L3 SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

Learning Paper

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Introduction

*L3 and Concern Worldwide*

Since 2011, Concern Worldwide in Rwanda (hereafter referred to Concern) has been implementing the school-community component of the Literacy, Language and Learning (L3) Initiative implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC) and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objective of the programme is to improve literacy and numeracy among early grade learners. The entry point for Concern’s work is with the School General Assembly Committee’s (SGAC), formally known as Parent Teacher Committees (PTCs).

The overall goal of the L3 programme is to strengthen teaching and learning so that children leave primary school with solid literacy and numeracy skills. There are five key expected results:

- **Result 1** Improved quality of teaching
- **Result 2** Improved availability of teaching and learning materials
- **Result 3** Support for English learning
- **Result 4** Strengthened ministry capacity
- **Result 5** Improved equity in education

Concern deliverables are linked to results 1, 2 and 5. They include:

- Delivery of a package of training to enhance community support for the delivery of quality education, with particular emphasis on teacher motivation
- Enhancing the culture of reading and promotion of equity in education within the community
- Scale-up of SGAC support for teacher motivation and student literacy nationwide

*(Scaled down to 12 districts – see programme evolution section)*

**Purpose of the Paper**

This learning paper is a review of Concern’s four years of implementation of school-community partnership activities within the L3 consortium. It assesses the impact of Concern’s support to school-community partnerships in improving early grade literacy and enhancing the culture of reading in Rwanda, highlights key achievements and opportunities, proposes solutions for addressing barriers and challenges to improving literacy in education, and presents recommendations for future programming and scale-up.

**Implementation Background: Evolution of the school-community component of the L3 programme**

The deliverables for which Concern Worldwide was originally responsible were to develop School General Assembly Committees (SGAC) then referred to as Parent Teacher Committees (PTC) training manuals. Following implementation of a pilot phase (6 schools in Bugesera District in 2012, with an additional 4 districts added in 2013), Concern supported the roll-out of SGAC training by training School Based Mentors (SBMs) to provide cascade training to SGAC members. Concern’s responsibility would then be to work directly with the communities and SGACs to ensure maximum impact of the intervention.
Under Law No 23/2012, School General Assembly Committees (SGACs) are an organ for School Management of which its members are elected by the school general assembly. The committees consists of parents (chair and deputy chair-serving 2-3 years), head teacher, teachers, a school admin staff, 2 stent representatives and a school owner( government subsidized or private school). These are over seen by the District Vice-Mayor or his/her designate as an ex officio. The committees’ responsibilities include to; convene and preside over the School General Assembly; monitor the implementation of the decisions taken by the School General Assembly; monitor compliance with laws, orders and instructions governing the school; take part in the management of the school assets; analyze the school action plan; follow up the discipline and conduct of school authorities, teachers and students; analyse major problems facing the school and propose solutions; perform such other tasks as assigned by the School General Assembly; and submit a report to the School General Assembly.  

REB under the Department of school leadership and management unit is responsible for the follow up of SGACs activities alongside Sector Education Officers. REB was crucial in approving the L3 BCC posters on literacy as well as the BCC materials on equity in education.

However, in the latter part of 2012 and early 2013, the parameters of Concern’s responsibilities changed. As the focus of the REB School Based Mentor Programme (SBMP) programme shifted to embedding English as a language of instruction, it was decided that the SBMs should only focus on supporting English in schools. As a result, they could no longer be used for providing cascade training to SGACs. Concern was tasked with filling this gap, and therefore with providing the training directly to SGACs.

The budget allocated to Concern was not adjusted to accommodate the expanded scope of its new responsibilities, and therefore compromises had to be made in terms of how many SGAC members could be trained per school. This required Concern to train 40% of all primary school SGACs in Rwanda by the end of the programme. Taking into account the associated time constraints and logistical challenges, as well the capacity of Concern staff to manage such a large scope of work, it was decided to focus on 12 of the 30 Districts of Rwanda, equating to 1,057 schools, 4,834 SGAC members, 163 SEOs and 12 DEOs trained over the course of the programme. The following districts were ultimately selected for intervention: Bugesera (81 schools), Burera(90 schools), Gisagara(64 schools), Huye(88 schools), Karongi(123 schools), Kayonza(89 schools), Muhanga(108 schools), Nyamagabe(102 schools), Nyanza(81 schools), Nyaruguru(80 schools), Ruhango(69 schools), and Rulindo(82 schools). Districts were targeted based on their poverty profile and whether or not they were one of the original pilot districts.

The community follow-up and support element of Concern’s original deliverables suffered as a result of this shift, as the majority of Concern’s time and budget was now dedicated to training and coordination due to the demands and scale of the programme.

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1 N°23/2012 of 15/06/2012 Law governing the organization and functioning of Nursery, Primary and Secondary Education
Concern had to think of logical ways to efficiently and effectively manage this additional responsibility within the same budget and the same staffing capacity, without making unacceptable compromises on programme quality and sustainability.

To address these new challenges, Concern held dedicated introductory meetings in each district to promote understanding and ownership of the programme by District Education Officers (DEOs) and Sector Education Officers (SEOs), and thereby ensure the involvement of SEOs in the planning and preparation of SGAC trainings as well as the organisation of literacy campaigns and literacy days in target districts.

Concern also provided support to SEOs in monitoring programme progress through regular follow-up of activities and M&E meetings and ensured that SEOs were fully involved in the selection of the best initiatives in teacher motivation and equity in education for financial awards as highlighted in sections below.

