ANASOMA MID-TERM REPORT
Insights on women and girls’ mobile reading in Kenya

May 2017
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report represents the consolidation of data and insights gathered from the first research sprint of the Anasoma Project, conducted from April 2016 to March 2017. The Anasoma Project aims to increase female participation in mobile reading and positively influence gender social norms and stereotypes, by identifying the barriers of and drivers to female mobile readership as well as by testing new empowering and engaging content through the Worldreader mobile app.

The research at this mid-term stage combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies to identify Worldreader’s potential female reader. Adopting a Human Centered Design approach, this report outlines the profiles of six personas, four of which represent Worldreader’s potential readers. For each persona, we identified their barriers, drivers and influencers to mobile reading. Looking across personas, we also provided a framework for the type of content that is empowering for women and girls in Kenya. We will use the four target personas outlined in this report to begin designing and testing strategies that will address the barriers outlined and leverage the attitudes and motivators that will drive mobile readership among our target groups. It is critical to mention that in order to identify the potential reader, the two pre-conditions are to target women and girls who are literate and own, or have access to, a data connected phone. While Worldreader hopes to one day broaden its scope and build partnerships to reach illiterate women and those without a data-connected phone, these populations currently fall outside the scope of the project.

This report represents what in Human Centered Design methodology is called “discovery” and will set the basis for the next phases of ideation, testing and prototyping that will conclude with the development of an outreach strategy to increase female participation in mobile reading. The initial findings suggest that age is the biggest differentiator among our target personas. Based on their age, the target groups we have outlined face different challenges to mobile reading that have been clustered as user experience, product awareness, affordability and understanding the value of reading.
While the influencers vary based on the age of our users, the ethnographic research found that immediate friends and family are the biggest influencers along with community members such as librarians and teachers, with some influence from social media and current trends. Furthermore the research found that women and girls in our target groups are motivated to read for a variety of personal reasons such as school and career as well as a desire to read for fun and get lost in a good book.

Finally, the research provided some critical insights on the definition of women’s empowerment that will be used to acquire and assess content in the next phase of the project. For women and girls, empowerment was commonly related to information, education, self-confidence, and leadership. For men, women’s empowerment was perceived as women and girls receiving an education, being able to pursue their careers and becoming financially independent. However, there was some discomfort with women’s empowerment displayed by men in the sample group who felt that women and girls in Kenya have become “over-empowered,” and that, “with too much focus on the girl-child, the boy-child has been neglected.” These attitudes require further exploration in order to address them as a potential barrier.

The insights generated, being just preliminary findings, have outlined several areas where there is need for further research in order to get a more complete picture of our potential reader demographic. Between May 2017 and February 2018 we will further our research to better address the barriers identified during the first phase among a more diverse and extended group of women, men and youth. The next phase of research will include user experience testing, testing of different strategies and solutions through the Worldreader mobile app, social media campaign tracking and ethnographic research to test and assess empowering and engaging content. The result of the testing will be the development of an outreach strategy to increase female mobile participation by June 2018.
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BACKGROUND
“Anasoma is an opportunity for Worldreader to understand women and girls in the context of digital reading. Engagement and empowerment are contextual; by providing the right content we aim to positively influence attitudes and stereotypes around women and girls reading on mobile.”
Who is Worldreader

Worldreader is a global nonprofit working to create a world where everyone can be a reader. Using low-cost technology (such as e-readers and mobile phones), a personalized digital library, and a worldwide network of corporate and nonprofit partners, we help millions of people reach their potential.

Lifelong Reading Program

Worldreader has four programs — Pre-Reading, School Reading, Library Reading, and Lifelong Reading. The Lifelong Reading program supports the development of a reading habit among youth, women and men.

The Lifelong Reading program currently encompasses two projects — Open Library Project and Anasoma — both contributing to Worldreader’s key goal of getting more people to read more often. While Anasoma is focused on understanding how to encourage more women to read using their mobile phones, Open Library Project focuses on how to get mobile readers to develop a reading habit.

Anasoma

Thanks to the support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Worldreader is implementing its first gender focused project in Kenya called Anasoma, ‘she/he reads’ in Kiswahili. A 2014 UNESCO report, Reading in the Mobile Era, showed that while girls and women make up only 23% of mobile readers, they consume over 66% of content¹. These numbers demonstrated that if more women knew about reading on their mobile phones, they would be likely to do so.

