OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT 2015–2020
Dear friends and supporters,

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate progress against the most pressing challenges of our generation. The challenges included preventing women from dying in childbirth, stemming the spread of pandemic disease, helping people re-skill for a new economy, and ensuring that all people have access to quality education.

That same year, Pearson decided to put its stake in the ground on the one issue that we believed would have a significant impact on all the rest – illiteracy.

We often refer to illiteracy as the invisible curse because you don’t see it the way you might see poverty or hunger or homelessness, but it’s no less urgent. To understand why Pearson would invest a significant amount of resources in this campaign - £14.2 million over five years – it’s important to understand just how urgent an issue it is:

- One out of every 10 people on this planet cannot read or write a simple sentence (and this number is likely an underestimate).
- Three-quarters of those who cannot read are women.
- Low literacy costs the world $1.19 trillion every year.

And yet for over a decade, the rate of progress on literacy has stalled and in some parts of the world, even declined. Given the magnitude of the challenge and Pearson’s own experience and resources in supporting better outcomes in education, we felt a moral imperative to take action.

Pearson pledged a five-year commitment to a coalition-based campaign for global literacy, Project Literacy. Its aim was to make significant and sustainable advances in the fight against illiteracy by 2030 so that all people—regardless of geography, language, ability, race, class, or gender—could have the opportunity to fulfill their potential through the power of words.

Over the last five years, we have united over 120 partner organizations—partners as diverse as UNESCO, The World Bank, USAID, Microsoft, Worldreader, Room to Read, Doctors of the World, and The Hunger Project. And what we’ve achieved together as a coalition is significant. We have raised awareness of the challenges of illiteracy through influencer and advocate-led cause marketing that has surpassed a reach of 3 billion. And we have supported programs that have directly impacted over 650,000 learners and partnered with social enterprises that are improving access to literacy for over 44 million learners. This impact includes adults who are learning to read for the first time, parents who now have the tools and the confidence to be their children’s first teacher, and children who are better able to access education through improved literacy.

As a campaign and a network, we are encouraged that the number of people unable to read and write globally has decreased over the last five years – from 781 million to 750 million. But that means that a quarter of a billion people are still shut out of opportunities that literacy can provide. This includes 100 million youth who do not have basic literacy skills. The same youth who will be called upon to propel the economy forward as part of the labor force around the world ages into retirement.

Our experience has demonstrated that a challenge as urgent as illiteracy requires a collective impact approach that coalesces the support of a broad range of practitioners, influencers, and funders. We have set a movement in motion. The work will continue to extend the reach of the campaign and facilitate an exchange of knowledge among frontline workers helping make literacy attainable for all.

We hope you stay involved in this movement, too, and explore the pages of this five-year report to see just how far we’ve come.
750,000,000 people can’t read this sentence.¹

**Women** make up 63% of adults who are unable to read and write. ²

**Children** of parents with low literacy skills have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. ³

Of adults with the lowest literacy levels, 43% live in poverty. ⁴

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**OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT**

Since we started in 2015, we've focused on raising awareness and mobilizing action, driving innovation for new solutions, and advancing best practice in the literacy field.

**PROJECT LITERACY AND OUR IMPACT**

- **3 BILLION PEOPLE REACHED**
  (online, print, and broadcast)
- **£14.2 MILLION**
  total investment in the movement with an additional £9 MILLION matched by in-kind support from influencers and partners
- **200,000+ PEOPLE**
  in our Supporter Community
- **200+ ACCESSIBLE READING RESOURCES CREATED**
- **29 PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS**, including Cannes Lions Grand Prix
- **120+ PARTNERS**
- **50,000+ PEOPLE REACHED**
  (online, print, and broadcast)
- **200+ ACCESSIBLE READING RESOURCES CREATED**
- **5 WORKING GROUPS**
  in our Community of Practice
- **7 MAJOR CAMPAIGNS**
- **650,000+ people directly impacted**

**How we do it:**
- Raising awareness and mobilizing action
- Advancing Best Practice
- Innovating for New Solutions

Image: Room to Read
STORIES OF IMPACT

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP: STORIES OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT

SCALING INNOVATION AND MARKET-BASED SOLUTIONS

Wizenoze + Cell-Ed + Project Literacy

Wizenoze founder Diane Janknegt and Cell-Ed founder Dr. Jessica Rothenberg-Aalami went from being complete strangers to fast friends. They met in 2017 at Project Literacy Lab, a partnership between Pearson and Unreasonable Group dedicated exclusively to scaling up ventures that are positioned to close the global literacy gap by 2030. Rothenberg-Aalami said, “Right away our solutions and experiences aligned.”

