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**Family Literacy Initiative Annual Narrative Report**

**December 31, 2024**

Family Literacy Initiative (FLI), a HIPPY homebased early childhood education program with parents serving as the first teachers for their children, completed its nineth years with increased results on children’s school readiness. We are please to report that FLI completed year nine with a total of 223 families with 224 children (120 males and 104 females) in the five low-income communities. The communities are Caldwell (49 children), West Point (47 children) Duazon (44 children), Nyemah town (43 children) and Neezoe (41children). 14 families dropped out of the original 237 families. Ninety (90) children completed the three years curriculum and have graduated from the program. Through the program implementation, 174 children (74 boys 100 girls) are enrolled in regular schools with improved literacy skills. This would not have been possible without the Comic Relief grant and continuous support from FoL and HIPPY. The program is giving families living in extreme poverty the opportunity to change the future of their children; and the need for this program to continue cannot be overemphasized.

With reduced budget for FLI year nine due to the adjustment in Comic Relief grant that divided the one year budget into two years, we were able to maintained 24 (13 male 11 females) trained Home Visitors, six ALP teachers (3 females and 3 males) from the communities. The 24 trained Home Visitors conducted 32 weeks of instructions/Role play activities to 223 families in the four urban and one rural community.

To measure evidence of the increase in school readiness of the children and improve literacy skills of parents, the pre and post bracken school readiness assessments and the ten weekly curriculum assessments were administered to the 224 (104 boys & 120 girls) FLI children and the out of school assessment was administered to the adult learners. Teaching and learning materials to cover the curriculum content were distributed to all the participating families weekly.

**Increase in Age-appropriate Enrolment**

There was an increase in the rate of enrolment of FLI children in formal school from 60% in 2023/2024 academic year to 78% in 2024/2025 academic year. The number of FLI children enrolled in their age-appropriate grades has also increased by 40.8%. This can be partly contributed to the increase in writing activities added to the required skills and concepts that children are expected to develop for promotion to primary grade one in Liberia.  The parents participating in FLI said the program is helping them to take a more active role in their children’s education. Parents are engaging the teachers and schools on the learning outcomes of their children. We are pleased that parents are taking the initiative and are getting involved with the schools. This is unusual for most parents in Liberia. We hope that in the coming program year, we can have greater parent engagement with the schools.

**Adapted HIPPY Curriculum**

The year one, two and three HIPPY curricula contextualized for Liberia was used for the home instruction along with Liberian books. It was observed that parents and children had increased verbal discussions and interaction with the Liberian books. About 94.5% of the parents reported that the content of the books was easy to follow, and they had more things to talk to their children about, because there are many things in the books that they can see around them. There is a need to include more Liberian books in the program.

**Evidence of the Program Success**

The FLI program has tracked four cohorts of graduates from the program in formal school. The first graduates of the program in 2018 tracked are now in grades ranging from 4th to 9th grade. The data collection for 2022 graduates along with non FLI children for comparison has been compiled. The evaluation technical working group will be analyzing the data that will provide evidence on the FLI graduates learning outcomes and social and emotional skills in comparison to children that did not participate in FLI. This study will provide insight on the impact that the FLI program is making in preparing children for school with their parents being their first teachers.

**Adult Literacy**

The FLI program did not do major recruitment for year one families in 2024. As a result, only 32 adult learners were recruited to replace learners that completed level 2 in 2023 along with 79 of the learners that graduated to Level 2 in 2023, bringing the total number of adult learners for 2024 to 105 persons. The total of 28 learners dropped and 77 adult learners (72 females and 5 males) completed the year. The program 2024 completion rate is 74% and dropped out rate is 26%. The cause for the drop-out rate is due to two factors: distance to the learning centers was far for some learners and poor living conditions. There are about 70% of the learners who are sending and receiving text messages from the ALP Teachers. They are reading at the third and fourth grade levels, while the other 30% of the learners are struggling to read between kindergarten and first grade levels. ALP Level 3 was added to the FLI adult literacy program in Nyemah Town for Level 2 graduates from 2023.With solar light provided by FoL, the ALP classes in Marchee Town, one of the rural towns under Nyemah Town, were conducted in the evenings when the people came home from their farms thus increasing retention. This could be adopted in other towns.

**Evidence of outcomes:** Five (5) of ALP learners enrolled in regular afternoon and night schools in Duazon and Neezoe. The Town Chief in Gankalashue (Nyemah Town) a participant is now able to read at 3rd grade level. In the first quarter, a parent in FLI/ALP Level 2 class in Duazon started teaching her 2nd grade son as study class/home teacher, a zero literate parent who enrolled in the program in 2021 in Nyemah Town now writes well, read almost at 2nd grade level, involved in child regular school activities and taught her son child with the FLI home visit lessons.