To address the gap left by SBMs, who would no longer be able to act as SGAC trainers, Concern contracted Community Based Facilitators (CBFs) directly from the community to provide the cascade trainings. Concern trained and coached these 19 CBFs to perform their role as facilitators and supported them in all training activities.

Thanks to these strategies, Concern was able to increase the number of SGAC members trained per school from 2 in 2013 to 5 in 2014 to-date. Furthermore, literacy events were decentralised from the district level to the school and Sector level, thereby ensuring opportunities for community members to participate more in these events.

**Methodology**

This paper draws its analysis principally from qualitative consultations – through consultative sessions, individual key informant interviews and qualitative surveys, collecting observations and recommendations from key stakeholders in the programme, including the Rwanda Education Board (REB), District and Sector Education Officers (DEOs and SEOs), Community Based Facilitators (CBFs), SGACs, parents, teachers, children and Concern Worldwide.

As EDC has its own M&E department, which collects information on programme progress on behalf of all partners, this serves to complement the qualitative data already collected by EDC.

Rationale: district that had been in the programme longer more than 2 years where impact could be assessed i.e not representative. wanted to see if we addressed the barriers identified in the beginning of programme

Baseline survey

a. Consultative sessions

From the 28th January 2016, consultative sessions were held in selected target key stakeholders beginning with Muhanga district to collect feedback on the school-community partnership component of the L3 programme. Only those who had been working with Concern since 2014 were invited from each Sector to ensure that medium- to long-term impact could be taken into account.
while comparing schools that received financial support for teacher motivation initiatives and those that did not. During the workshops, participants were divided into six stakeholder groups: 1) 7 District Education Officers (DEOs), 2) 10 Sector Education Officers (SEOs); 3) 10 School General Assembly Committee (SGAC) parents, 4) 10 SGAC teachers, 5) 10 SGAC head teachers and 6) 6 Community Based Facilitators (CBFs). A facilitator was assigned to each group to guide discussions through a set of tailored questions. Stakeholders were asked to share their ideas and opinions on the successes and challenges of the programme, as well as to provide recommendations for programme improvement. Particular effort was made to discuss the impact of the programme on L3’s expected results.

b. Individual interviews
From 7th-11th March 2016, Concern field staff conducted individual interviews with 21 parents, 24 teachers (non-SGAC) and 11 children from a sample of 11 L3 primary schools that had been awarded teacher motivation grants: Cyamukuza, Gisorora, Kagarama, Kirehe Catholic, Magi, Mbogo, Mukiza, Mujuga, Munyegera, Muyange, and Nkumbure. The following week, Concern conducted interviews with 11 parents (mothers), 5 teachers and 11 children from 3 additional schools that were awarded equity grants: Sanza, Ngarama and Kotana. These interviews sought to collect first-hand insights about the benefits, effectiveness and impact of the grants, based on their perceptions.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted with Rwanda Education Board (REB) officials in school leadership management unit who provided high-level insights on the successes and challenges of L3 implementation. Also, feedback from Concern education staff was sought and incorporated in the learning paper.

c. Digital Data Gathering surveys
From 7th-11th March 2016, Concern field staff used Digital Data Gathering (DDG) devices to collect data on literacy behaviour and the impact of the L3 literacy posters distributed by the programme, in the same 11 schools visited for the individual interviews. In total, 177 children, 27 parents and 27 teachers were surveyed.

Measuring the impact of the L3 programme against expected outcomes

Outcome 1: Teacher motivation

Background
5 of the 11 members of each SGAC (usually the SGAC president, head teacher, a teacher representative, the school owner- government subsidized schools who were trained by the programme-, and SEO) were included in the SGAC training provided by Concern. Of the 4 days of training, one day was dedicated to teacher motivation, with a focus on ‘soft motivation’ support, such as recognition of teachers and facilitating, appreciating their work, rather than financial reward.

As part of the training, participating SGAC members developed an action plan with concrete ideas for motivating the teachers in their schools, such as sensitising parents to visit their children in school, follow up on their children’s progress and conduct in the classroom, communicate and collaborate with teachers, attend meetings, and implement IGAs that contribute to teachers’ morale and wellbeing. Progress on these action plans was then monitored by Concern staff with the support of SEOS using specially designed monitoring tools. In addition, the L3 programme provided
financial awards to schools with the best initiatives to improve teacher motivation. 174 grants were awarded to the best performing income generating activities.

**Analysis of stakeholder feedback**

All 51 participants in the consultative session gave the L3 programme a mark of 4 or higher out of 5 for teacher motivation, and many cited improved teacher morale as the most important positive outcome of Concern’s inventions in the L3 programme. They described the multitude of simple ways in which parents and the wider community are now shouldering responsibility for their children’s education and showing appreciation for teachers, including visiting their children at school and following up on their academic performance, ensuring children are equipped for school, helping children with revision instead of making them work after school, inclusion of teachers in school governance, providing free tea and/or lunch to teachers on school days, giving gifts and certificates to teachers whose children are achieving good examination results, increased communication and collaboration between teachers and parents to solve problems in schools and developing income-generating projects for teachers.

According to L3 stakeholders, these simple acts go a long way in improving teacher motivation. As the Huye DEO explained; “Thanking teachers at public gatherings, as advised by the L3 programme, has had a significant impact in terms of changing community mentalities and perceptions towards teachers and teaching, which is traditionally seen as a lesser, unworthy profession.”