Wizenoze develops technology that enables learners to search and find relevant and trusted content online that matches their interests and reading skills. Cell-Ed enables learners to acquire literacy, language, and workforce-ready skills through a mobile solution. With their complementary offerings, Janknegt and Rothenberg-Aalami decided to collaborate on upskilling employees. “We’re both driven by the fact that we want people worldwide to increase their reading skills,” said Janknegt. Rothenberg-Aalami’s team works closely with partners who need to deliver on-demand mobile learning to employees, and Janknegt’s team provides curated, readable content matched to an employee’s reading level. Janknegt explained, “Cell-Ed is the way to teach learners how to read and Wizenoze is the way to provide easy-to-read content.” Rothenberg-Aalami added, “We can go from very dense, high-level reading material and with the help of Wizenoze convert that to a readability level for all.”

Both companies have outstanding results. Cell-Ed has a 91% learner approval rating, and 91% of students using Wizenoze had a better learning outcome than their peers who didn’t use it. Janknegt and Rothenberg-Aalami both felt supported through the Project Literacy Lab, and have continued to work together to reduce illiteracy. “It was just ideal that we were partners,” said Rothenberg-Aalami. Janknegt couldn’t agree more.
Our Collective Impact

Images: courtesy of The Unreasonable Group, Wizenoze, and Cell-Ed

Literacy Matters because... It’s THE LIFELINE
UNESCO + Project Literacy

The digital divide looks different today than it did in the past. The primary cause of the gap now is not cost barriers or limited technical access, it's limited skills.

UNESCO participated in Project Literacy to join a partnership committed to improving understandings about how technology might be developed to better accommodate people with minimal education and low levels of literacy.

Under the Project Literacy banner, UNESCO and Pearson launched an initiative called ‘Improved Livelihoods in a Digital World’. It sought to examine how technology solutions - outside of education - can be made more inclusive, accessible and usable for low-skilled, low-literate youth and adults, and those who cannot read or write.

The work documented 14 case studies to share specific examples of technology projects that have successfully targeted and benefited low-skilled users in developing countries. Extracting lessons from the case studies and a larger landscape review, UNESCO produced guidelines that are helping technology pioneers build more inclusive digital solutions. These solutions enable users with emerging literacy skills to discover life-changing portals to information, social services, and community engagement, while simultaneously providing reasons and means to improve foundational literacy skills.

The UNESCO-Project Literacy case study on Talking Book, an audio device by Amplio that can hold a library of informational content, offers one example of the many ways thoughtful product design and content can make technology more inclusive. Talking Book's technology works in villages with no electricity or network, providing rural and remote communities with access to life-changing knowledge like health, agricultural, and financial strategies. The Talking Book program has reached over 400,000 users in Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda. Cliff Schmidt, the founder of Amplio, said, "In working with UNESCO and Project Literacy, we found organizations that truly understand the reality and unique challenges behind using technology to reach people who are illiterate."

The UNESCO partnership with Pearson allowed the two organizations to identify and share strategies to meet the digital needs of underserved populations. "We know that once someone starts using digital technology, a virtuous circle is created where users begin to build literacy skills and take an educational step forward. We wanted to help technology providers jumpstart this virtuous cycle," said Mark West, a project officer at UNESCO. West examines how technology can be leveraged to improve educational opportunities.

The Guidelines have achieved international recognition since their launch in 2018 and are used by numerous technology and donor organizations to better tailor digital services so they can benefit low literate people.
LEVERAGING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO EMPOWER PARENTS

Worldreader + Results for Development + Project Literacy

If you read to a child in their pre-literate days, the learning outcomes for the rest of that child’s life are changed. In a world of educational unknowns, Luke Heinkel, Senior Program Officer at Results for Development, is certain about that fact. How, then, does one encourage caregivers to read to their children? That question was at the root of Heinkel’s work with Pearson’s Project Literacy and Worldreader, a non-profit championing digital reading in underserved communities.

In 2015, Worldreader, Project Literacy, and global development non-profit Results for Development (R4D) launched Read to Kids, a digital reading pilot that promotes the school readiness of young children by empowering caregivers to read aloud to them via mobile phones. Worldreader designed and developed the WorldReader Kids app, and R4D used an adaptive learning approach to ask critical questions about digital literacy in India. WorldReader also partnered with influential community-based organizations across Delhi to foster a habit of reading to children. Trying to change home literacy environments is challenging, but the diversity of partners, undoubtedly, helped.

