



Changing lives through education

## **Early Years English Improvement Project**

funded by

thewaterloofoundation\*

**Year 1 Report, 2018-19, Gondar, Ethiopia**



## Background

Link Ethiopia's Early Years Improvement Project is designed to build upon the successes of the Libraries and Literacy project.

Between 2013 and 2016 Link Ethiopia's Libraries and Literacy Project improved English literacy and promoted the fun of reading in 46 schools in the Amhara and Oromia regions of Ethiopia. Library and Literacy schools outperformed control schools in EGRA-Burt literacy tests measuring English sounding, reading, writing and listening. Participating pupils improved their English literacy score from 5% to 38%.

The Early Years English Improvement Project works alongside the regional government in Amhara to deliver an English phonics programme with the aim of region-wide adoption within three years. The project is designed to change the way English is taught in all elementary schools in the Amhara region, increasing English literacy rates and primary school completion. The project has two activity areas: in-service and pre-service training.

## Aims

In the first three years:

- Train 520 English grade one teachers in 130 schools benefiting 26,000 pupils.
- Train 340 pre-service teachers benefiting a further 17,000 pupils.
- Hold regular meetings with the Amhara Regional Education Bureau to evaluate the project, reviewing each annual expansion to cement the phonics method in the curriculum.
- In-service and pre-service training will directly benefit the trained teachers and their pupils. Indirectly, local government will gain the evidence and experience to enable newly trained teachers to use the phonics method.
- Create a supply of skilled teachers who can become the trainers to support government-led phonics training after the Early Years English Improvement Project has ended.

## Intended Outcomes

The Early Years English Improvement Project aims to:

- Improve the English literacy skills of early grade pupils in Amhara, improving their likelihood of completing education and their employability in later life.
- Up-skill pre-service and in-service teachers with the English phonics method to support the next generation of teachers.
- Work with Colleges of Teacher Education to ensure all new teachers are trained in the phonics method.

## Project Implementation

Activity	Delivery date	Progress status
Project Initiation	October 2018	Completed
Baseline reading tests at year 1 target schools	October 2018	Completed
Semester 1 pre-service phonics training	October 2018	Completed
Debrief on trainings	November 2018	Completed
Meeting with College of Teacher Education to decide training schedule	November 2018	Completed
Baseline reading tests at year 1 control schools	November 2018	Completed
Meeting with vice-directors at target schools	November 2018	Completed
Observation of teaching – semester 1	November 2018 – January 2019	Completed
In-service phonics training	November 2018	Completed
Compilation of baseline reading test results	December 2018	Completed
Refresher in-service phonics training	April 2019	Completed
Observation of teaching – semester 2	February – May 2019	Completed
Endline reading tests at year 1 target schools	June 2019	Completed
Endline reading tests at year 1 control schools	June 2019	Completed
Identify best practice teachers	June 2019	Completed
Gather data on English results & promotion rates	June 2019	Completed
Compilation and analysis of assessments & data	July 2019	Ongoing
Internal evaluation & reporting	July 2019	Ongoing



## Summary of activities

### In-service support (qualified teachers currently teaching in schools)

- 3 day base training was provided by a certified Jolly Phonics trainer with the support of Link Ethiopia staff to the following:
  - 9 schools with 4 teachers from each school (36 teachers trained).
  - 4 instructors from Gondar College of Teacher Education (CTE) (1 College of Teacher Education reached).
  - 3 members from the local Education Office.
- Training covered all 42 phonics sounds:
  - For each sound, trainees learnt the letter sound, letter formation, blending (reading) and how to identify the sound in words.
  - The trainers used the Jolly Phonics kit to make the training more descriptive and resourceful for the trainees. Examples of teaching using flash cards and words from the materials were shown to demonstrate how trainees can use them in classroom lessons.
  - The trainees took turns practising each sound to ensure sounds in one group were successfully learnt before passing onto the next sound group.
  - At the end of the training, the trainers demonstrated how the phonics teaching can be incorporated into daily lessons by teaching one sound a day including sound revision, story, letter formation, sounding and dictation.
  - 3 trainees practised delivering a lesson using the Teachers' Lesson Guide.
  - 9 schools received a Jolly Phonics Extended Classroom Starter Kit.
- Refresher training in semester 2
  - 2 day refresher training was provided by Link Ethiopia staff.
  - 1 teacher from each of the 9 schools received refresher training (please see point 3 of challenges for an explanation of the reduced number of teachers receiving refresher training).
- Lesson observations and survey
  - All teachers who received semester 1 and 2 training were observed and received feedback multiple times in the project year. 3 schools received 3 lesson observations and 6 schools received 2 lesson observations over the whole year.

