

Reading For All in West Africa:
What Would It Take?
Learning from Read India



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More African children are in school. . .

- Sub-Saharan Africa: 78% GER in 1999; 95% GER in 2005
 - Guinea: 34% (1990), 88% (2006)
 - Mali: 25% (1990), 80% (2006)
 - Senegal: 58% (1990), 80% (2006)



But most are not learning well. . .

- Guinea: by the end of Grade 2, the average child knows only half of the letters in the alphabet
- Mali: by the end of Grade 4, only 23% of boys and 10% of girls are able to read a simple sentence
- Senegal: by the end of Grade 3, children correctly read average of 20-25 words per minute



Some major reasons:

- The historical context of schooling has produced a model that is:
 - Intended to select a small elite; far from an EFA model
 - Heavily controlled by central government
 - In a language children and communities don't speak or understand



Additional issues:

- New or no democracy
- Poverty and related issues (malnutrition, poor health); very low adult literacy
- Historical context=systems that countries cannot finance on their own=donors



Inspiration from Read India and Experience:

- No more pilots
- Design for scalability
- Cross-border
- LOI as necessary but not sufficient
- Mali *pédagogie convergente*
- Guinea small grants for school improvement
- Re-think “non-formal”
- Free up funding for creativity



The School/Learning Site as the Priority

- Where can the change we want happen?
Classrooms
- Schools need support and some autonomy over resources.
- Measurement of learning outcomes at the school level first—who are they for?
- Children as the first consideration, not central level staff



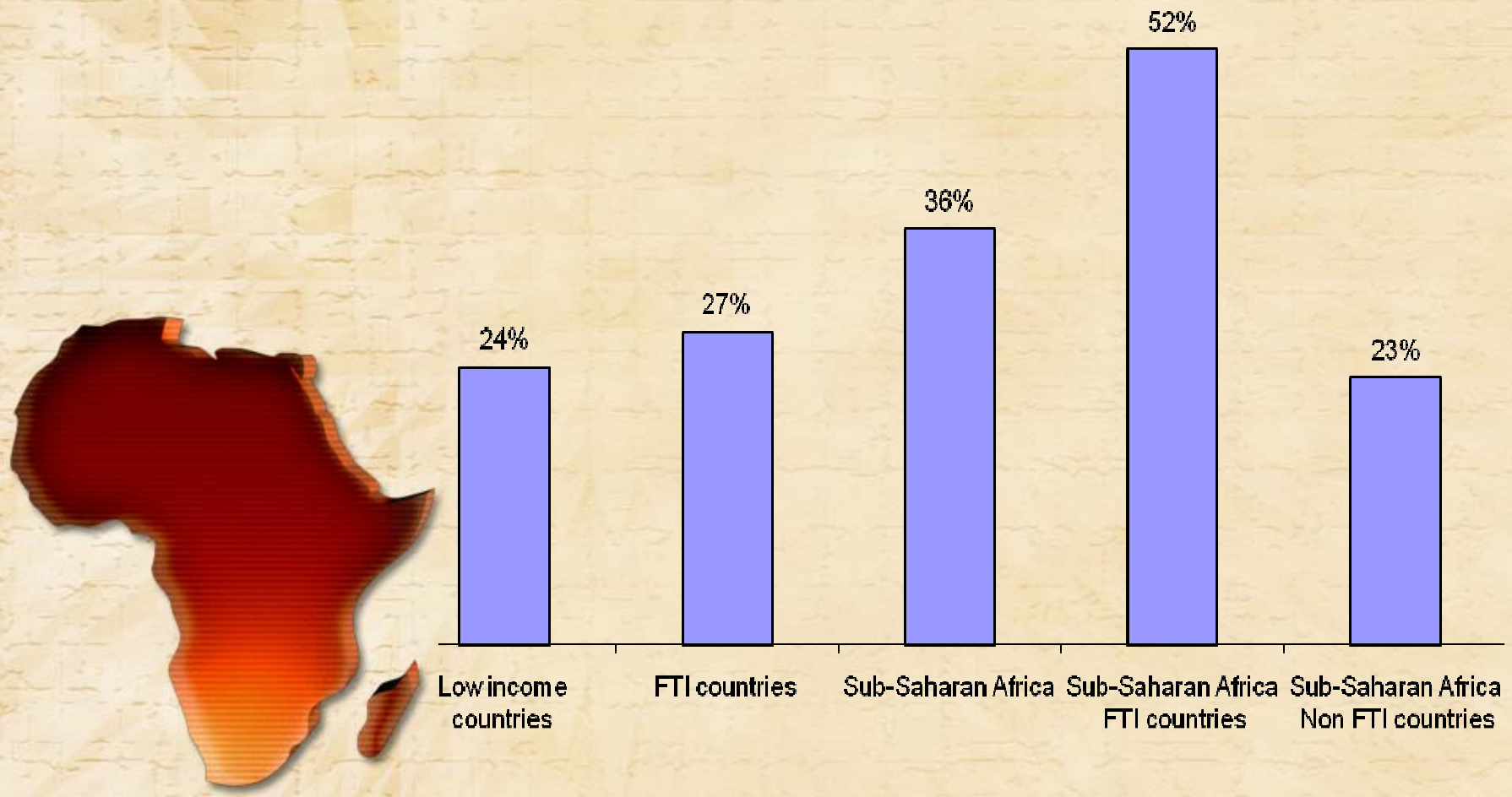
Need to Change Donor Behavior

- Low capacity
 - Donors are overstretched, and have little time or ability to engage
- Insufficient knowledge of reality
 - Representatives who never visit schools or talk to parents—“why would I do that?”
- Inefficient use of resources
 - Capture at the central level, spending on per diems, construction and cars, no focus on school, classroom level resources
- What are the incentives for donor staff?



So, is a dramatic growth in learning outcomes possible?

Percent change in primary enrolment: 2000-2006



A Reading Intervention in Niger and Mali

- 2007-2008 school year
- Plan Niger and Plan Mali
- Fast-track reading program (SMRS)
- 2 weeks of teacher instruction
- Follow-up support



Mali

- 1267 students in 25 community schools (ages 6-8) working in Bamanankan
- 4 months of instruction
- 90% reading at grade level, with comprehension; 46% in control group after one year (also Bamanankan)
- “Education is a known technology”



Learning from Read India

- Focus on methods, student-teacher interaction
- No interventions without measurement, monitoring, evaluation
- Implementation linked to M&E
- Readiness to invest in independent monitoring



More . . .

- New attention to paraprofessional teachers: Volunteers in Mali
- New assessment focus—who is the data for?
- Materials: Numerous titles, reducing costs, increasing numbers of languages
- LOI



Results Oriented Programming

- Not donor-produced with outputs and indicators, managed at the central level
- Not input-oriented investments at central level, but . . .
- Large scale small grants to schools and decentralized offices, based on local plans for results
- NGO programming for innovation, non-governmental work at scale



Looking Ahead

- Momentum gathering for assessment and improving instruction—but still donor focused
- UNESCO Seminar to Propose New Learning Indicator for FTI
- Hewlett: Trying to identify and support national energy, national initiatives for change