We are pleased to report that parents who couldn’t read to their children when they enrolled in the ALP classes are now reading to their children at home using the FLI materials and are involved in their children regular school activities, which is the objective of the ALP component in the FLI program.

**Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers constructed in collaboration with self-help from community dwellers in two of the towns, that have no school within 45 minutes walking distance to the nearest school are open for 2024/2025 academic year. There are 115 students ranging from nursery to kindergarten in the two rural towns participating in FLI in the rural community Nyemah Town. FLI Home Visitors are serving as the ECD teachers. Two of the home visitors, one from Marchee Town, and one from Gankalashue Town with the intervention of WE-CARE completed their biometric to be placed on the government payroll. This will ensure that the ECD centers have trained staff after the FLI program leaves the towns.

The challenge of access to primary school for the children to continue their education in these two towns remain the same. We are continuing our discussion with the Ministry of Education to assign a grade one teacher at the Marchee Town school for the academic 2024/25 year. A trained teacher is pay US$100.00 to USD$150.00 per month in Liberia.

This year we had unimaginable support from the community taskforce. The volunteer taskforce supported the program through continuous motivation of families, participating in all the program activities and creating awareness of the program in community and town hall meetings. We appreciate their efforts.

**Challenges**

The major challenges in this year’s implementation were retention and regularity of families/learners to leave their businesses or farms to attend adult literacy classes and role play activities, and the deplorable road conditions during the rainy season in rural and swampy communities. Most times when the road was flooded the team was unable to reach particularly the rural community of Gankalashue. The program’s management team is mitigating these challenges by regularly calling and texting of learners on classes days, visiting and role playing with parents on their farms and at their business areas, encouraging and identifying with parents in difficult times as motivation to ensure they are retained and remain committed to make the difference. From the assessment conducted during recruitment, more than 75% of the program beneficiaries (parents) are single parents surviving on small businesses in urban communities and farming/gardening in rural areas. Unless the families’ lives improve, we will continue to experience these challenges.

About twenty percent of the Family Literacy Initiative (FLI) graduates tracked over the last three years, report showed that they did not enroll in school upon completing the FLI program mainly because of lack money or means to make an income. Collaborating with other organizations and providing soft skills and financial empowerment to parents to increase FLI graduates’ enrollment and retention in school are needed for long-term success of the children.

We are recommending that village Savings and Loan (VSL) be included into the program rollout for year ten with the aim of empowering parents financially to enroll and retained their FLI children in school. The adult literacy classes be equipped by adapting other VSL model to provide capacity building for parents qualifying for the VSL.

All attempts to purchase the required HIPPY books from the designated publisher during the year was futile as HIPPY International is no longer working with the publisher. Liberian books developed by WE-CARE that have the skills and concepts of the HIPPY books were used with the contextualized curriculum. From a parent survey conducted, more than 94% of the parents reported that the content of the books was easy to follow, and they had more things to talk to their children about because there are many things in the books related to their local environment. There is a need to include more Liberian books in the program to reduce the dependency on imported books.

**FLI Staff**

FLI program activities were implemented by 36 trained staff that include 3 coordinators, 5 supervisors, 21 home visitors, 6 adult literacy teachers and a material production person. For a better educated workforce, six Home Visitors and two ALP teachers are enrolled in college studying for bachelor’s degree in early childhood and primary education.

**HIPPY Conference**

In October 2024, the Program Manager of WE-CARE Foundation, Yvonne Capehart Weah attended the HIPPY Conference of Directors in Vancouver, Canada. A presentation was made on the FLI/HIPPY program’s activities and outcomes. Directors of HIPPY programs from seven other countries made presentation on their respective programs. What stood during the conference was the level of evidence that have been collected on the positive results of the HIPPY program. Also, like FLI all the countries have done adaptions to the HIPPY program to suit their respective country contexts. What was sad was that all the programs are receiving funding from their governments besides Chile and such a great program has not been able to go beyond being placed in the Ministry of Education Section Plan.

**Commendation**

WE-CARE Foundation, Friends of Liberia, HIPPY International and all the families that are participating in the Family Literacy Initiative program would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to all the contributors especially Comic Relief US, Global Giving, Evaluation TWG and the FoL Education Committee. Your donations and technical support are helping to improve lives by making a parent and child become literate and prepare for school. You are giving a brighter future to families.