### Pre-service activities (teacher students in the final year of their teaching qualification)

- 1 day 'train the trainers' course was provided to 4 lecturers from CTE on how they can teach phonics to their pre-service teachers in college (in addition to them attending the 3 day base training).
- 3 1-day training sessions were provided to 20 pre-service teachers in December 2018 and June 2019.
- Training was delivered partially by Link Ethiopia staff and partially by the CTE lecturers.



### Other activities

- 3 meetings were held with the local Education Office to keep them informed and involved in the project.
- 2 meetings were held with the regional Education Office to present activities and results and to collaborate on year 2 expansion.

### Evaluations

- EGRA-Burt reading test evaluations were completed with 8 target schools and 2 control schools. We consulted with a monitoring and evaluation expert who advised these were a proportional representation.
- Survey completed after the observation and feedback was given to in-service teachers on how to improve their teaching.
- Focus group discussions were held with 5 in-service and 5 pre-service teachers.
- A CTE student has been selected for a longitudinal case study to monitor their teaching once they are placed in a school in the next academic year.

### Progress

We are at the stage we anticipated to be.

### Achievements

- Pupils in English classes taught by our trained teachers showed an advancement in reading age of 9 months. They could identify an extra 28 letter sounds, read 16 more words fluently, read 1 and half more sentences correctly, and write 3 more words correctly than pupils in the control schools.
- CTE's are actively engaged with the project, keen to participate more and to pass on the phonics method of teaching to their students.
- The backing of the project by the CTE will further support our case with the Regional Educational Bureau to make phonics part of the English curriculum.
- This summer there will be an additional training with 6 CTE trainers and the college dean on phonics.

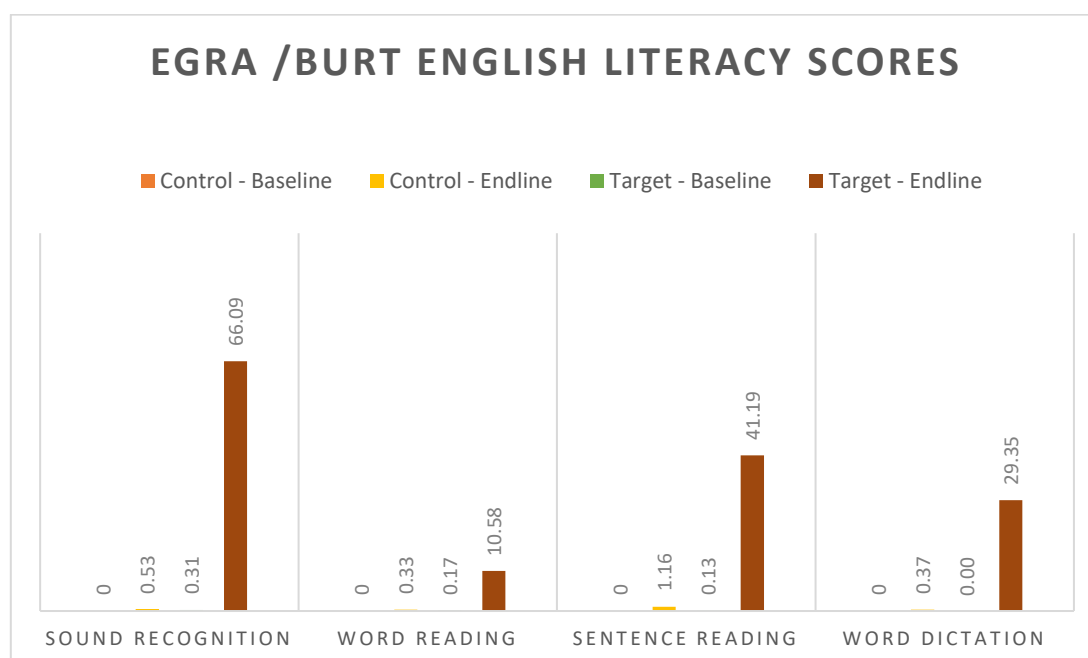
## Challenges

- The Amhara coup attempt which happened when we had planned to collect data caused some staffing and scheduling issues.
- The number of staff that have adequate knowledge about phonics is limited – this will expand with the project and through the CTE work we are doing now.
- There were challenges relating to the sharing, accessibility and safe keeping of phonics training materials. One lead teacher tended to take ownership of the phonics materials reducing the access and effectiveness of the other teachers. Due to this we reduced the number of teachers receiving the refresher training from all 36 teachers to the 9 lead teachers.