Anasoma originates from the intention to further understand and address the findings of the UNESCO Report through a research pilot meant to provide Worldreader with the know how, strategies and tools to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment through digital reading.

The Project focuses on understanding and identifying the barriers of and drivers to female mobile readership. In addition, the Project will identify new books that are empowering and engaging for women and girls in Kenya and that match their interests and needs. The final outcome will be to positively influence gender social norms and stereotypes. To achieve this, we adopted a Human Centered Design methodology to ensure a highly participatory approach in identifying the challenges for women and girls to read on mobile phones, and build solutions and strategies based on these challenges.

By providing real time data of our registered users through our Worldreader mobile app back end system, Anasoma is also contributing to the gender data revolution and the need for sex disaggregated data, as spelled out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The project’s final objective is the development of an outreach strategy to increase female participation in mobile reading by 2018. This strategy will then be tested and implemented in Kenya with a final goal of scaling through the development of a global strategy to increase female participation in mobile reading by 2020.
CONTEXT
Two thirds of the world’s 744 million illiterate people are women and access to books is essential to changing this statistic. Through the Anasoma learnings we hope to identify the strategies, tools and know how to reach a greater number of women and girls by providing a free service where they can read and enhance their knowledge, through the self-directed use of their mobile phones.

Before analysing the barriers of and drivers to female mobile readership, it is critical to provide some key information on the Kenyan context in terms of the gender divide, literacy and education of women and girls and the usage and ownership of mobile phones to effectively understand female mobile readership.

As in many other parts of the world, women and girls in Kenya are largely disadvantaged politically, economically and socially. They are underrepresented in decision-making positions and have less access to education, land, and employment. The situation is worse for women and girls living in rural areas who spend long hours doing house chores, which interferes with school attendance and leaves them with little time to earn money or engage in other productive activities.

Globally, in the last five years there has been a positive shift in how women and girls perceive the value of mobile phones. Women report that owning a phone makes them feel more independent, while staying connected presents a chance to access new prospects and helps them to save on time and money. However, women and girls are 14% less likely to own a mobile phone than men. The gender gap in mobile ownership in Kenya is 7%, which is comparatively small in relation to the income levels earned in Kenya which would normally indicate a larger gender gap.

Literacy and education of women and girls

Despite progress in recent years, universal access to primary education and enrollment in secondary education in Kenya remains low for both boys and girls, that stand at 51% and 48% respectively. At the same time, a disparity continues to exist when it comes to literacy with 16% of women in Kenya lacking basic literacy skills, compared to 9% of men.

Furthermore, only 43% of women have used mobile internet in Kenya, compared to 61% of men. Use is mainly impacted by income and education levels. In terms of ease of use, 49% of female mobile phone owners require assistance in using mobile internet, compared to 37% of men.

References:
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY
Taking into account these known challenges to access and usage, the key research objective was to identify and profile our potential reader, namely those women and girls in Kenya who are literate, own or have access to a data connected phone and who are simply not aware of, or choose not to use the Worldreader mobile app. The first phase of the research combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to identify barriers and drivers to female mobile readers, understand attitudes of women and men towards women reading on their phones, and better define reading behaviours and preferences.

The research adopted a Human Centered Design (HCD) approach that is a multidisciplinary, bottom up approach that applies anthropology, design and strategy in order to understand a problem area in context. This approach consists of three main iterative phases:

- **Discover:** understanding the problem space by studying the context and key actors.
- **Ideate:** creating solutions based on the insights from the Discover phase.
- **Prototype & Test:** developing prioritized concepts and iteratively validating them with users and other stakeholders.

The present report focuses on results of the ‘Discover’ phase of the research that will inform the next phases of ideation, prototyping and testing.

The research is the result of quantitative and qualitative analysis, combining a telephone survey, a Worldreader mobile app survey, the back end data from our Worldreader mobile app and ethnographic research. While the combined data has been used to profile our readers; critical importance has been given to the findings of the ethnographic research in shaping the development of target personas. Consequently, the main insights of the present report are prominently the result of the ethnographic research, while the quantitative research served mainly to further understand the reading behaviour, preferences and demographics.

