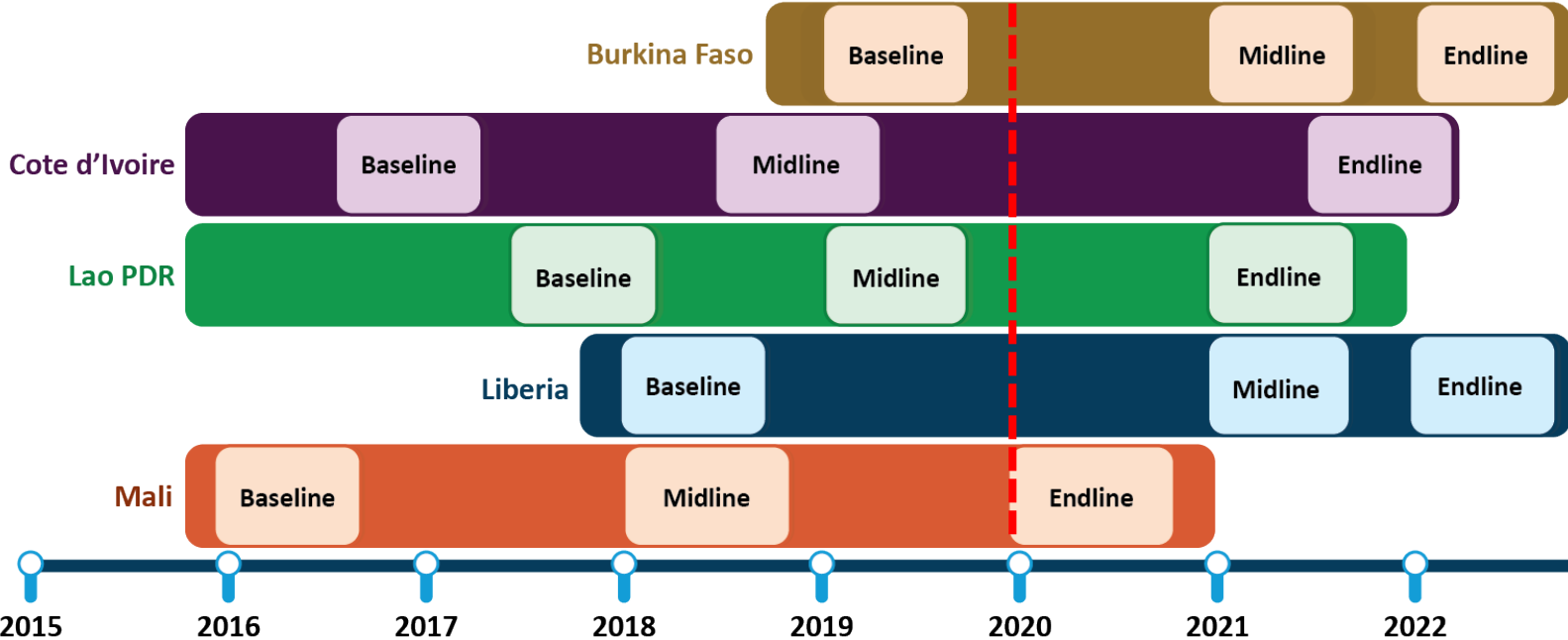
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- What programming adjustments did implementing partners make during the pandemic?
- What were the successes and challenges of these program adaptations?