## Evidence of impact - EGRA-Burt Results – Control Schools vs Target Schools

EGRA-Burt tests evaluate students in four elements of English literacy: letter sounds, word reading, sentence reading and aural understanding.

The chart below shows the relative scores for each area where pupils in target schools who received phonics training outperformed control school pupils in all areas.



Looking at the Burt word reading scores allows us to give a reading age to the average pupil before and after the project.

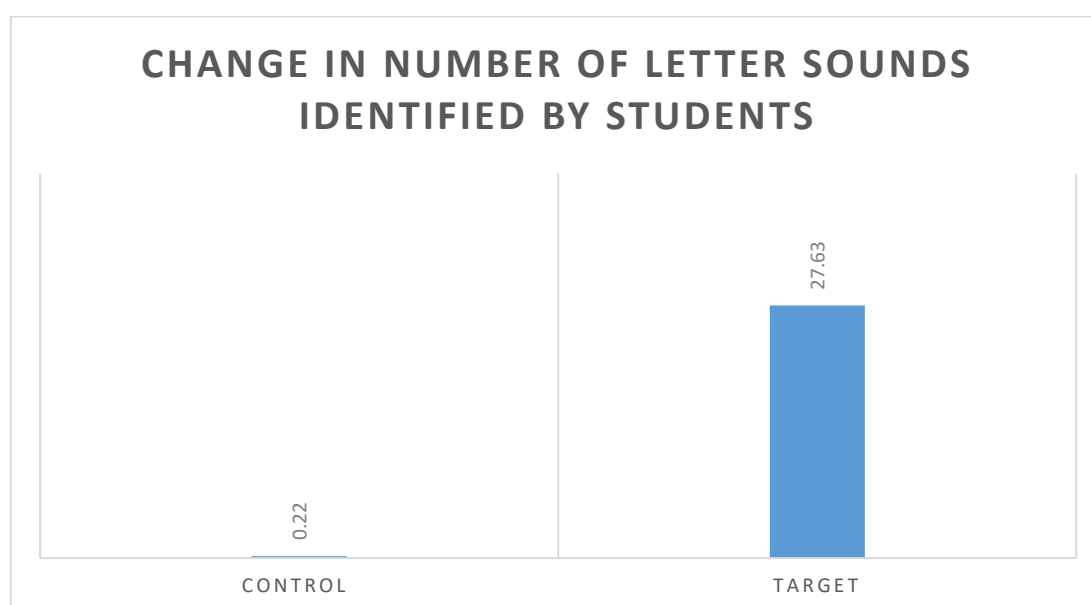
At the start of the academic year, both control and target school pupils had a reading age below the range of the test – we have set their scores as proxy results of 5 years and 3 months. At the end of the year, pupils in target schools had a reading age of 6 years. In control schools, there was no significant change in reading age at the end of the year. This means the programme improved reading age by 9 months over the average pupil.

Comparing this to our performance in 2015-16, this indicates a steady improvement in the effectiveness of the lessons delivered by teachers, when our phonics programme enabled pupils to reach a reading age of 5 years 11 months.

### Letter Sounds

The keystone to the phonics approach is that children learn not just letter names but the sounds they signify. This should allow them to 'decode' written words into their respective sounds and read them aloud. Therefore we would expect a considerably higher performance in target schools than control schools in the letter sounds elements of the EGRA-Burt tests.