Our approach for the ethnographic research was exploratory; utilizing observation and semi-structured interview techniques, which gave us a holistic understanding of our participants’ reading behaviours, needs, drivers and barriers in context. Besides interviewing readers, we also spoke to key experts in gender and digital reading. In total, we interviewed 47 women and men between the ages of 18 and 54 in Nairobi, representing the urban sample (15 females and 5 males), Kakamega, representing the rural sample (10 females and 5 males) and Murang’a, a peri-urban setting (8 females and 4 males). Focus group participants were recruited through a partnership with the Kenyan National Library Service (KNLS).
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

- Telephone Survey: 632
- Mobile App Survey: 152
- Back end data: 57,557
- Ethnographic Research: 47

Quantitative Research

Qualitative Research

Grand Total of 58,388

Sex Demographics of Participants

- Telephone Survey: 316 Males, 316 Females
- Mobile App Survey: 102 Males, 48 Females
- Back End Data: 14,027 Males, 4,963 Females
- Ethnographic Research: 14 Males, 33 Females
PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER
PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER

After conducting 47 interviews with current and potential mobile readers, we developed six personas. Personas are key archetypal users that represent the behaviours, attitudes, goals, and values of larger groups of readers. Personas are based on the ethnographic research detailed in the methodology and are a useful tool for stakeholders as it helps them empathize with readers, ask the right questions, generate insights and ultimately design a product that is specifically targeted towards the latent needs of a persona.

To come up with this set of personas, we mapped all of the observations from our research and found patterns and trends from the interviews. We used these behavioural patterns to group similar people together. After generating insights, we found that the main differentiator between our potential target group was age as our readers exhibited different reading behaviours in terms of location, content, rationale, etc. depending on their stage of life.

We further found that the personas developed through the research fall into three categories: The first represents those “Eager to Read,” our main target population who are broken out into three personas named Lisa representing three life stages i.e. 19, 30 and 45 at which they exhibit different barriers, drivers and interests. The second represents those who “Require Motivation to Read,” a potential target persona given the name Mary that at age 19 faces some more fundamental barriers but who can be converted into a reader with the proper positive reinforcements and interventions. Finally, a third group representing two personas at age 30 and age 45 given the name “Esther” whose barriers include lack of access to a data-enabled phone, lack of awareness about the value of reading, and low literacy. Since the barriers of this third group fall outside the scope of the Anasoma project, we do not intend to further investigate their behaviour and needs. Currently, Worldreader does not possess the capacity and resources to properly and effectively address these deep-rooted barriers. Nevertheless, in the longer term, the hope is to partner with organisations focused on those thematic areas to tackle the issue with a more holistic approach. As such, for the scope of the two-year project, the focus is mainly on the four personas who it will be possible to convert into readers with Worldreader’s current resources.

For each persona, we will explain in depth their rationale for reading, their influencers, their content preferences, their reading journey as well as what content they find empowering. We will refer back to these personas throughout the document to continue building empathy and make sure we do not drift away from understanding the challenges and motivations of our current and future readers.
## Summary of Personas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Persona</th>
<th>Key Characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eager to Read</strong></td>
<td>Lisa at 19 years</td>
<td>University/college student, no income, feature phone owner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa at 30 years</td>
<td>Teacher, earns KSH 40,000 per month, smartphone owner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa at 45 years</td>
<td>Business owner, earns KSH 100,000 per month, smartphone owner</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Requires Motivation to Read</strong></td>
<td>Mary at 19 years</td>
<td>High school graduate, no income, feature phone owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Outside Project Scope</strong></td>
<td>Esther at 30 years</td>
<td>Primary school dropout, small grocery kiosk owner, earns KSH 3,000 per month, feature phone owner</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Esther at 45 years</td>
<td>Primary school dropout, small grocery kiosk owner and farmer, earns KSH 5,000 per month, feature phone owner</td>
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Who influences me and how do they influence me?

My Parents:
My parents taught me the importance of reading since I was little. For example, my dad would bring home books and newspapers and ask me to read them and then narrate the stories to him. My parents also kept a small library of books at home.

Community librarian:
I usually access books from the public library in my community. The librarian there recommends to me books that I should read. He has also created a book club within the library where as readers we come together to discuss and share learnings with one another.