Worldreader brought Read to Kids to Syrian refugees in Jordan and the program will expand to Peru next. Wendy Smith, Director of Education at Worldreader, credits Pearson for bringing publishing and the evidence generation from R4D closer to nonprofits. “If we want to move the needle on education, in these very difficult settings, it’s going to take everyone—public, private, tech, and traditional education systems—rolling up their sleeves so we know what’s working and what’s not. Read to Kids was a great model for everyone and certainly one that should be replicated.”

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HIGHLIGHTS

EVOKE: YOUTH-CENTERED SOLUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

EVOKE: Leaders for Literacy takes a game-based learning platform originally developed by the World Bank and uses it to improve youth literacy in South Africa by leveraging young people as social innovators.

CREATING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

In 2018, Project Literacy and R4D established a global community of practice that virtually convenes literacy practitioners in 20 countries to tackle barriers to closing the literacy gap. These implementers, researchers, and funders identified common challenges facing literacy programs and are co-creating free, public solutions.

CAMPAIGNING FOR AWARENESS: GIVE YOUR WORD

In 2017, Project Literacy highlighted the story of Wanda, who did not learn to read and write until she was an adult. She was encouraged by her desire to read stories to her children. On International Literacy Day, we celebrated her literacy journey by publishing her first book, The Little Chicken Named Pong-Pong, which was downloaded over 3,000 times, and read aloud by actor and activist, Idris Elba.

READING PARTNERS: REACHING MORE LEARNERS

Reading Partners helps children become lifelong readers by empowering communities to provide individualized instruction with measurable results. Pearson, as part of the Project Literacy campaign, made a three-year commitment to help expand and deepen Reading Partners programs across the country. Since our partnership launched in 2015, we have helped the organization serve 26% more elementary school students in 73% more schools and reading centers, ultimately providing an increase of 30% more tutoring sessions.

Follow along at r4d.org

Learn more at readingpartners.org

Learn more at allchildrenreading.org/solutions/leaders-for-literacy

Download the book at projectliteracy.com/rewritinglives
BOOK BOOST: ACCESS FOR ALL CHALLENGE

Around 250 million children of primary school age are unable to recognize basic letters and numbers. For the millions of children with disabilities that impact their use of traditionally printed material, the shortage of quality books in accessible formats is even worse. To address these challenges, we launched Book Boost: Access for All Challenge with All Children Reading to drive innovation in accessible publishing. The winners, eKitabu and SIL LEAD have produced more than 200 books and reading resources for learners with varying abilities.

Learn more at allchildrenreading.org/competitions

Download the guidelines at rb.gy/29xoas

REACHING LEARNERS EARLY

Through support from Pearson, Too Small To Fail, an initiative of the Clinton Foundation, partnered with Univision and Text4Baby to conduct research into the best practices in mobile texting programs to engage parents and caregivers. We’ve also supported research by Jumpstart on the value of texting as a low-cost, low-effort activity to promote family engagement.

Follow their work at toosmall.org and jstart.org

WORKFORCE ATLAS: ADVANCING LITERACY FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Workforce Atlas, a platform developed in partnership with ProLiteracy, is an online careers pathway platform. It assesses adult learners’ literacy, numeracy, and workplace skills before directing them to recommended occupations, online resources and local providers that can help them achieve their aspirations. To date, the platform has been piloted with 239 adults across the United States and will continue to scale in the coming year.

Learn more at workforceatlas.org
OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LITERACY FIGHT

LEARNINGS AND OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE TEAM

Over the last five years, we’ve learned a lot about running a global advocacy campaign and programs. We’re sharing those learnings with you now, in the hopes that you apply them and share them with others.

LEARNINGS

- Partner with social entrepreneurs. They are a key part of the solution with their innovative, highly scalable, and financially sustainable solutions.
- Harness the power of influencers. Find your champions, arm them with the facts, and let them use their voice to support you.
- Apply an innovation mindset and approach to social impact. Our orientation towards trying things and learning along the way led to impactful new learnings for the literacy field.

OPPORTUNITIES

- POLICY CHANGE
  While we focused on public advocacy which can impact policy, we did not focus specifically on influencing policy change to support literacy. There’s still a great need to do more of this.
- FOUNDATIONS
  We are proud to have partners from many different sectors, and yet we realize that we have had limited collaboration with foundations. Together, alongside governments, nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, and companies from the private sector, we can create the maximum momentum and impact for literacy.
- SPREADING ACCESS
  In our last year and a half leading Project Literacy, we joined forces with Results for Development to create five working groups. They have created tools that serve the literacy field. The opportunity is to help spread access and usage of these free tools.
The Project Literacy movement has included some of the world’s greatest innovators, practitioners, and researchers. We know that literacy is key to unlocking talent and leadership to solve the world’s biggest challenges, and we’re proud to have worked with over 120 diverse organizations.