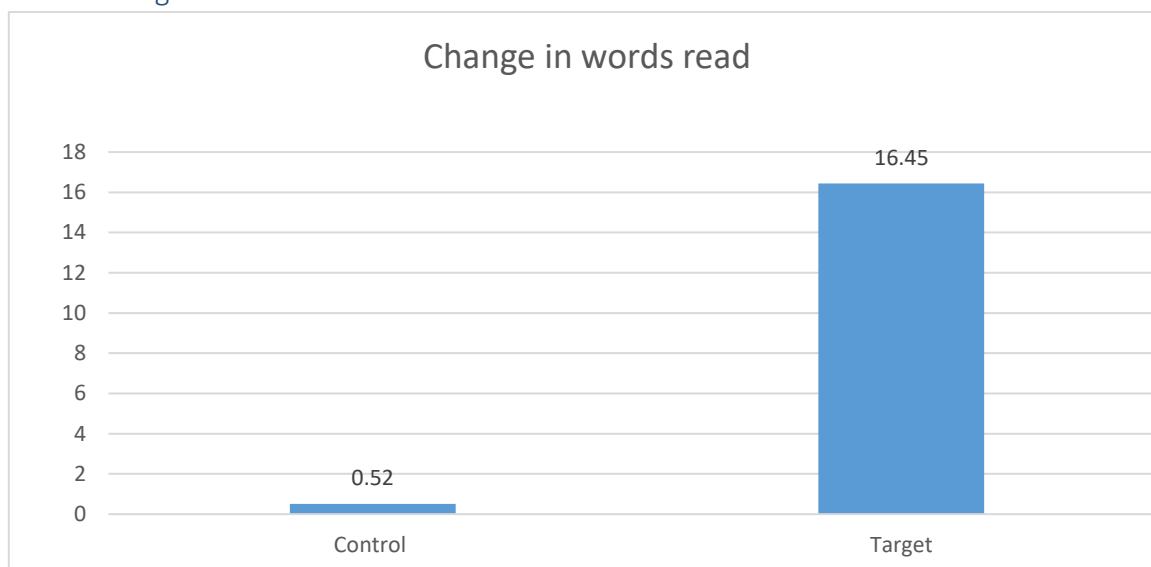
The EGRA-Burt tests gives pupils a list of 42 letter sounds. As the graph below shows, by the end of the year pupils in target schools were able to identify an extra 28 letter sounds compared to control schools who were most often not able to identify any new sounds. At the baseline, neither group was able to read any letter sounds correctly, by the end of the first year, pupils in the control schools could only read 0.2 sounds correctly, while students in target schools were able to read 28 letter sounds correctly.



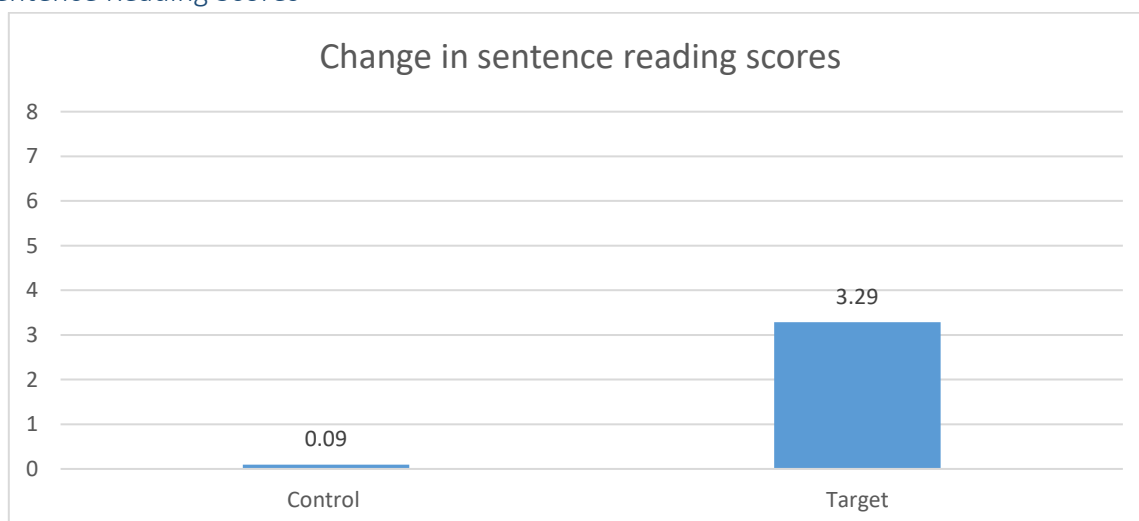
## Word Reading

The Burt test gives pupils a list of 158 words of increasing complexity. The phonics programme teaches pupils the letter sounds so that they can 'sound out' and then read new words. As expected, with an increased ability to identify the letter sounds in English, pupils in target schools were able to read more fluently at the end of the year. In our end line test, pupils were able to read 16 more words in the standard test. The average control school student did not show an improvement over the year.