Peers and friends:
My friends and peers are also helping me in picking books to read. I borrow books from them and they also recommend to me books that I should read. Also, when reading for school, we often work in groups and read together.

Why I read
I mostly read academic books because they are the books I need for my course. When I’m not reading for school and need to relax, I read fiction books: romance and thriller are my favourites.
I love reading because I learn about different cultures and experiences and from some stories and characters, I gain inspiration and confidence to pursue my dreams.

NAME: Lisa
AGE: 19 years
OCCUPATION: University/College student
INCOME: None
PHONE OWNED: Limited access to phone

Biggest challenge reading on mobile: Limited access to a phone and/or sufficient data

Profiling our potential reader
EAGER TO READ

I love reading and I believe it is extremely important to succeed in life. I know the internet provides access to thousands of books, I just wish I had my own smartphone and was able to afford data so that I could read those books online.

I mostly read academic books because they are the books I need for my course. When I’m not reading for school and need to relax, I read fiction books: romance and thriller are my favourites.
I love reading because I learn about different cultures and experiences and from some stories and characters, I gain inspiration and confidence to pursue my dreams.
What is empowering for me?

I love books with strong characters and success stories. They inspire and give me confidence to know that I too can fulfill my dreams and be able to overcome the difficulties in life. I love reading books that teach me new skills that could help me with my career.

Why aren’t others like me Worldreader readers?

I heard about Worldreader from a friend but I haven’t used the app myself. This is because I don’t have a data connected phone and I heard that one cannot read on it without one. I was also informed that one needs to load those phones with data to read on the app; I don’t always have access to a phone or can’t always afford data bundles because I don’t have a job.

Reading Journey

School Term

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<th>Time:</th>
<th>Place:</th>
<th>With Whom:</th>
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<td>☀️</td>
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When school is in session, I read every day at the school library. At times, I will borrow books and read in my room or in a quiet location out in the field. When I want to relax, I read in the evenings after classes and during the weekend.

Holidays

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When I am at home during holidays, I read mostly from the community library. I also borrow books from friends or relatives and read at home. I will also borrow books from friends or relatives and read at home in the evenings before going to sleep.
EAGER TO READ

I love reading but my busy schedule at work and at home makes it difficult for me to read as much as I would like to. Reading on mobile would be more convenient for me but I don’t know where I can access books on the internet.

WHY I READ

There are times I read novels for fun and to relax after a long day. However, most of the time I just read to build my professional and childcare skills.

WHO INFLUENCES ME AND HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE ME?

I usually know in advance what books I want to read and therefore, I pick them on the basis of my personal needs and motivations at the time. Other times though, I have nothing pre-planned and my friends, peers and booksellers will recommend to me books that I should read.

I also check book reviews online and if I like a book, I go and buy it from the bookstore. Additionally, I rely on the media, especially social media to be informed on the latest books or new authors.

NAME: LISA
AGE: 30 YEARS
OCCUPATION: TEACHER
INCOME: KSHS 40,000 PER MONTH
PHONE OWNED: SMARTPHONE

Biggest challenge reading on mobile: Limited free time to read and lack of awareness on where to find books online
PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER

MY TOP CONTENT PREFERENCES

WHY AREN’T OTHERS LIKE ME WORLDREADER READERS?

What is empowering for me?
I love books where I can learn and improve my knowledge. I believe the more I know, the more I can advance in life. As a professional, I want books that make me a better professional and that prepare me for future opportunities in my career. I also like reading books about marriage and childcare. When it comes to fiction novels, I love books with strong characters and success stories as they motivate me.

Why aren’t others like me Worldreader readers?
Because of my busy schedule at work and at home, I don’t usually have a lot of time to surf widely on the internet; mostly I am on email, social media or on news websites. As such, unless something is mentioned in those sites, I rarely hear of it and I end up missing out. I have never heard of the Worldreader mobile app therefore I have never used it.

WHAT IS EMPOWERING FOR ME?

Reading journey

WHERE I GET MY BOOKS FROM

WHAT TIME I READ

My favorite books are family and career books. They are the majority of books that I read. The rest of the time, I engage with fiction, especially romance and thriller.

I buy my books mostly from the book vendors on the street because they are cheap.
I also borrow from friends and relatives.
Once in a while, I will buy from the bookshop.

Because of my busy schedule, I mostly read alone at home in the evenings from 9pm which is when I get some free time.

