

# Community-Based Literacy Interventions in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review

Elizabeth Spier, PhD

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# Goal

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Conduct a systematic review to identify interventions outside of formal education systems that support children's literacy development in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC)

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# Rationale

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For most of the world's children, despite substantial increases in access to primary school, academic learning is neither occurring at expected rates nor supplying basic foundational skills.

Example: In Ghana, as of 2008, four out of five young women who had completed Grade 6 were still illiterate or only partially literate (UNESCO, 2012).

# Rationale

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Despite efforts and innovations in many countries, these problems will not be solved quickly.

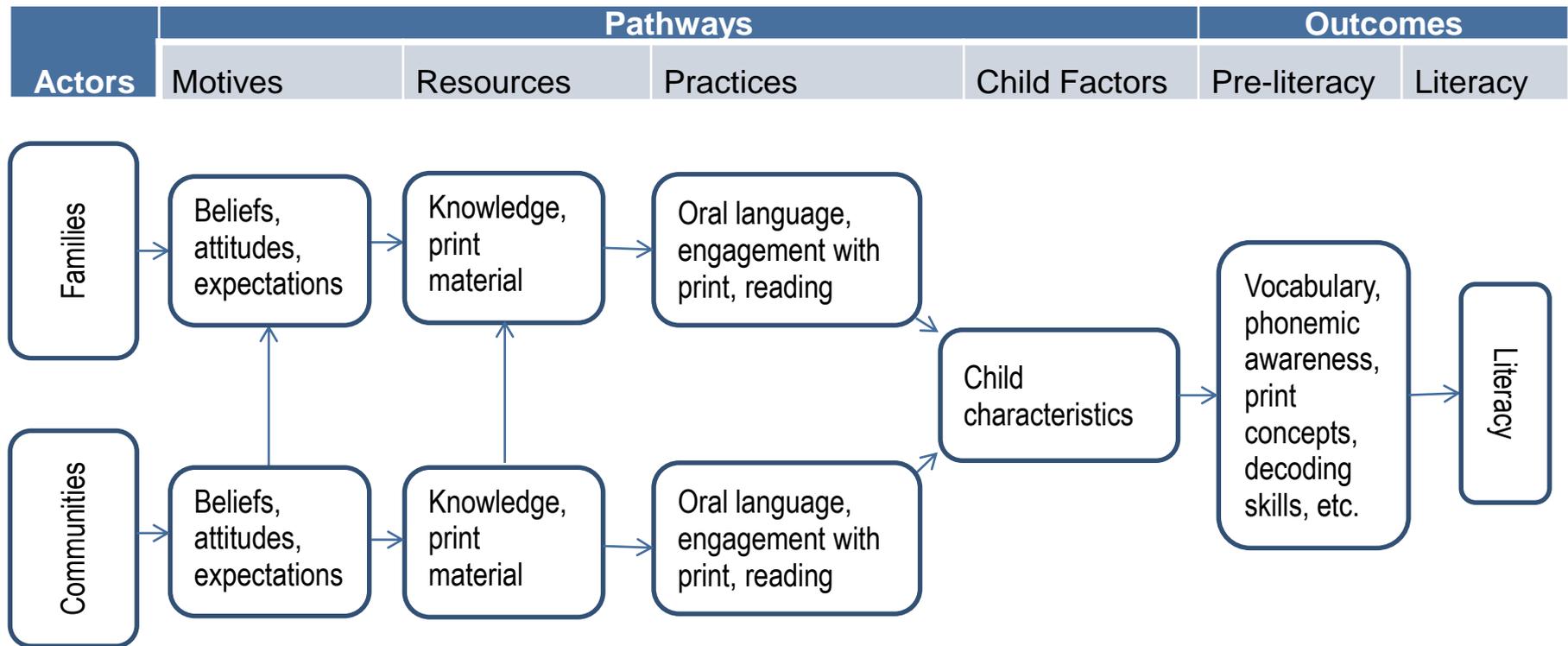
Alternative or supplementary approaches are needed to support children's literacy development.



# Approach

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# 1: Logic Model





## 2: Define PICO\*

Population: Children ages 3 to 12 years in LMIC

Intervention: Must be a primary study of an intervention that addresses pre-literacy or literacy skills, and is delivered through family or community members. Interventions delivered at school are acceptable only if the delivery mechanism is family or community.