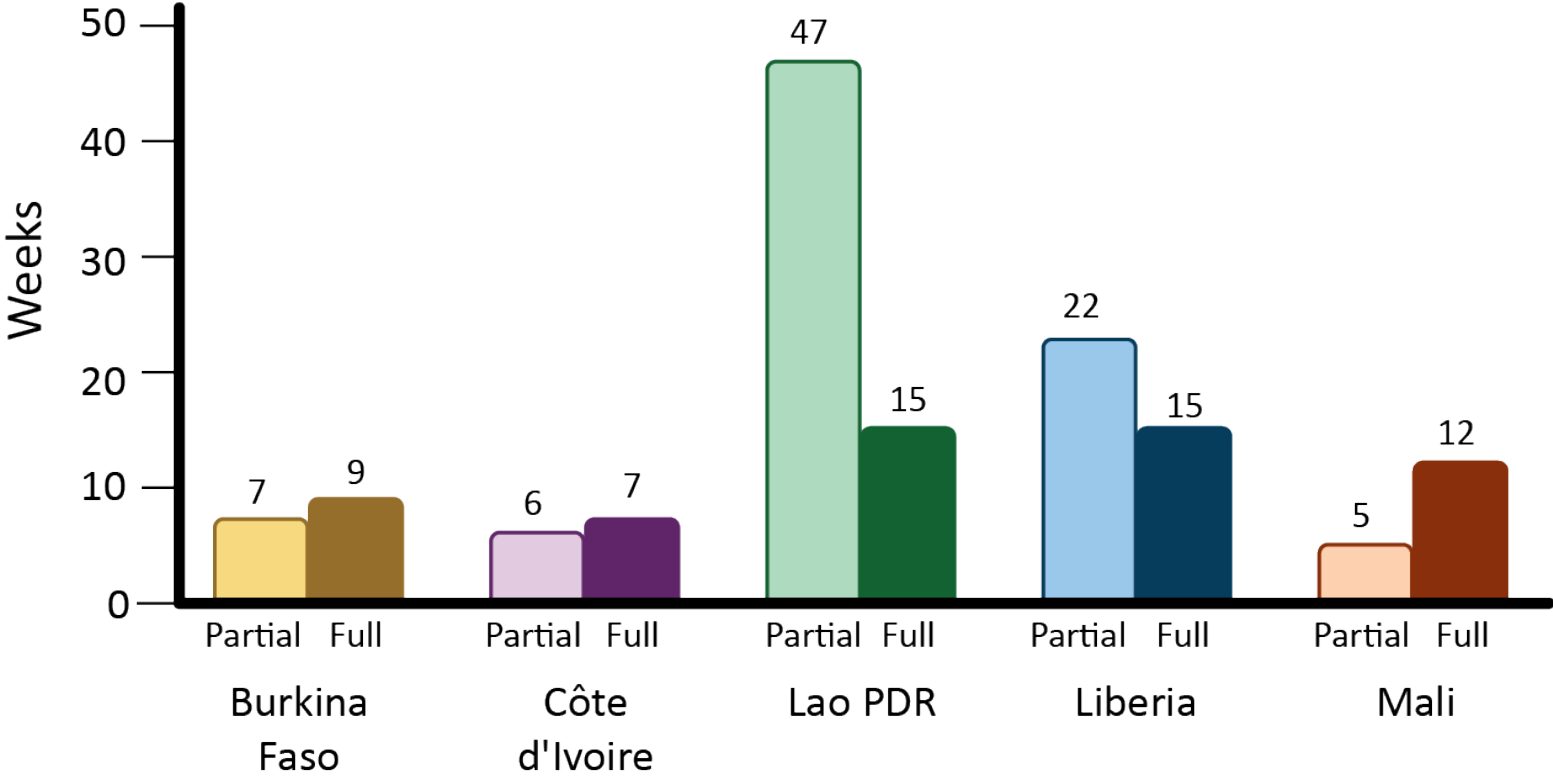


# FFE Evaluation and Program Timelines



Note: Red line depicts beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

# COVID-19 Schools Closures, by Country



Source: UNESCO Country Dashboard. COVID-19 Education Response. 2022

# FFE Program COVID-19 Adjustments

	Delayed activities	Switched to take home rations	At-home learning materials	Radio-based literacy course	Remedial learning activities	COVID-19 prevention messaging	Handwashing kits to schools
Burkina Faso	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Côte d'Ivoire	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lao PDR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Mali	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Program Adjustments Successes