An SEO added, “For the first time, parents are being encouraged to consider teachers’ livelihoods and quality of life. This has in turn allowed them to recognise the value of starting income-generating activities in order to develop and improve teacher wellbeing. I have personally observed these changes translate into a strong bond between teachers and parents, and as a result teachers are now happily carrying out their responsibility to provide the best quality education that they can.”

The teachers themselves echo these sentiments. Theogene Nzeyiki, a teacher at Kagombyi Primary School in Karongi District, says: “I no longer hear the common jokes that parents use to make, such as saying that their income could pay the salaries of three teachers. In fact, when the SGAC becomes aware of a parent with a poor attitude towards teachers, they now report him or her to the Sector authorities.” Ferdinand Nsengimana, the head teacher at Mutunda Primary School in Huye District, notes that before the trainings, only one or two parents would pay for extra lessons, whereas now, 103 children are benefiting from paid extra lessons in preparation for national primary leaving exams.

However, Zebedee Mutuze, a teacher at Mutunda Primary School, cautions that “although much has been achieved, unfortunately there are some parents who still have little consideration for education. These parents still send their children to school with no school materials, and when the teacher asks the child to bring the parent to school to discuss this, the parents pull their child out of school.”

SGAC presidents agree that there is still some way to go to improve parents’ attitudes and understanding of the importance of education, and also cited poor teacher capacity (despite improved morale) as a significant challenge to improving the quality of education.
3 out of 6 CBFs echo this sentiment, with Sosthene Ntazinda saying, “The current status of teacher motivation is not good enough. Teachers still feel isolated and lack self-confidence, and some simply do not want to work hard. Their low salaries present an additional barrier to motivation. More work needs to be done to improve the relationship between teachers and parents and to increase the level of respect for teachers in society.” Adds Therese Mukangamije: “There is still a need to fully implement the lessons learned from the trainings. Some parents continue to have a poor attitude towards teachers and education. Some children are unmotivated in school because they see their older peers struggle to find employment even if they have completed school. The learning environment is not conducive to a high-quality education.”

Furthermore, of the 24 non-SGAC teachers interviewed in the field, 11 (46%) reported that they did not feel that teachers were appreciated by parents. Several interesting issues were raised, including the 10% mark for “automatic promotion”, whereby children must graduate from every class regardless whether or not they are able to read or write. As mentioned by several teachers during consultative session, automatic promotions has made parents lose trust in teachers because they do not understand how their child can move up a class when they are still unable to read or write.

2 of the 3 REB officials interviewed recognized that improved attitude and commitment of teachers stems from the support provided by parents and systems that have been put in place by the education Sector.

**Recommendations**

**Policy**

In a bid to improve motivation of teachers, respondents recommend that the Concern/L3 approach of supporting initiatives that benefit all teachers collectively should be adopted. Based on Concern’s experience gained in supporting the SGAC, Initiatives like hair salons, livestock rearing, especially dairy cows where they have land, pigs and banana plantations have so far worked well. This will reduce the instances of grievances when a single teacher is rewarded for good performance.

In boosting recognition of teachers’ work by the community, parents and teachers recommend that the set percentage for automatic promotion be reconsidered by government in order to provide enough time for children with academic difficulties to develop the necessary skills for proceeding to the next class. As practiced, Teachers are not expected to exceed the 10% of children who repeat the class. Parents see some children moving to the next class with inadequate reading and writing skills as a failure on the part of the teachers. With such perceptions, teachers are less motivated as parents think haven’t done their part.

Finally, on the basis of numerous stakeholder responses, it is recommended that teaching and learning materials are updated and distributed to schools immediately after changes are made to the national curriculum. Teachers also require refresher training regarding the changes made.

**District/Sector**

District and Sector authorities should develop means of engaging with parents to become more involved in their children’s education; given that Concern’s interventions have triggered a positive trend in many L3 schools and there is still room for improvement.
Outcome 2: Culture of reading

Background
Concern trained and sensitised 5 out of 11 SGAC members on community support to literacy among young children. The training content was developed based on research conducted by Concern in 2012 on community-based barriers to literacy and opportunities to promote reading\(^2\). The findings indicated that some of the barriers to literacy in communities included a lack of basic reading materials, resources and conditions conducive to reading. Conversely, a number of opportunities were also identified for literacy promotion, such as supporting children who are enthusiastic about reading and who want to read and be supported in learning to read, as well as considerable political goodwill around the cause of improving literacy.

On the basis of these findings, SGACs were trained to develop action plans that would help them to improve community support to literacy. The SGACs went on to organise sensitization campaigns to encourage parents and communities to help their children to read, provide them with reading materials, read with their children, and provide them with time and resources, such as light, to read at home.

In addition to these campaigns, Concern supported the planning and organisation of literacy days and reading competitions in schools by providing awards for the best performing contestants. Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) materials were also designed and distributed to schools as a means of raising the awareness of parents and communities about the importance of promoting and supporting literacy.

Analysis of stakeholder feedback
The literacy events and reading competitions were one of the most highly praised components of the L3 programme as a cost-efficient and highly effective means of motivating children to read. Most of the consultative session participants cited the impact of these competitions on improved literacy and increased interest in reading as one of the top three most important positive outcomes of the L3 programme.

