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Monitoring Radio Programming in
times of COVID-19:

Preliminary findings from parent
interviews and discussions

Presentation to the Basic Education
Coalition

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Read Liberia Activity

July 27th, 2020

Background on Teaching By Radio in Liberia

- In Liberia, COVID-19 related school closures started on March 17th.
- Officially, the Ministry of Education (MOE) Teaching by Radio (TBR) program started on March 30th.
- Within the Education in Emergency strategy, the MOE coordinated all radio lesson activities across the country, building on, and adapting, lessons from the Ebola experience.
- The MOE adopted a collaborative approach, drawing on each donor's, and/or implementing partner's, comparative advantage within the sector, to fast track radio program content and program development.
- In this context, USAID Read Liberia developed, recorded, and provided to the MOE 30-minutes lessons covering key components of early grade literacy and language arts instruction.
- The TBR program ended June 30th, 2020.

Source of radio monitoring data

Parent interviews: School Community Mobilizers (SCMs) phoned parents and asked them scripted questions about listening to the radio.

Read Liberia took advantage of an existing mode of communication between SCMs and parents and adapted it for rapid monitoring.

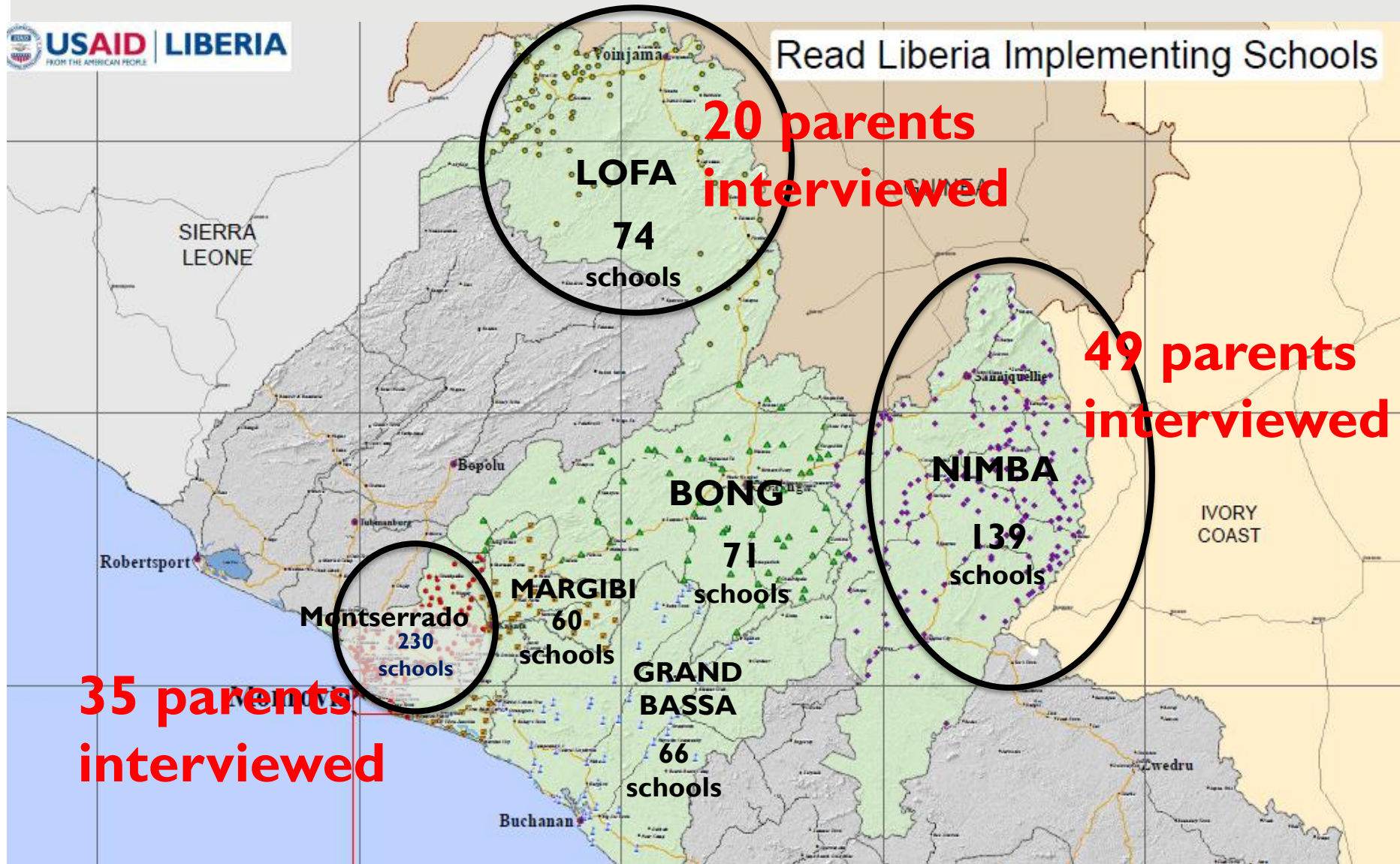
104 parents were interviewed in 3 counties (out of 270 parents)

Limitations: Convenience sample based on parents who have phones and were available by phone. There were serious connective issues that limited even communication with SCMs.