## Word Reading Scores

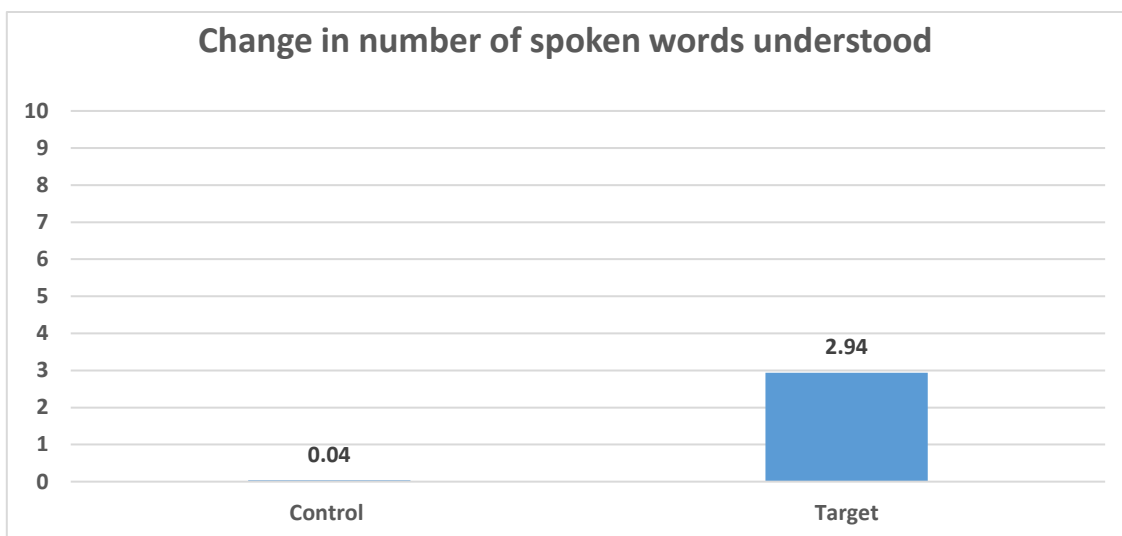


## Sentence Reading Scores

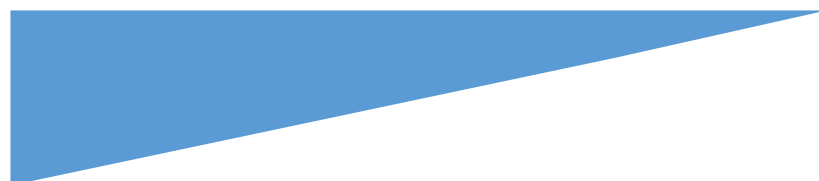




## Word Dictation



## Feedback from In-service Classroom observation



‘Almost all teachers mentioned that the methodology is helping them and the pupils to learn actively and freely by enjoying English lessons. They also mentioned that children are happy when the teacher opens the Jolly phonics pack to teach them a new sound. Hence, they said that in the previous they were not happy to teach English for grade 1 students but now, not only for this year but also for the other year, they prefer teaching grade 1 students. They also made their model class attractive and resourceful by using the jolly phonics materials and by using their modification like displaying tricky words in the classroom on a flowering artificial plant or on the wall.

Most teachers were performing by displaying all the jolly phonics pack and based on the training manual like the lesson plan or teacher’s lesson guide. Students were actively participating in the lesson in different activities like sounding, word reading, dictation, and identifying sounds in words’.

Zemene (Project Manager, Link Ethiopia)

### Feedback from Focus Group Discussions

5 in-service teachers, 5 pre-service teachers and 1 expert from Gondar City Education administration were interviewed at the end of the project.

#### **Q - What differences do you observe between the curriculum textbook and Jolly Phonics methodology (Importance of Jolly Phonics?)**



‘Jolly Phonics started with sounds and letters with by using different techniques like stories, actions, etc. The story is helpful for the students’

Endeshaw (Teacher, Walaj)



‘The students are always happy, not feeling bored’.

Yihunie(Teacher, Meseret)



‘Jolly Phonics does have a potential to make children effective in a short period of time’

Adenek (Gondar Education Administration Expert)



‘We have learnt English for the last 13 years but it is Jolly phonics that made us learn English better’

Mesere Adino (Pre-service teacher)



## Pupil drop-out rates & grade repetitions

Data will be available in year 2.