\*Petticrew & Roberts, 2006



Comparison: The study must have a treatment group and a valid comparison group.

Outcome: Eligible outcomes included a full range of pre-literacy and literacy skills. Outcomes must be measured with standardized assessments, country-specific or locally used assessments, or assessments developed for the evaluation.

# 3: Parameters for Search

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- a. Timeframe
- b. Types of documents
- c. Terms and search strings  
(e.g., girl + read + program + family + Malaysia)
- d. Databases for academic literature
- e. Sources of grey literature





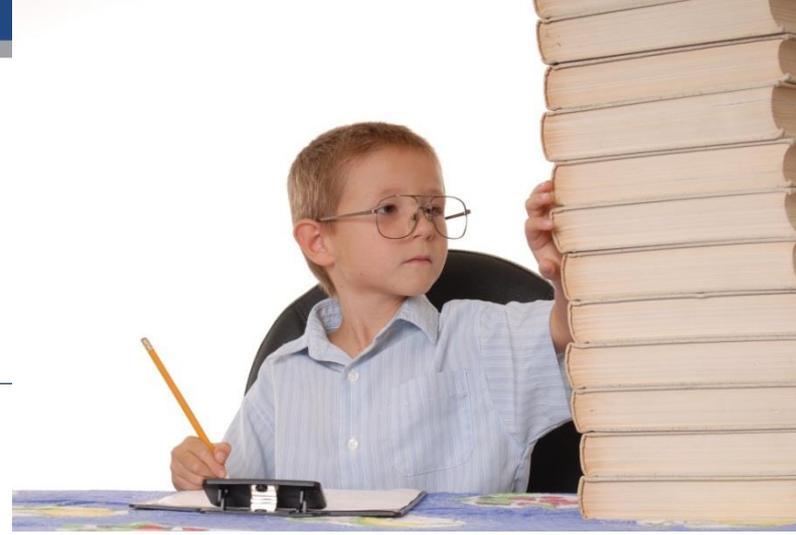
# What Did We Find?