- Relatively few gaps in school feeding with switch to take-home rations
- Provision of handwashing kits and sanitation supplies at schools was well-received and handwashing behaviors improved
- Training on handwashing and health protocols inspired school communities to build handwashing stations, contributing to sustainability mechanisms
- At home learning materials allowed students to continue learning during school closures

Photo Credit: AIR (Mali)



# Program Adjustments Challenges

- Need to revise previous years' content when schools reopened
- Poor connectivity and network quality precluded some from attending meetings which transitioned to virtual meeting space
- Lack of access to technology and inconsistent internet connectivity limited some from participating in virtual learning programs (e.g., radio programs)
- Low levels of parental literacy and social distancing restrictions limited at home learning
- Poor road conditions and infrastructure limited distribution of at home learning materials

Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services (Lao PDR, LEAPS)



# Key Takeaways

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COVID adaptations were perceived to fill some immediate gaps, however, catch up programming was still perceived as necessary

Explore options for remote lessons (e.g., mobile libraries, take-home assignments, radio-based lessons)



Take home rations and distribution of school hygiene kits were perceived as a useful COVID response

# Sustaining the Impacts of Food for Education Programming: A Synthesis of Promising Practices, Challenges, and Recommendations

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Glynnis Melnicove, MPA

# Motivation

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- The Farm Bill stipulates that development outcomes should be sustained by host governments and local communities.
- Sustainability is built into every FFE program as foundational results.
- Sustainability takes a long time and therefore there is little evidence on what works.



Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services (Lao PDR, LEAPS)



# Research Questions

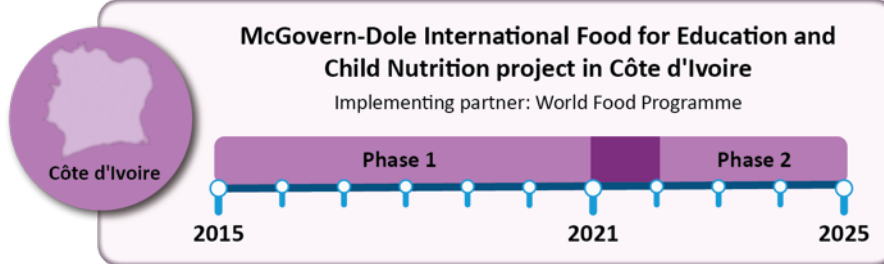
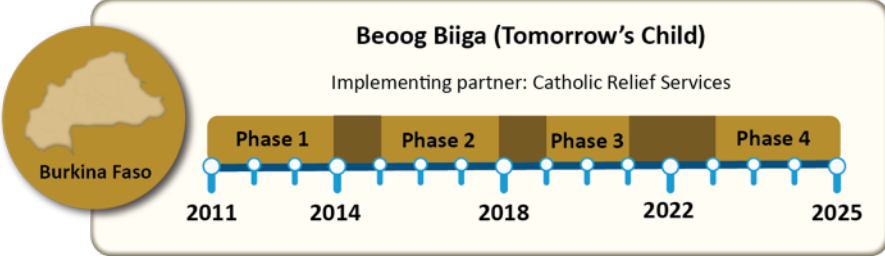
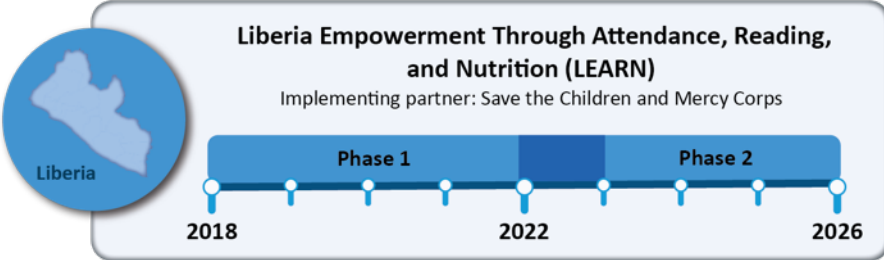
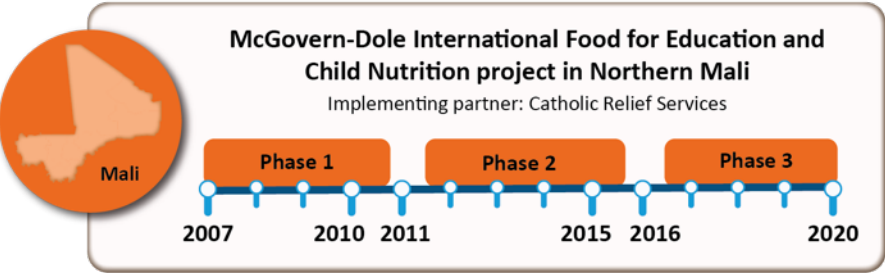
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- What approaches and strategies are being used to promote sustainability and handover?
- Which approaches and strategies show promise?
- What challenges do programs continue to face?
- How can USDA apply lessons learned to promote sustainability across current and future programs?