The reading competitions have unleashed a positive sense of competitiveness among children, which motivates them to read as much as possible, both in and out of school. Many schools have implemented reading hours in which children read aloud to each other as a result of the interest sparked by the competitions. Furthermore, children are not the only ones motivated by the competitions. As one DEO related, “Parents are clearly motivated by the literacy events and wish to see their children continue to receive gifts and trophies from these competitions, which helps to promote a culture of reading outside school hours.” Many SEOs and SGAC presidents have also observed that parents have started coming to school to borrow books for their children in order to prepare them for competitions, and clear and consistent improvements in children’s reading skills in both Kinyarwanda and English are evident.

\(^2\) Community based barriers and opportunities to promote reading attainment among early grade learners in the rural Southern Province of Rwanda (Research Lead and Report Author: Dr Marty Holland, Centre for Global Development through Education (CGDE) and Rwanda Education Board Lead: Dr. Evode Mukama - Deputy Director General, ICT in Education, REB)- 21/11/2012
Reading competitions aside, SGAC presidents also related how parents in their schools are not only buying books for their children and providing them with dedicated reading time, but many have even joined adult literacy schools so that they can improve their own literacy skills. In one parent’s community in Karongi District, a project called ‘Tubura’ (NGO) has been implemented in their district to ensure that all children have access to a solar-powered light source to read at night. SGAC presidents also described the impact of the L3 training on their own households, with most admitting that they did not previously think reading was important or interesting, but that the training has led them to start a new tradition of dedicated reading and discussion time for the whole family.

REB Director of Unit on School Leadership and Management, Eugene Rukeba, emphasizes that parents’ participation in literacy events and consistent provision of reading materials facilitates excellent performance and this should be encouraged widely. Another official (anonymous) pointed out ‘...attaining basic literacy competencies for every child at an early age is key to learning.’

However, most participants agreed that while the L3 programme has certainly made a difference, there is still a long way to go in building and entrenching a strong culture of reading among Rwandans.

**DDG survey for BCC materials on literacy**

Of the 177 children we surveyed, 169 (95%) reported that they read at home. Of these, nearly 50% read two to three times per week, around 20% read four to six times per week, and another 20% read every day. Of the 8 (0.05%) who do not read at home, 5 (0.03%) said it is because they cannot read.

Of the 27 parents surveyed, 25 reported that they read at home, and 25 said that they had brought home a book for their child to read at some point within the past week, compared to what used to happen in the past, indicating a positive change in the culture of reading.

**Recommendations**

**Policy**

The Ministry of Education should continue to strengthen structures that ensure that all schools have established functional and accessible libraries. These should be well stocked with reading books and accessible to children, teachers and even community members.

**SGAC/School**

SGACs and schools should prioritise action plans that include promoting the culture of reading through strategies such as reading competitions, availing a reading hour to children during class time, and other opportunities designed to encourage children to read.

**Community**

Community and school children should be encouraged by local authorities, schools and other education actors to participate in literacy events and use the existing mobile library system to improve the culture of reading.

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3 Although it is impossible to discern whether this is a direct result of L3 programme initiatives, as the young children are not aware enough of the L3 programme to be able to accurately answer such a question
Outcome 3: Equity in education

Background
5 SGAC members per school were trained on how to improve gender equity and other forms of equity in schools, again based on findings from Concern’s research on barriers and opportunities for literacy. Barriers identified in the research related to gender equity include gendered workloads and expectations as well as biological factors. Other inequities that can hinder school attendance or academic performance include poverty and being an orphan.

After training, SGACs developed action plans to address gender and inequity barriers to attending school and therefore to improving literacy and numeracy skills. Some SGACs organised the construction of girls’ rooms to reduce absences and/or drop-outs due to a lack of support for managing menstruation periods. To date, 5 schools from 5 different districts have received financial support from Concern to improve their girls’ rooms. Additionally, BCC materials promoting equity in education were developed and distributed to all schools and communities.

Analysis of stakeholder feedback
All the SGAC presidents interviewed provided very positive examples of how the trainings provided by Concern have significantly improved the knowledge and skills/capacities of SGACs to contribute to reducing drop-outs and encourage parents to send children with disabilities to school. For example, Claver Ntakobazangira, SGAC president of Kagombyi School in Karongi District, says, “Now there are 32 children with disabilities who are in school after having previously dropped out. Before L3, there were only 5. We have started an association of children with disabilities, and conduct advocacy campaigns in a bid to prevent discrimination against children with disabilities.” Several teachers and head teachers also noted that children with disabilities population at their school is growing rapidly compared to other schools because of how supportive and accommodating they are of disabilities.

During the programme life, schools have also set up funds, some initiated by the children themselves, to equip extremely poor children with clothes, shoes, food, income and school materials.

One SEO described improved gender equity in education as “by far the most positive outcome of the L3 programme.” However, one Concern Education Officer reported that gender inequities are firmly entrenched in Rwandan culture, and that there is still a long way to go to dismantle certain ideas, such as keeping a daughter home instead of a son when there is an emergency at home. She therefore only gave Concern’s intervention in the L3 programme a score of 3 out of 5 for gender equity in education Gender equity in schools is explored further in the SGAC grants section below.

All 3 REB officials interviewed did not have adequate information on what L3 was doing with regards to equity in education, however they recognized that support provided to underprivileged children especially the girl-child goes a long way in sustaining them in school in order to receive an education.
**Recommendations**

**Policy**
Minimum standards for girls’ rooms should be set by the government to ensure that these are conducive and dignified for girls to use. Please see the “SGAC grants” section below for specific recommendations for girls’ rooms.