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# Literature Identified

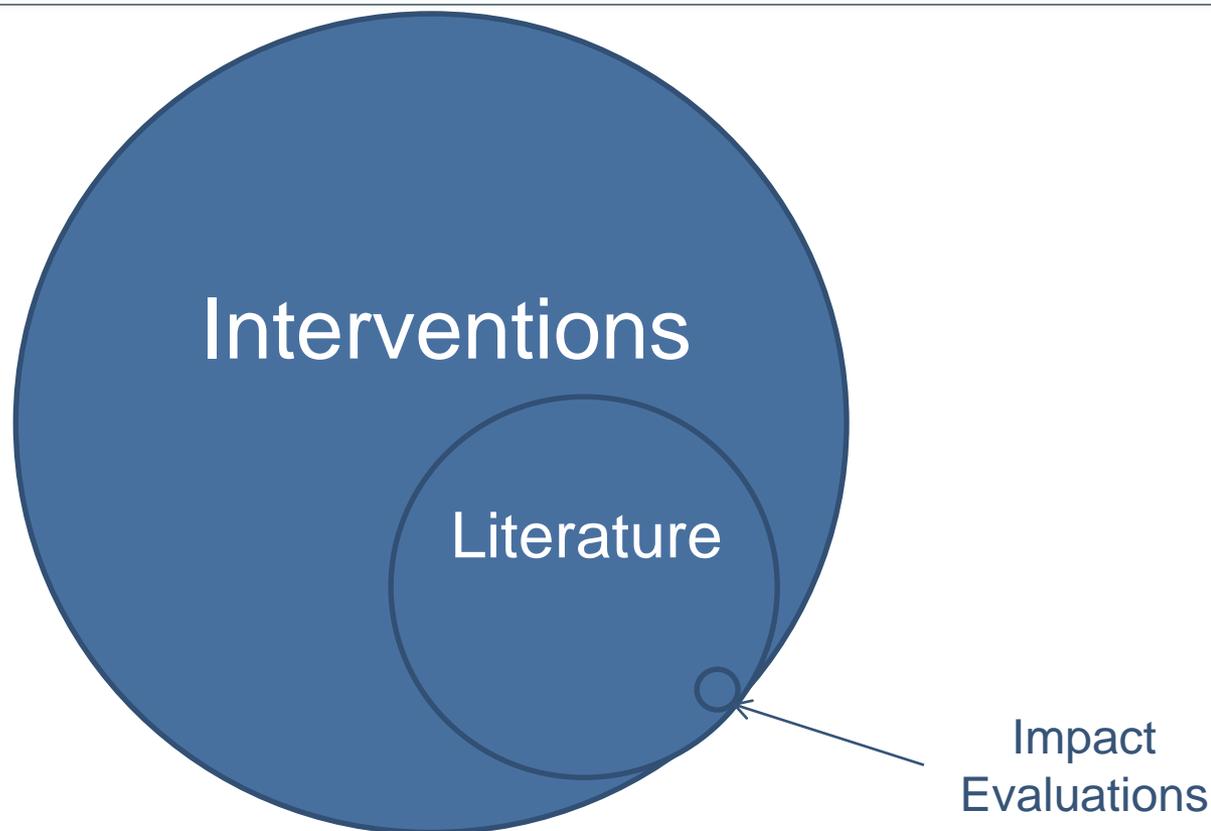
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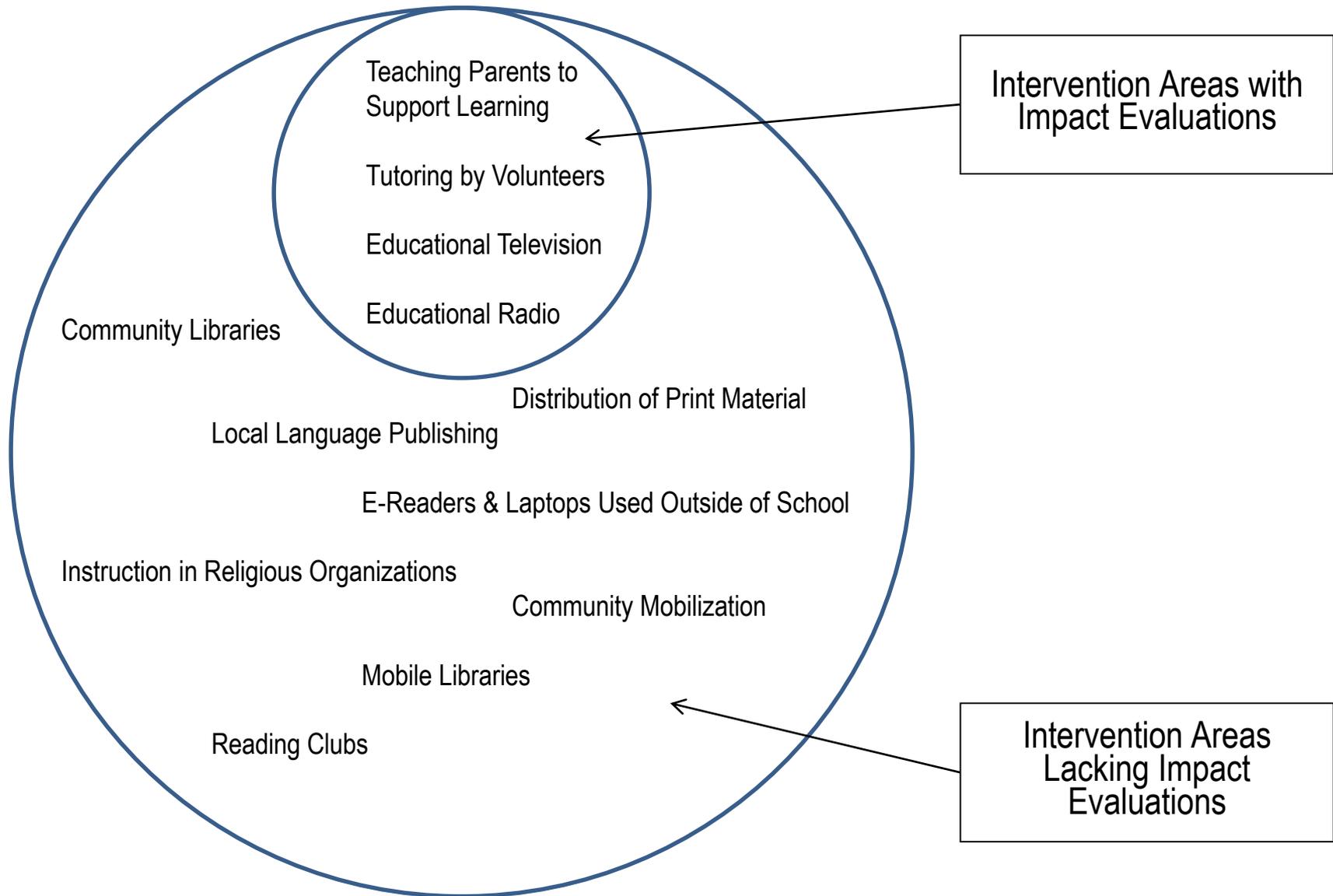
1. Screened 10,430 items
2. Identified 52 studies for consideration
3. Of those, 16 met our criteria for inclusion
4. Excluded 3 studies on educational radio
5. Included 13 studies in our review