Photo Credit: AIR (Burkina Faso, BB3/BB4)

# Methodology



# Strategies and Approaches

Components	Details/Description	Burkina Faso	Cote d'Ivoire	Lao PDR	Liberia	Mali
Literacy	Training and capacity building of teachers and school administrators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Literacy champions/reading clubs				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Parent teacher associations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Mentorships	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
	School management committees			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Government capacity building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
School Feeding	Collective fields and school gardens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Government capacity building			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Local and regional procurement				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Savings groups/income generation strategies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Community management committees			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Promising Approaches

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Leveraging  
community-based  
structures



Engaging savings  
and lending  
groups



Incorporating  
livelihood and  
income-generating  
activities



Identifying  
champions of  
change

# Challenges

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- Communities' inability to make contributions to support education or school meals programs
- Insufficient resources to continue monitoring the school meals implementation and literacy initiatives
- Lack of clarity around sustainability plans and processes

Photo Credit: AIR (Liberia, LEARN)



# Implications

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Expand local and regional procurement commitments.

Increase communication and coordination with government and local stakeholders.



Continue to identify and support income-generating activities.

Partner with local universities to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning capacity and evidence generation.



Conduct stakeholder mapping to identify sustainability champions who can continue to support initiatives after the program.

# Applying the Evidence: Foundational Learning Improvement Package (FLIP)

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Pooja Nakamura, PhD

# Motivation

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Accumulated evidence on how to improve foundational learning, sustainably and at-scale

- FFE evaluations
- Evidence syntheses on factors that support foundational learning
- Piloting and evaluating foundational literacy programs with CRS in Guatemala and Lao PDR
- Studies on the role of language in improving learning quality

Photo credit: Lorina Richmond for the [FRAME-India Project](#)







# What Is the Evidence Pointing To?

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- Improve “quality” of instructional inputs
  - Tailor programming to teach in the “right” languages
  - Support teacher professional development, including appropriate design and use of supplementary materials, and structured interactions
  - Group students by skill levels
- Support caregiver/community engagement
- Support remote learning options
- Create strong channels for stakeholder buy-in and ownership for sustainability

Photo credit: [Emmanuel Ikwuegbu](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Foundational Learning Improvement Package (FLIP)

FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning
- Deep focus on language issues



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
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- Deep focus on language issues
- Implemented through existing educational infrastructure and local stakeholders



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
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- Digitization – as appropriate



Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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FLIP is a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy improvement package

- Full teacher toolkits linking classroom-based assessments and instruction
- Based on a science of learning
- Deep focus on language issues
- Implemented through existing educational infrastructure and local stakeholders
- Digitization – as appropriate
- Implementation hand-in-hand with research

Photo credit: [Yannis H](#) on [Unsplash](#)





# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

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## Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom



Classroom-Based Reading Assessments






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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom



Classroom-Based Reading Assessments

<b>Légende</b>		A besoin de beaucoup d'attention particulière		A besoin d'une attention particulière		N'a pas besoin d'attention particulière
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Noms des élèves	Niveaux des compétences de lecture et d'évaluation formative											
	Connaissance du vocabulaire oral			Conscience phonologique			Décodage			Compréhension de la lecture		
Seuils	0-3	4-7	8-10	0-4	5-8	9-11	0-5	6-10	11-16	0-1	2-3	4
												