Because of my busy schedule, I am stuck in traffic or during lunch break in the office.

I sometimes read in between activities like in the bus.

My top content preferences

Fiction
Family books
Career books

20%
40%
40%

20%
PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER

NAME: LISA
AGE: 45 YEARS
OCCUPATION: BUSINESS OWNER
INCOME: KSHS 100,000 PER MONTH
PHONE OWNED: SMARTPHONE

I want to make a positive impact on other people’s lives and I consider reading as a way to discover how to achieve it. I know there are a lot of online books of which I can access on my phone but I just find it difficult to read on mobile.

WHY I READ

Mostly, I read to get inspired on how I can improve myself and other people around me and the society in general. Once I discover what I want to work on, I read topical books on that subject. I also read self-help books to improve myself and to advise others.

WHO INFLUENCES ME AND HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE ME?

Right now, the kind of books I read are largely influenced by my self-improvement as well as by the people I seek to impact. I am mentoring teenage girls in my community and therefore what I read is being informed by what is relevant to them.

The girls will at times suggest book titles for us to read together. I also search for recommended book titles and authors online after which I buy them from book stores.

I also follow events in the media very closely and this influences my choice of books as well as what I seek relevant but also contemporary reading topics for myself and for the people I want to impact.
**MY TOP CONTENT PREFERENCES**

![Pie Chart]

- **Motivational/ Self-help books**: 55%
- **Fiction**: 45%

I like reading motivational and self-help books. For instance, I am mentoring a group of teenage girls in my community and so I like reading books touching on teenage issues. At times though, I will read fiction like romance, thrillers and fantasy when I need to relax.

**WHY AREN’T OTHERS LIKE ME WORLDREADER READERS?**

I don’t understand the book categories when deciding which book to read and I find confusing to move between pages. Also, the font size used in many mobile sites is too small and I don’t know how to enlarge it; this strains my eyes and I find it hard to read lengthy books. Finally, I consider reading on mobile to be more suited to the youth who are more tech-savvy and who like to keep up with technology trends.

**WHAT IS EMPOWERING FOR ME?**

I love books that are helping me understand more what I can do to make an impact in other people’s lives and the community in general. I love books that help me discover my purpose and passions in life and that give me ideas of what I can do to live them out.

**READING JOURNEY**

**WHERE I GET MY BOOKS FROM**

- **LOCATION:**
  - Bookshop:
  - Family/Friends or Public Library:

- **FREQUENCY:**
  - Often:
  - Occasional:

I buy most of my books from bookstores. I sometimes get books from the public library or borrow from friends and relatives.

**WHAT TIME I READ**

- **TIME:**
  - Evening:
    - I mostly read in the evenings from 8pm when I have more free time.
  - Daytime:
    - I first read books alone but then re-read them with the other people I want to impact. For instance, I read with the Sunday school children in my church as well as with a group of young girls in my community that I mentor.

- **PLACE:**
  - Home:
  - Church:

- **WITH WHOM:**
  - Alone:
  - Others:
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PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER

REQUIRES MOTIVATION TO READ

When I was at school, I only read the set books that my teachers gave me. Now that I left school, the only book I read is the Bible. I don’t really see the point of reading unless it is necessary.

WHY I READ

When I was in school, I only read what was required for me to pass my exams.

Now, the only book I read is the Bible and the reason I read it is because it is part of my religion and it gives me guidance in my Christian walk.

NAME: MARY
AGE: 19 YEARS
EDUCATION: HIGH SCHOOL
INCOME: NONE
PHONE OWNED: FEATURE PHONE

Biggest challenge reading on mobile: General lack of interest in reading as well as limited access to an internet-enabled phone

WHO INFLUENCES ME AND HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE ME?

Growing up, I did not have people around me that told me that reading was important. My parents and teachers in primary and high school usually expressed the importance of reading for academics and for passing exams but not other books.

Some students and teachers even thought that reading books that were not set books was a waste of time that could have been used for academic work. Those who read were labeled as “idlers”.

My close friends and relatives also don’t read. Today, I am in a position to read books from the community library nearby but I just don’t see how it will help me and I am not interested.
WHAT IS EMPOWERING FOR ME?

What I find really empowering is religious texts. I really enjoy reading the Bible because I get encouraged especially during hard times and also receive guidance on how to become a stronger believer.