**SGAC/Community**
Parents should be sensitized through SGACs to provide information about reproductive health and the required materials for menstrual periods to their daughters. Please see the “SGAC grants” section below (pg. 17) for the findings from Concern’s field survey of parental awareness of the importance of girls’ rooms.

**SGAC functionality**

**Background**
5 SGAC members were included in the SGAC training provided by Concern. Of the 4 days of training, 2 days were dedicated to ensuring that SGACs understand their roles and responsibilities as highlighted above.

**Analysis of stakeholder feedback**
Virtually all SEOs scored the functionality of the SGACs under their purview as 5 out of 5, and most SGAC presidents gave their own SGAC a score of either 4 or 5 out of 5. It is also clear from the feedback provided during the consultative sessions that the L3 trainings organized by Concern have resulted in a much greater understanding of the role of the SGAC in school governance and its responsibility to encourage parental and community involvement in education. In fact, many of the session participants across stakeholder groups cited this as the most important positive outcome of the L3 programme.

However, when session participants were questioned on the key responsibilities of the SGAC, many of the aforementioned responsibilities were not mentioned in participants’ responses, which strongly suggests a need for continued reinforcement of training of SGAC members on their roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore, as pointed out by the Kigembe Primary School SGAC president: “What will happen when new members join the SGAC without receiving any kind of training? There must be a system in place for ensuring that new members are also trained.” Similarly, the Concern programme was only able to train 5 out of the 11 members. Where budget and time allows, all members should be trained.

Additionally, SEOs cited high rates of illiteracy among SGAC parent members, ever-changing SGAC leadership (as parents can only be members for 2-3 years), and insufficient financial resources for field visits (they are unable to visit all schools unless they walk, and many schools under their oversight are long distances by foot) as the biggest challenges that they face in terms of monitoring L3 implementation.
Recommendations

Policy/National
REB should revise the current eligibility criteria for SGAC members to ensure that members have basic literacy skills that will allow them to fully benefit from trainings and engage in their responsibilities.

REB should ensure that new members elected to SGACs are trained on their roles and responsibilities in a comprehensive and practical manner given that parents’ representatives are changed every 2-3 years.

Consultative session participants also suggested that REB work more closely with SGACs and play a more engaged role in SGAC capacity building.

SGAC
Each SGAC member should have clearly defined responsibilities to encourage maximum engagement and contribution to SGAC activities at the individual level.

Primary school children should be represented in SGACs in accordance with the law No 23/2012 on School Management. Presently, many schools that combine primary and secondary education only offer SGAC representation to secondary school children.

Quality of training provided

Background
To effectively train the SGACs, Concern developed training modules to improve their awareness and understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and to help them to promote community support to teacher motivation, literacy and equity in education.

In order to ensure sufficient time to cover the training content, the number of training days was increased from 2 to 4. Concern also decided to set up training sites in each Sector in order to maximise the time and resources available given the large number of SGACs to be trained. Unfortunately, the unexpected expansion of Concern’s scope of intervention created significant budgetary constraints, which meant that the number of training participants had to be decreased from all 11 SGAC members (pilot phase) to only 5 members per SGAC. It was expected that these 5 trainees would in turn share their acquired knowledge with the remaining 6 members.

Given Concern’s limited human resources relative to the scope of work, Training of Trainers (ToTs) workshops were provided to Community-Based Facilitators (CBFs), who would then facilitate trainings of SGACs and local authorities (SEOs and DEOs) in target districts, with oversight and in-training support from Concern staff. The CBFs receive refresher trainings from Concern on a quarterly basis.

Analysis of stakeholder feedback
The SEOs were highly appreciative of the trainings, both because they learned about certain responsibilities that they were not previously aware of, and because the trainings have increased the effectiveness and efficiency of SGAC parent members, thereby facilitating their own work as SEOs. One example highlighted by the Rugabano Sector SEO is that “there are MINEDUC protocols for
guiding SGACs that we were previously unaware of. The trainings sensitised us and now we are very much conversant with SGAC duties within the framework of these protocols. For example, before, many SGAC members had been on the committee for 5 years or even longer, but we have since learned that according to MINEDUC guidelines, membership should be 2 years with the possibility to extend for one additional year only.”

SGAC presidents also appreciated the training, particularly with regards to increasing awareness of members’ respective roles and responsibilities, but several also highlighted areas in which it had been insufficient. Project management and the development and implementation of action plans were both cited as topics on which more time should have been spent.

Also raised by the SGAC presidents was the need to train audit committees in conformance with Law No 23/2012 on School Management. This was not part of Concern’s original mandate, as the primary focus of the audit committee is financing and assets, rather than enhancing school-community partnership. Nevertheless, “monitoring of the function of the School General Assembly Committee” is also a stipulated responsibility of the audit committee.

CBFs also gave the training high marks, with several mentioning that it had significantly increased their confidence as SGAC trainers, but suggested that the training methodology should be adaptable to different levels of knowledge and attitudes, including the illiterate, which is not currently the case. They also raised the issue that it is difficult to train parents with entrenched disinterest towards education.