Map of Read Liberia – Radio Monitoring



Read Liberia Implementing Schools



Training and data collection

- Virtual pilot of data collection form among supervisors to validate and adapt short questionnaire/script for parents.
- Supervisors were trained via mobile phone conference calls on the process of data collection and strategies for conducting a phone-based survey with parents.
- Supervisors rolled out training to SCMs via phone.
- Data collection (phone interviews with parents) took place from June 29th to July 3rd, 2020
- SCMs provided data to Supervisors over the phone. Supervisors used formatted excel summary sheets to enter the data, which were submitted to Read Liberia's ME&L team for data cleaning and final consolidation.

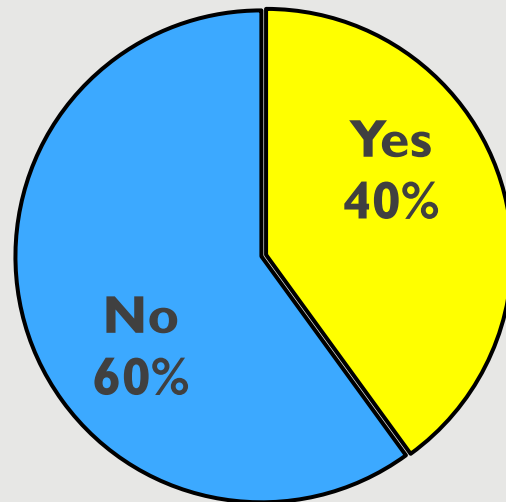
Student profile

- Parents of students interviewed (N=104)
- break down of children/students
 - 2% KG
 - 52% Grade 1
 - 46% Grade 2

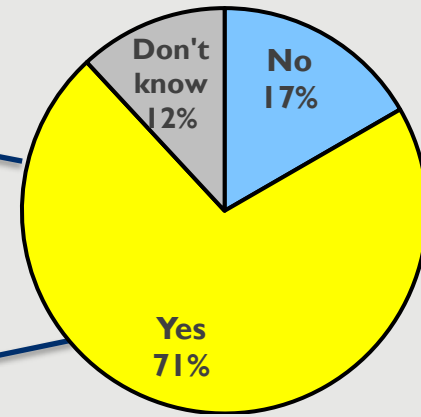
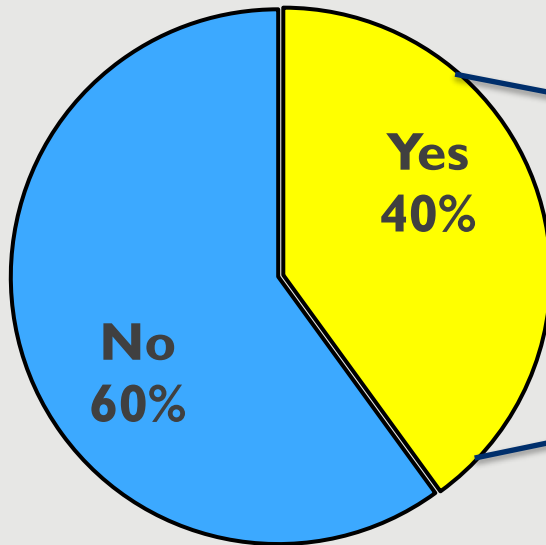
 - 47% male
 - 53% female

Preliminary Findings

**Did your child listen to the MoE
Teaching By Radio Program last week?
(N=104)**



Did your child listen to the MoE Teaching By Radio Program last week?

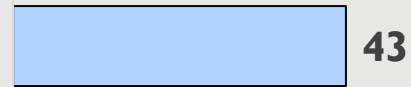


Did your child listen to the Read Liberia Radio Program last week? (N=42)

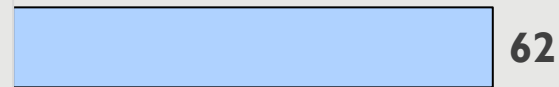
40% of children were reported to have listened to the MoE's radio program the week before. Of those, 71% listened to the reading radio program. Overall, 28% of students listened to the grade 1 and 2/Level 1 reading radio program.

Percent of
parents
answering “yes”
(N=42)

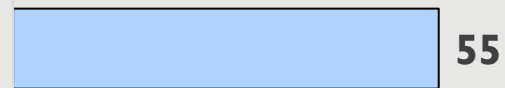
Did your child listen to the radio program at
your home? (or somewhere else).



Was your child following along with a book
while listening to the radio program?