WHY AREN’T OTHERS LIKE ME WORLDREADER READERS?

Generally, I just do not really see the value in reading including reading on mobile so I never look for apps where I can read books for free.

Also, I cannot afford an internet-enabled phone or enough data because I don’t have a job.

READING JOURNEY

When I was a student, I would only read books related to my course and my Bible. I would say 70% of my time on school books and 30% on my Bible. Now, I only read the Bible (100%) because it guides me in my spiritual walk.

MY TOP CONTENT PREFERENCES

100% The Bible

I usually read my Bible everyday at home in my bedroom. I read in the morning as soon as I wake up at around 6.30 am and read for about 30 minutes. I also read it again in evenings as part of my evening devotion.

On Sundays I also read it in church together with the other church members.

We also have home fellowship with my Bible study group every Wednesday where we read the bible together and discuss.

PROFILING OUR POTENTIAL READER
KEY INSIGHTS
There are significant barriers that women and girls in Kenya face when it comes to reading on a mobile. Beyond the intrinsic barriers of literacy and phone ownership that fall outside the project scope, the research findings suggest that the key barriers to mobile readership can be grouped as user experience, product awareness, affordability and understanding the value of reading. These are further outlined in the pyramid below.

**BARRIERS TO MOBILE READING**

For user experience we have outlined a number of minor challenges in navigating the app as well as issues related to digital literacy in each of the personas. In addition, the research reveals that many people are simply not aware of the existence of a Worldreader mobile app where they can access free books.

Even when someone is aware of the mobile app and able to navigate it, there can be issues in affording data bundles or in actually finding the time to read on mobile. As such, affordability is a significant barrier to uptake of reading on a mobile. A number of women and girls in Kenya do...
not place great value on reading. There is an opportunity and time cost to reading on mobile and how significant this is perceived to be, determines whether one chooses to read. Reading books either in print or on a mobile requires potential readers to make a choice: to use their money, time and skills in favour of reading, or reserving these resources for other activities in their lives, such as working, cooking or spending money on items that are considered more critical.

We found that there are negative societal narratives around reading for women and girls. These differing attitudes and perceptions prevail in society around mobile reading, shaping potential readers’ opinions. Negative narratives that we have observed, such as beliefs that women should be looking after their families instead of reading, are perpetrated at different levels of society among both close friends and family and more removed networks, hindering mobile reading and its level of uptake.

While infrastructure falls outside the scope of this project, it is worth noting that there were also significant barriers resulting from the lack of basic infrastructure needed to read on mobile. In a lot of rural areas in Kenya, we heard women complain about the network breakdowns and the slow internet connection. One woman told us that she often has to refresh the page on her browser while reading, therefore spending more data than usual. From this, it is clear that slow internet connectivity and poor infrastructure impact the uptake of mobile reading, especially for potential readers living in rural areas (and to a minor extent peri-urban areas).

The barriers outlined in the pyramid affect some women and girls more than others, on the basis of their age, education and interests, among other characteristics. As such, in the next subsection we delve deeper into these differences based on the four target personas we have outlined.

**Insights per persona - Barriers**

**‘Eager to Read’ Target Group**

**LISA AT 19 YEARS**

For a young Lisa, we found that data cost was her biggest barrier to mobile reading. As those falling under this persona are typically still studying, they do not earn an income yet and have to rely on relatives, guardians and parents for money. Those readers like Lisa have limited
purchasing power for buying data bundles. When we interviewed this group, we found that they also prioritize how they spend their airtime. They tend to spend most of it in chat apps or social media such as WhatsApp or Facebook because keeping in touch with their social networks is extremely important to them. Those readers live mostly in a peri-urban setting, although they can also be found in urban or rural areas.

This persona faces barriers founded in negative societal narratives underestimating the value of reading for women and girls. This is more prevalent for Lisa if she is living in a rural area where traditional culture is stronger. They are highly impressionable: family, peer and community narratives are extremely important to them and will influence whether this group reads or not. It was clear from our research that Lisa at 19 has a lot of peer and parental pressure to succeed at school. For example, one young woman in Nairobi told us that her teacher scolded her for reading a romance novel and told her that she should focus on her studies instead. There is a prevailing belief that reading for pleasure and entertainment is frowned upon by adults when young girls are found to be reading certain content that is considered “adult reading material.” We also heard that girls are “more vulnerable” than boys and because of this, they often experience restrictions as to when, where and with whom to read print and online books. Furthermore, most young women in rural areas and in urban slums are expected to be home before dark and therefore will not stay on in the libraries to read as long as young men do. As a result, it is critical that these groups of people are surrounded by positive influences that can further encourage them around the importance of reading.