28 Too Many
826 National
Achievement for All
Action on Addiction
Afriipads
Angara
Asia Foundation
Beeline Reader
The Big Issue
Foundation
Book Aid International
Book Trust
Books Beyond Words
Breakthrough
Collaborative
Bulverde Spring
Branch Library
Foundation (BSBL)
Cell-Ed
CENPEC
Center for Literacy
Cradles to Crayons
Curious Learning
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia
Doctors of the World
UK
Edon
Edovo
Emote
Emotion
EQtainment
Extreme Dialogue
Feed the Minds
Fight for Peace
First Book
Fondazione per la Scuola della Compagnia di San Paolo
Football Beyond Borders
Garvag
Guten
Hackney Pirates
IAGUPM
Impact Network
Indy Reads
Iowa City Public Library
Iris Speaks
Jumpstart
Karadi Path
KickUp
Kingo
Kodable
Lanka Jathika
Learning Games Studios
Lessons for Life
Foundation
Letras
Library for All
Lightsal
Literacy Action
Literacy Inc.
Literacy Partners
Literator
LitWorld
Livox
Mary Ward Center
Microsoft
Ministry of Stories
Minnesota Literacy Council
NEI Foundation
National Braille Press
National Literacy Trust
NF
Office of Adult Education, City of Philadelphia
Parent-Child Home Program
Pearson
Pencils of Promise
Pratham Books
Project Literacy of Bergen County
ProLiteracy
Raising a Reader
Reach Out and Read
READ Alliance
Read Easy UK
Reading is Fundamental
Reading Partners
Reading Rescue
Robbie Al
RocketLit
Room to Read
San Francisco Education Fund
Shannon Trust
SpeakM2Oalities
Stones2Milestones
SunCulture
TabLab
Tales2go
Team Read
The Beat Within
The Dream Center
The Hunger Project
The Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF)
The Literacy Lab
The Reading Agency
ThinkCerca
Too Small To Fail
True North
Ubongo
Un Milion de Niños
Lectores
UNESCO
Unreasonable Group
USAID
Veerni Institute
War Child UK
We Need Diverse Books
Western Cape Primary Science Programme
Wizenaze
Womankind
Worldwide
World Literacy Foundation
World Vision
Worldreader

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1Child 1Book
Aga Khan Rural Support Program
Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development
BeeLine Reader
Beyond the Classroom
Book Aid International
Bridge/Coalition for Quality Education WC
Cardinal Educational and Development Initiative
Cell-Ed
Chemonics International
Child Dream Foundation
Classroom, Inc.
Fabretto Children’s Foundation
FACE for Children in Need
Family Support and Rescue Organization
Feed the Minds
Fight for Peace
Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative
Harvard Libraries
Impact Network International
Indus Action
Iris Speaks
Jumpstart
Kenya Society for the Blind
Kidogo Innovations
Learning Games Studios
Lessons for Life
Literacy Trust
Literacy4All
Little Rock ECD Center
LitWorld
Luganda Lusoga Lugwere
Vehicular Cross-border Language Commission
Magic Bus India Foundation
National Centre for School Leadership
National Literacy Trust
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Pencils of Promise
Pizza Hut
Power 2
Prikkle Academy
Project Literacy of Greater Bergen County
Queen Rania Foundation
ReadABook Nigeria Initiative
Reading Partners
Sightsavers
STIR Education
Stones2Milestones
Tai Solarin University of Education
The Click Foundation
The Parent-Child Home Program
The Reach Trust
Tushinde Children’s Trust
Ubongo Learning
VVOB
Wagon Strategies
Wangoh Dynamics
Technologies
We Love Reading
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Australian Council for Educational Research
People’s Action for Learning Network
PRO Literacy
Room to Read

Image: Leif Redmond, Results for Development
Project Literacy campaign support totaled £12.4 MILLION

As convener and founding partner of Project Literacy, Pearson contributed £14.2 million from 2015 to 2020 with additional matching support of £9 million from media, non-profit, corporate, and individual sources.
Our founding partner

Pearson is the world’s learning company, with expertise in educational courseware and assessment, and a range of teaching and learning services powered by technology. Pearson products and services are used by millions of teachers and learners around the world every day.

Our mission is to help people make progress in their lives through learning — because we believe that learning opens up opportunities, creating fulfilling careers and better lives.