# The Big Picture

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# What Evidence DO We Have?

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# Effects of What Has Been Studied

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Programs that teach parents to support children's learning can have positive effects in some contexts, but no effects in others.

Educational television has a positive effect on children's early literacy development when children view programs at least three to five days per week over several months (inside or outside of home).

# Effects of What Has Been Studied

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Tutoring: Tutoring by community members had a positive effect on children's literacy (READ India). Tutoring by peers (UNICEF's Child-to-Child model) was effective at improving children's early writing across country contexts, and had positive effects across multiple areas of literacy development in some contexts (Bangladesh, DR Congo, Yemen).

# Even within the studies we DID find...

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- Only one study involved children over age 7
- No studies from Latin America
- No studies of special populations



# Take Home Message

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A systematic review can identify gaps in the evidence regarding:

- the effectiveness of an approach already in use
- which intervention produces the greatest effect in a given context and/or for a specific population

Ideally, the identification of such gaps would inform the allocation of funding for impact evaluations.



# Who We Are

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# Literacy Review Team

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## Organizations:

American Institutes for Research

Yale University

Search Institute

## Consultants:

Dan Wagner; UNESCO Chair in Learning and Literacy; Director, International Literacy Institute; University of Pennsylvania

Terri Pigott; Professor of Research Methodology; Loyola University



# Literacy Review Team

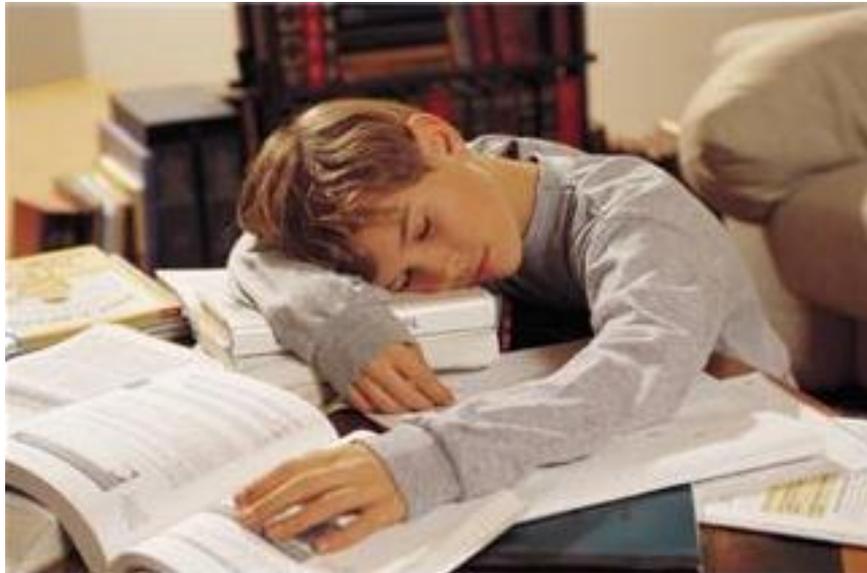
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## Advisory Panel:

- Dr. Tirussew Teferra; Professor and Laureate in Education; Dean, College of Education and Behavioural Studies; Addis Ababa University
- Steve Bowler; Director; Fountain of Life; Malawi
- Seema Zainulabdin Lasi; Senior Instructor, Human Development Programme; Aga Khan University; Pakistan
- Maria-Carmen Pantea; Lecturer; Babes-Bolyai University; Romania
- Paul Stephenson; Senior Director; Child Development and Rights; World Vision International; United Kingdom

# The End!

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