**LISA AT 30 YEARS**

This persona has a stable job, such as teaching or library services, and has a family. Her biggest barrier to uptake is that she has limited time to read. When she comes back from work, she often has to take care of her family, cook and help her children with homework, which makes it hard for her to find some quiet time to read. During our research, we talked to a number of women who told us that they preferred to watch book-adapted movies rather than the actual books because it was less time consuming. These readers live mostly in an urban area, although they can be found in a rural or peri-urban setting.

Furthermore, this persona is seldom aware of the existence of the Worldreader mobile app where she can access free books. Her limited free time means that she cannot spend hours
surfing the web to find books so when she does use her data connected phone, she goes on websites and services that she knows well, such as email, social media and news websites. This means that often, other opportunities to read books on online mobile platforms go unexplored. These challenges are more prevalent for Lisa if she is living in a rural area. To start with, a stronger traditional culture often found in rural areas expects women like Lisa to solely take care of housework, whereas in urban settings today some men help with such day-to-day responsibilities, therefore leaving her with a bit of free time to read. Additionally, penetration of mobile technology including the use of mobile apps, is lower in rural areas compared to urban and some peri-urban areas. Therefore if living in a rural area, Lisa at 30's likelihood of reading on mobile is lowered even further.

**LISA AT 45 YEARS**

For this group of users, we found that their biggest barrier was their limited digital literacy that hampers their capability of using the mobile app. Digital literacy refers to the cognitive and technical skills, as well as confidence needed to be able to in the first instance, use the internet and a mobile phone and then to select and read books online. Because these skills are lacking, this group prefers to read paper books that they are more familiar with rather than struggle to read on mobile. Women within this group live mostly in an urban area, but can also be found in rural or peri-urban locations.

“I have had this smartphone for 6 months now but I just call and text with it. I know I could do a lot more with it, and my son is trying to show me, but I find it hard to use”

- Edith, 45 years, Kakamega.

There is a general perception that reading on a mobile is more suited to the youth who are more tech-savvy and keep up with technology trends. People in this persona’s age bracket are considered “old fashioned”, lacking the ability to keep up with ‘youthful’ activities like mobile reading. For example, one woman in Kakamega recounted a story that told of some women in her investment group who made fun of her when she told them of her endeavours to read on her phone. They told her that she should leave these things to her daughter, further perpetuating this negative perception of women of a certain age reading on their phone.
Readers like Lisa at 45 are more likely to experience these challenges if they are living in a rural area where penetration of mobile technology including the use of mobile apps is lower in comparison to urban and some peri-urban areas.

‘Require Motivation to Read’ Target Group

MARY AT 19 YEARS

Women like Mary at 19 are not aware of the value of reading and this is driven by the lack of positive influencers in their lives who can encourage them to take up reading. During our research, a “Mary” told us that her parents and teachers never encouraged her to read. The only book she read was the Bible because it was very important to her and her parents. When she was in school, she only read books she needed to read in order to pass exams; she did not consider any other content useful. This persona also does not earn an income and comes from a low income family where food and other basic necessities are prioritized over education.

We also found that negative societal narratives around reading for women and girls, as outlined above, were another barrier for this persona. Other things were seen to take priority over education and reading for this persona, such as finding a job or helping their family in the home. Reading is considered a ‘leisure activity’ that does not contribute to the family’s life and income and therefore is frowned upon.

Future areas of inquiry

There were limitations to our study regarding the numbers of research participants who fell into different age groups. We did not interview as many respondents between the 30-44 age group as we had planned since we had difficulty identifying the right sample. In our next sprint of research, we will seek to further explore the negative societal narratives for our persona within this age bracket represented by Lisa at 30.