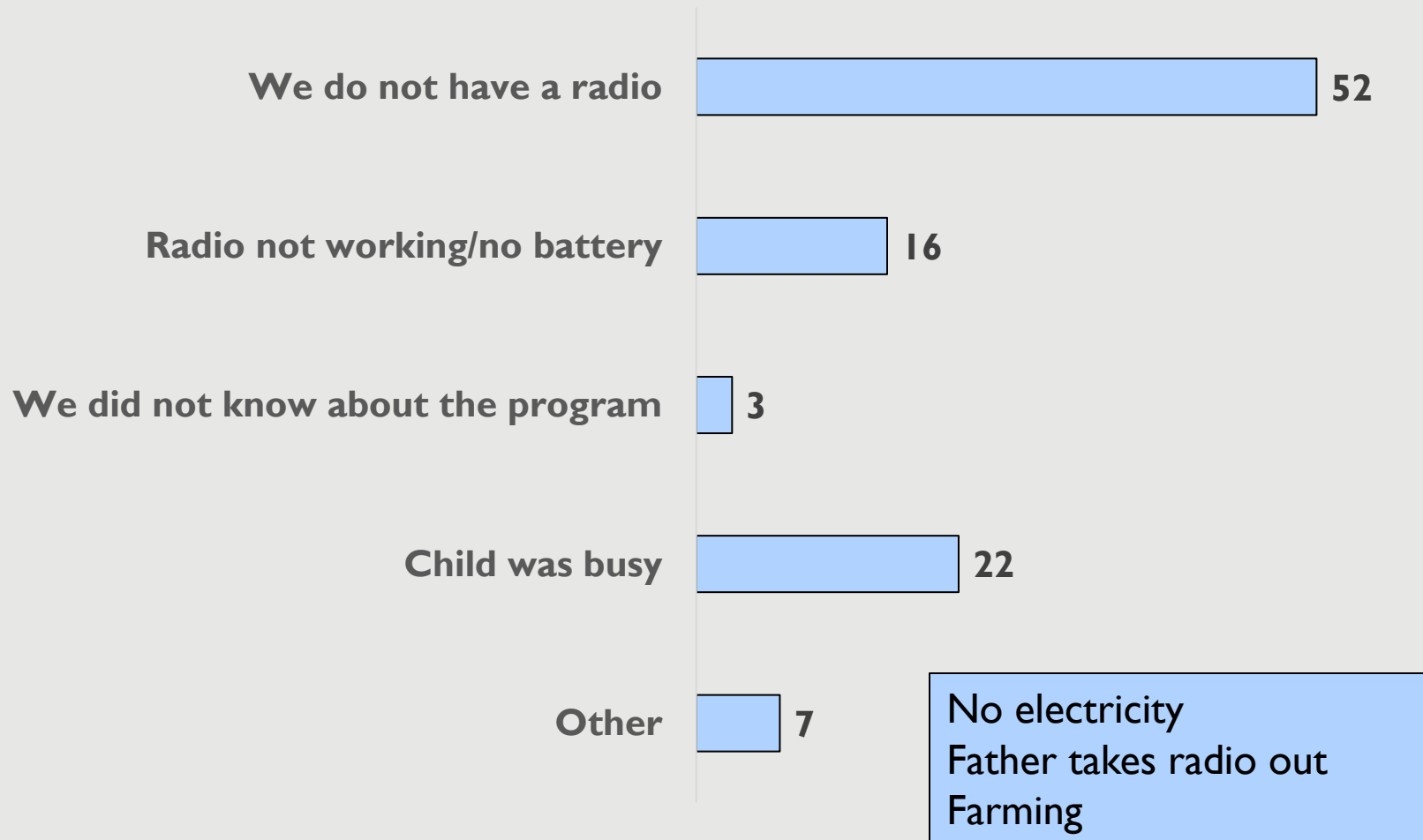
Did you or someone in your household
listen to the program with the child?



Do you feel like your child received valuable
learning from the radio programming?



Reasons for not listening to Reading by Radio (percent) (N=73)



Did you receive information about the MoE teach by radio program? (N=104)

- 94% of parents reported that they had received information.
 - 10% heard on the radio
 - 84% heard from the school community mobilizer
 - 5% heard from neighbors/another parent
 - 1% heard from school or teacher

Radio Programming Feedback

Collected by SCMs during routine phone conversations with parents
(not part of the rapid survey)

“Things are hard here now, we are trying to find food for the children”.

Parent from Lofa County

Radio stations and program availability:

- The selection of Radio Stations did not geographically cover all of the districts. Most parents preferred local radio stations and don't listen to national stations.

Program scheduling

- Parents reported the inconsistency in the airing schedules and delays in the broadcasts making it difficult to plan to listen. Many say it was difficult to follow the program due to the time the program may be aired – in some cases at 9 PM. Programming did not begin in Lofa county until mid-May.

Other reasons for not listening

- The lack of radio by some parents remained a challenge.
- Some children were not regularly following lessons due to their farming schedules.

Content

- Insufficient time for the lessons.
- Parents don't understand the languages spoken by the presenters, and they do not understand clearly what is being taught

Conclusions and Recommendations

Parent survey

- Less than half (40%) of G1 and G2 students listened to the MoE radio program the week before the interview– 28% reportedly listened to the Grade 1&2/Level 1 MOE-Read Liberia reading program.
- The most common reason for not listening was lack of radio as reported by 52% of parents.
- Majority of listeners (57%) who listened to the radio program did NOT listen at home. Read Liberia is exploring what these alternative venues are in order to encourage wider use of radio (recognizing the importance of social distancing).

Discussions with parents

- Need to broadcast consistently at times best suited for small children. Need to reach local stations and cater to those outside of the reach of even local stations.