## Financial summary

<b>LINK ETHIOPIA</b>	
<b>Early Years English Improvement Project</b>	
Baseline and Endline Evaluation	£318.00
In-Service Phonics Training Semesters 1&2	£2,022.94
Pre-Service Phonics Training Semesters 1&2	£1,068.33
Education Bureau Meetings	£719.00
CTE oversight	£700.00
Train the Trainer event	£0.00
Monitoring and support Visits	£324.25
Staff	£1,506.00
Admin	£657.19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7,315.71</b>

## Key planned activities for next year

- Coordinating with the Regional Education Bureau to scale activities up to 4 new areas.
- Recruit and train field workers in 4 cities.
- Links with Local Education Office in each new city hub.
- Identification of 40 new schools, introduction to 3 new CTE's.
- Identification of 8 year 2 control schools.
- Meet head teacher & staff at target schools.
- Meet head teacher at control schools.
- Update meeting with Regional Education Bureau.
- Year 2 base line reading tests at target schools.
- Year 2 base line reading tests at control schools.
- Phonics training for Year 2 target schools.
- Phonics training for Year 2 CTE lecturers and pre-service teachers.
- Lesson observations at target schools.

## Photo Report



**Above:** every school at the 3-day base training receives a Jolly Phonics Extended Classroom Starter Kit

**Left:** teachers familiarise themselves with the Jolly Phonics materials at base training, November 2018





**Above and right:** a teacher practises delivering the lesson to the other trainees, using Teachers' Lesson Guide, on the final day of base training, November 2018.



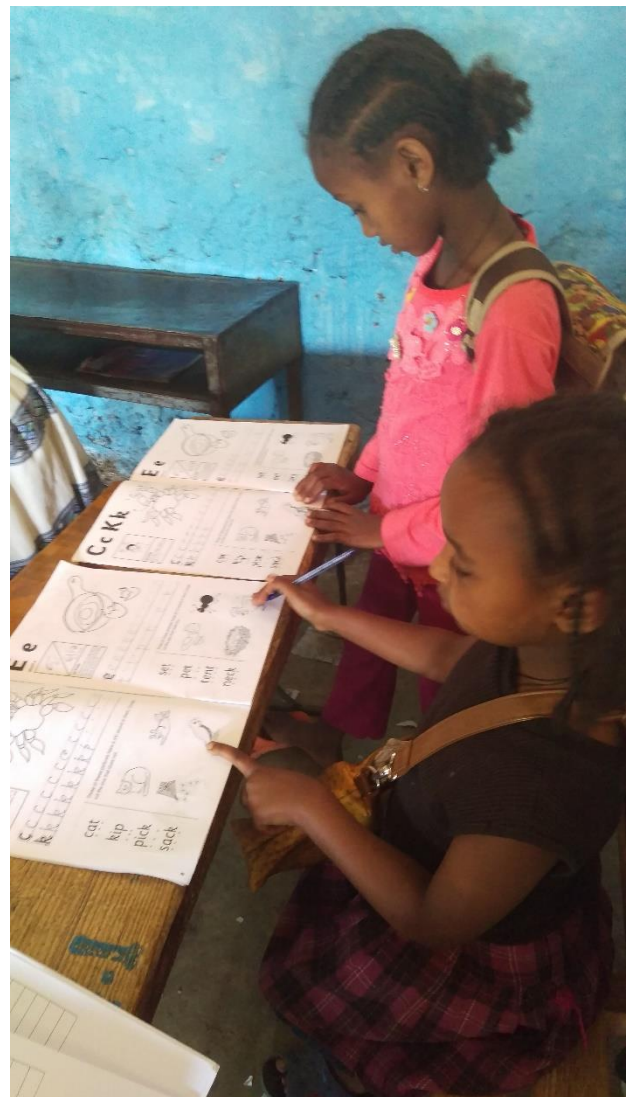


After attending the 3-day base training, 4 instructors from the Gondar College of Teacher Education completed a further 'Train the Trainers' day course. This allowed them to in turn skill up pre-service teachers in their final year of training.

**Left and below:** An instructor trains pre-service teachers in the phonics method, December 2018.







***Above, right and below:*** Pupils learn English using the Jolly Phonics resources and lesson plans in their classrooms