It should be noted that several CBFs claimed that SEOs were not interested in participating in trainings, which made their work as CBFs more difficult. Indeed, majority of CBFs cited the disinterest of SEOs in participating in trainings as one of the biggest challenges of implementing L3 school-community partnership activities, saying they are over-loaded with work from other sectors (especially social services).

As mentioned in the preceding section, the need for a mechanism for training new SGAC members was also highlighted.

**Recommendations**

**Policy**

REB and other implementers should organise field trips so that SGAC members can see how successful SGACs work. Concern recommends that other information sharing mechanisms, such as newsletters or regular experience sharing meetings, should be utilized so that SGACs can learn from one another.

REB should train audit committees to ensure effective monitoring of the SGACs.

SGAC training and election schedules should be aligned such that new members can benefit from training as soon as they are elected. Alternatively, arrange cascade trainings such that outgoing SGAC members are expected to train incoming members as part of the handover process. However, this would only work if SGAC members are competent and equipped to do so (see earlier recommendation about eligibility criteria for SGAC membership).
Clear national guidelines should be set for parental involvement in education, for which the responsibility of implementation should be decentralised to local education authorities.

Ministry of Education should ensure that SGAC training support is included in the annual education budget.

More time should be spent on action plans and project management during SGAC trainings to help SGACs implement IGAs efficiently and effectively.

District and Sector executive secretaries should ensure that SEOs are availed to attend and participate in the training.

Cell secretaries and community leaders should also be recruited to participate in trainings as a means of enhancing community involvement.

**M&E**

**Background**

Given the unexpected shift in the scope and demand of the programme, it was not possible for Concern to provide dedicated follow-up and support to the SGACs following training. As such, Concern enlisted the support of the education authorities in each of the districts in which the intervention was implemented. Dedicated introductory meetings were held with the authorities in each district to ensure understanding and ownership from DEOs and SEOs. SEOs were then trained and supported to monitor the action plans of the SGACs using checklists provided by Concern. Regular follow-up M&E meetings were held with SEOs to review implementation, share best practices, discuss challenges and suggest solutions.

**Analysis of stakeholder feedback**

According to the vast majority of head teachers, teachers and SGAC presidents, SEOs are providing strong support and follow-up of SGAC activities through regular visits and appropriate advice on their action plans. CBFs were more reserved in their praise, with several expressing concern that their SEOs were not engaged enough in L3 activities.

The SEOs themselves reported several shortcomings with regards to the support and resources available to them for carrying out their monitoring and follow-up duties. All but one reported that they only receive limited help or support from their supervisors (DEOs) for following up on L3 activities.

There were also multiple reports of significant challenges in terms of transport for monitoring visits. One elaborated: “The transport support we receive is not enough, and so we are not able to reach out to each and every school. The only way we would be able to do so using the current transport budget is to go on foot.”

REB officials noted that they were able to visit and observe learning in progress with the aim of checking utilization of L3 materials provided to schools. During field visits they also observed that that every L3 stakeholder including SGACs was aware of their role and responsibility towards achieving the programme objectives.
Recommendations

Policy/National
MINEDUC and MINALOC should agree on ways of facilitating M&E activities for SEOs. This may include transport support, increased communication and appropriate materials such as laptops, internet access, etc.

REB should continually improve the capacity of SEOs to fulfil their M&E responsibilities by providing regular refresher trainings on basic M&E concepts and key principles.

To holistically improve learning achievements, REB should actively participate specifically with regard to community involvement during preparing and training of DEOs, SEOs, SGACs as well as conducting periodic joint field visits.

SGAC grants

Background
Financial support was provided to the best SGAC initiatives that reflect a clear commitment to improving teacher motivation or equity in education. Schools from disadvantaged areas and that do not benefit from any other source of support were specifically targeted for grants, which were awarded on the basis of assessments of the SGAC’s action plan and status of implementation. The assessment and final selection of best initiatives was collectively undertaken by the District Education Officer, Sector Education Officers and Concern.

To date, Concern has provided financial supported to 174 initiatives to improve teacher motivation and wellbeing, as outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number of IGAs supported</th>
<th>Amount awarded (Rwf)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hair salon</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17,045,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small livestock (pig/goat/rabbit)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14,862,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow rearing</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>39,012,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/cultivation</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5,742,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business/boutique</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>77,862,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table below lists the schools that received support from L3 component implemented by Concern for their equity initiatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>Amount awarded (Rwf)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUGESERA</td>
<td>RUHUHA</td>
<td>RUGARAMA P.S</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUYE</td>
<td>RUSATIRA</td>
<td>G.S KOTANA</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of stakeholder feedback

Stakeholder feedback on the impact of both the teacher motivation and equity grants was overwhelmingly positive. The Ruramba Sector SEO described the impact of one teacher motivation grant in his Sector as follows: “I personally know of a school that started a barbershop, and the income generated is used to provide easy loans to teachers. What was great is that the barbershop initiative also encouraged other SGACs to learn from the experience and find ways of motivating teachers. As a result, 4 out of the 7 schools that I oversee are now providing lunch to teachers, which motivates them to carry out their duties efficiently as they are no longer hampered by an empty stomach!”

All 24 teachers interviewed during the field survey reported significant improvements in their motivation as well as their children’s academic performance as a result of the teacher motivation initiatives in their schools. Participants reported increased teacher punctuality (and, as a direct result, improved student punctuality), improved work ethic (such as using teaching aids, actively encouraging children to read and borrow books, and preparing lessons in advance), and an improved relationship with their community thanks to increased interaction with parents. Two reported that while children at their school typically performed poorly in exams, in 2015 not a single student received a fail grade in the national examinations. A teacher at Muyange Primary School remarked that for the first time ever, his school had ranked first in their Sector for student performance.