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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

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Classroom-Based  
Reading Assessments



Full Package of  
Pedagogical  
Interventions Linked  
with Assessments  
Results

Photo credits: (left to right) [Zach Vessels](#) on [Unsplash](#); Elizabeth Spier; [Husniati Salma](#) on [Unsplash](#) ; [Yogendra Singh](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

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Classroom-Based  
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Supplementary  
Materials

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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

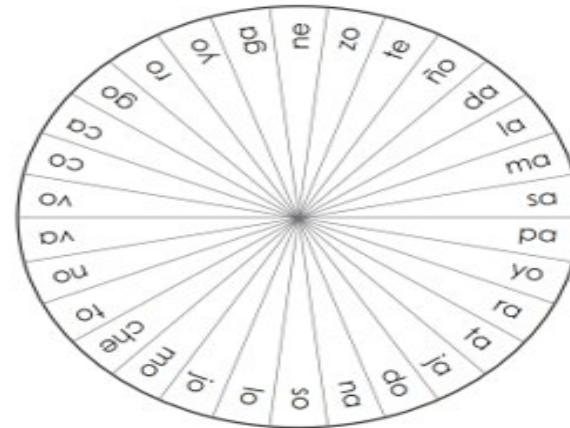


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# Key Components of FLIP in the Classroom

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Classroom-Based  
Reading Assessments



Full Package of  
Pedagogical  
Interventions Linked  
with Assessments  
Results



Supplementary  
Materials



Continuous teacher  
training, coaching,  
and support

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# Implementing FLIP in Benin With CRS as Part of Food for Education Programming

## MGD21 Keun Faaba III At-a-glance



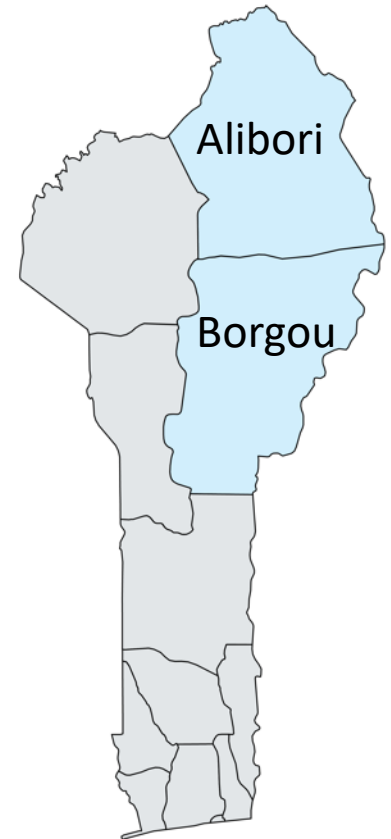
4 communes: Banikoara, Bembèrèkè, Nikki, and Sinendé



175 schools



53,331 students served



## AIR Literacy Activities



- Material development & validation
- Master training and teacher training
- Pilot implementation (60 schools)
  - 127 teachers
  - 60 school directors

# Next Steps

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Photo credit: by [Z](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Next Steps

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- Continue to *apply the evidence* of what ingredients need to come together for improving foundational learning, at scale.
  - Fine-tune and adapt, as needed, in Benin with growing evidence
  - Start implementation of FLIP in Lesotho



Photo credit: by [Z](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# Next Steps

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- Continue to *apply the evidence* of what ingredients need to come together for improving foundational learning, at scale.
  - Fine-tune and adapt, as needed, in Benin with growing evidence
  - Start implementation of FLIP in Lesotho
- Continue to *generate evidence*
  - Ingredients for quality of teaching
  - Dosage, duration
  - Scaling and sustainability



Photo credit: by [Z](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Thank you!

Questions? Comments?



Advancing Evidence.  
Improving Lives.

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