Of the 11 SGAC student members interviewed during the field survey, three reported that they had noticed a significant improvement in their teacher’s time management, punctuality and energy since the implementation of teacher motivation IGAs in their schools. The remaining 8 either answered “I don’t know” or described how the IGA had personally benefited them, such as being able to get a shave at school thanks to the hair salon.

The impact of the equity initiatives is perfectly illustrated by Thomas Munyabarenzi, the head teacher of Sanza Primary School in Karongi District: “From P1 to P4, girls would outnumber boys in class, but as they approached puberty, the number of girls in class would decrease rapidly. Now, the girls have a club headed by an ‘aunt’ (female teacher) elected by the children themselves. This ‘aunt’ provides sex education and teaches them how to use the girls’ room. As result, the drop-out rate has decreased from 4% to 1%. What’s more, many girls from other schools are seeking to enrol in our school because of the support that girls receive here.”

This is echoed by the female children that were interviewed during the field survey, who all described their school’s girls’ room as an extremely helpful tool that allows them to manage their period “with dignity”. According to them, the girls’ room is used very frequently, and the ‘aunt’ (usually a teacher) plays an important role in teaching girls about menstrual hygiene and allaying any fears they may have about using the girls’ room.


**Recommendations**

**Policy/National**

REB and MINEDUC should continue to emphasise teacher motivation by scaling up implementation of IGAs and encouraging schools/SGACs to do the same. This is a more effective use of funds than rewarding one teacher per school per year, because IGAs motivate and benefit all teachers simultaneously.

MINEDUC should establish minimum standards for girls bathrooms for all schools. Several female children recommended the following improvements to the girls’ room, all of which could be integrated into national guidelines:

- Provide emergency skirts and underwear so that girls can return immediately to class instead of having to wait for their skirt to dry.
- Provide more than 1 towel/kitenge, basin, and bar of soap so that girls are not forced to share if using the girls’ room at the same time.
- Ensure that the girls’ room is appropriately located near the school bathroom.
- Ensure cleanliness of the room.

**SGAC**

SGACs should endeavour to engage parents and the wider community in supporting initiatives that aim to motivate teachers, and they should also play an active role in monitoring the implementation of those initiatives.

6 of the 11 mothers interviewed during the field survey had little knowledge about the girls’ room at their daughters’ schools, of which three knew nothing at all because they do not discuss such issues with their daughters and do not think that teaching their daughters about menstrual hygiene is their responsibility. For example, one claimed that it was her older daughters’ responsibility to teach her younger daughter about such things. Such attitudes should be explicitly addressed at SGAC meetings.

**Sustainability**

**Background**

The continued success of SGAC-led school action plans should be guaranteed thanks to community involvement and ownership, and to SEOs who were trained to support the SGACs in implementing their plans. Combined, it is expected that these factors will ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of Concern’s L3 interventions – however, in reality, this can be only guaranteed in those schools where the SGAC and the SEO have taken their responsibilities and action plan implementation seriously. Unfortunately, this is not the case in all schools or all Sectors and requires continued focus and re-enforcement.

**Analysis of stakeholder feedback**

Generally speaking, the consultative session participants were optimistic about the sustainability of the progress made thus far, with all stakeholder groups expressing commitment to playing their part in ensuring that the successes of the L3 programme extend well into the future. However, several CBFs cautioned that the progress made is only likely to continue in those Sectors where SEOs are
genuinely interested in and committed to the objectives of the L3 programme. This challenge was also highlighted by two Concern Education Officers, one of whom said: “When we contact certain SEOs to follow up on their checklists, they ask us for how much longer they will be responsible for monitoring their schools’ action plans, suggesting that they are not fully aware, or do not take full ownership, of their monitoring responsibilities.”

Challenges foreseen by the session participants with regards to sustainability include insufficient financial resources that do not allow schools to replace stolen or damaged technologies on time, parents who do not help children to take care of textbooks distributed by EDC / L3 and, most importantly, the absence of functioning monitoring (audit) committees.

REB officials also expressed optimism emphasizing that the continuity of L3 activities is their obligation and will continue to provide required support to schools and encourage communities to take part in their children’s education. Notably, other education actors taking on the idea of improving literacy levels in the country and are now training SGACs on their responsibilities and how to achieve their objectives.

**Recommendations**

**Policy/National**
REB and EDC should continue to sensitize school leadership on the importance of taking responsibility for and ownership of learning materials, including keeping them in good condition and replacing them when necessary. REB should monitor how schools manage their materials.

Challenges related to implementation of the L3 programme were raised by consultative session participants about the quantity, quality and accessibility of L3 learning materials. Participants reported issues on some lessons are too challenging for young children, audio too fast for children to understand; Content errors; technical challenges due to lack of electricity; insufficient number of phones and books per classroom for accessing material; late delivery of books; and concerns about the feasibility of replacing materials when necessary in the future among others.

**District/Sector**
Monitoring of SGAC functionality, teacher motivation, equity and literacy should be incorporated into SEO and DEO performance contracts to ensure that their responsibilities in these areas are clearly defined.

**SGAC/Community**
SGACs should be encouraged to fundraise for their school initiatives within their communities to improve their feasibility and sustainability as well as to increase community ownership.

**Impact of L3 literacy posters (BCC Materials)**

**Children**
To assess the impact of L3 literacy posters displayed in schools, we surveyed 11 L3 primary schools with Digital Data Gathering (DDG) devices. Of the 177 children surveyed, 108 (61%) reported seeing a literacy poster at their school. If we exclude those children who did not stop to read it and those who do not remember what the message of the poster was, 83 children remain, which is equivalent to 47%. This proportion is lower than expected, and easily explained by the fact that of the 11
schools surveyed, only 5 still had posters on display. In the remaining 6 schools, the posters reportedly had to be taken down due to water or sun damage, were stolen, or in one case, were pinned up in the principal’s office (where children would rarely see them). Generally speaking, the posters only lasted 2-6 months before they disappeared or had to be taken down. However, during Concern monitoring visits throughout the L3 programme cycle, it has been remarked by staff that many posters are being stored unused in the principal’s office without ever being displayed at all.

On the other hand, of those 83 remaining children who had seen, read and still remember the message of the poster, all claimed that it encouraged them to read more. 50 (60%) said it encouraged them to read at home, 29 (35%) started borrowing books from the library, 27 (33%) feel confident enough to participate in reading competitions, and 7 (0.08%) now ask their parents to buy books for them.

75 of those 83 children (90%) were also convinced to share the message of the poster with others. Of those, most (64-85%) shared the message with other children.

**Parents**

Of the 27 parents surveyed, 15 (55%) said they had seen an L3 literacy poster, of which 13 (48%) stopped to look at it, and 12 (44%) could describe the message of the poster. Of those remaining 12, (44%) all said that the poster convinced them of the importance of reading and of the fact that they had an important role to play in improving their child’s literacy. All 12 (44%) also reported that the poster changed their behaviour with regards to their child’s literacy.

When asked how the poster changed their behaviour, 10 (37%) said they give their child time to read at home, 8 (30%) said that they buy reading material for their child, 5 (19%) said they had their child read aloud to them, and 2 (7%) said they told their child bedtime stories. 11 of the 12 said that they were convinced to share the message of the poster, mostly with neighbours and other parents.

**Teachers**

24 of the 27 teachers (89%) surveyed reported seeing an L3 literacy poster. Of these, all stopped to read it but two could not describe the message of the poster. Of the remaining 22 of the 24 teachers who stopped to read the message on the posters, all said that the poster convinced them of the importance of reading and that they had an important role to play in children’s literacy.

Only 2 reported that the poster did not result in any change in behaviour, with one claiming that they already did enough to support children’s literacy and the other citing insufficient time, resources and support as reasons for not implementing the message of the poster.

Of the 22 teachers whose behaviour did change as a result of reading the poster, 8 said that they helped children prepare for a reading competition, 16 allowed children to borrow books from the library to bring home, 16 encourage children to read more in class, 3 set up a reading club, and 2 have instituted a reading hour in their class.

**Recommendations**

Quality standards for posters (physical sturdiness) should be set to sustain them when subjected to harsh weather conditions.
Head teachers should be encouraged to make effective use of the BCC materials (by displaying them in an area that is highly visible to most children), and this should monitored more effectively.

Given the arguably limited impact observed thus far, potential alternatives to posters should also be discussed.

**The way forward**

A successful scale-up of the L3 programme will require that significantly more emphasis is placed on support to and accountability of SGACs. The results of the consultative sessions indicate that SGAC members understand the three L3 outcomes linked to Concern deliverables extremely well, and that they also recognise the importance of parental involvement in education and of supporting teacher motivation. However, there are many other responsibilities that they may not be sufficiently aware of and are therefore not putting into practice, especially if their SEO and/or DEO is not providing adequate follow-up and support. Ensuring a higher level of competence among members is also critical to improving SGAC performance, and could be achieved by implementing more stringent eligibility criteria for membership.

Similarly, SEOs’ roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined, with a clear segregation of duties. Tasks assigned to them by various actors (REB, MINEDUC, NGOs), in addition to their responsibilities unrelated to education should be streamlined in order allow for more effective engagement by SEOs in supporting and monitoring SGACs.

There is also a need for more effective encouragement of parental involvement and responsibility with regards to education. Although what has been achieved so far is certainly a big step in the right direction, much more needs to be done. For example, existing structures (such as community gatherings and community works) could be used as opportunities for encouraging people to rethink their attitudes towards education, and clear guidelines could be developed to ensure that SGACs take responsibility for dismantling the entrenched notion that merely sending a child to school is sufficient, when in fact parents must play an engaged and active role in supporting and preparing their children for school.

Encouraging parents to get involved in their children’s education requires that parents trust in the education system, which can be difficult when their children continue to move up a class every year despite lacking basic literacy skills. Therefore communities and SGACs should be actively recruited to a robust advocacy effort around the policy of automatic promotion.

Teacher motivation should also be more strongly emphasised and efforts to improve teacher motivation should be expanded. This can be achieved by scaling up IGAs, as these motivate and benefit all teachers simultaneously. Such efforts should be supported by the government.

Reading competitions have widely been appreciated by parents, teachers and local authorities as an effective means of improving the culture of reading among children and their communities. Literacy events need to be expounded by all education actors given that there is willingness of schools and their communities to participate as well as local authorities who are ready to provide support in whatever means possible.