These preliminary identified barriers and insights will be used to ideate solutions during a series of participatory sessions in the next sprint of research in order to design how to address these barriers through mobile app development and content curation, to mention but a few. Once the strategies, solutions and messaging are further tested, we will design an outreach campaign to encourage more women and girls to read on the Worldreader mobile app by June 2018.
During our preliminary research, it was apparent that girls and women’s reading preferences were different based on the personas we uncovered. We found that for all personas, culture has a major influence and can dictate reading behaviours such as content choices, locations for reading, time of reading, as well as general reading attitudes.

The present infographic shows the intersection between influencers, drivers and motivators and the effect that they have on the Lisas’ and Mary’s choice to read and become our readers. It also shows how influencers, drivers and motivators are predominantly affecting Lisa at different stages in her life. The result is that the greater the combination of drivers, motivators and influencers, the higher the possibility of Lisas and Marys being converted to mobile readers.
KEY INSIGHTS

Insights per persona - Drivers and Motivators

LISA AT 19 YEARS
We found that Lisa at 19 prefers reading on a mobile as she puts a high value on privacy. One young woman in Nairobi told us that her mother always used to check what books she was reading and got into trouble when her mother thought she had picked an inappropriate book. Reading on a mobile has really changed things for her because her mother cannot constantly check her phone. This persona also mentioned that accessing books for free (vs. having to pay to borrow a book from the library) and getting books from friends through reading groups on social media such as WhatsApp or Facebook were two main advantages of mobile reading.

LISA AT 30 YEARS
For Lisa at 30, mobile reading is also her preferred choice but not for the same reasons as Lisa at 19. Indeed, because of her limited time, this persona prefers reading on mobile as she is able to read anytime and anywhere including in between tasks. She is also attracted to the variety of books online that she can read for her professional and family needs.

LISA AT 45 YEARS
For this group of users, they strongly preferred reading paper books as opposed to reading on a mobile. One woman in Nairobi told us that to her, reading means the sound and feel of flipping pages and she misses the sensory experience of this interaction on a mobile. She really enjoys touching the book and underlining and highlighting certain sections. Another woman in Kakamega told us that “serious readers read paper books”. Serious readers are the ones who carry books around and keep libraries at home unlike those reading on a mobile.

Finally, some women in this age group are involved in mentorship activities and when they receive the younger generation at home, they prefer some outward and physical evidence in the form of a home library to inspire their mentees, something that is considered difficult to achieve by reading and collecting books on mobile.
Through our research, we have identified drivers and influencers that have an effect on girls and women reading. While our research participants had some intrinsic motivations for reading, we identified some drivers and influencers such as people (family, friends, community), places (home, work, library), media and trends. The preliminary findings suggest that these drivers and influencers varied based on setting.

Across all personas, immediate family and friends are the strongest influencers driving the majority of readers to develop an early interest in reading. Librarians are other key influencers, especially in rural areas where they are the most prominent location to source books. Librarians recommend what books to read, create reading groups (both offline and online), and some also do community outreach activities in schools and other public forums sensitizing people to the importance of reading. It is worth noting here however, that the majority of our research group was accessed through libraries so there is likely some bias in the appreciation of the value of libraries and librarians. Other key influencers are teachers, especially those teaching literature (both English and Kiswahili), often taking students through curricula set books.

We found that location and easy access to books played a significant role in influencing reading behaviours in our persona groups. Girls and women who were able to access books at home either from their home library or from immediate family and friends, were found to have developed an early reading culture. Proximity to a library was also a key determinant to whether someone reads.

In Kenya, public libraries are operated by the Kenya National Library Services. The majority of these libraries are located in county headquarters, most of which are largely urban. As such, women and girls in urban areas have more access to these public libraries than those in peri-urban and rural areas, which translates to them reading more and a wider selection of books. A few rural areas, however, have community libraries but most of these are usually not well stocked and their opening hours are often irregular.

Finally, we found that media and trends greatly influence these groups. The media plays a key
role in promoting reading as well as relaying news about the latest books and online reading platforms. It also reports news and events that trigger an interest in certain books at certain times, producing reading trends. For example, the nomination of Ngugi wa Thiong’o for the Nobel Prize in Literature influenced women and girls to start reading his books. Social media in particular, is widely relied upon as a source of news as well as a platform to connect with reading communities all over the globe.

Depending on the persona, some drivers are more important than others: we will explore them further through our personas in the subsection below.

**Insights per persona - Influencers**

**LISA AT 19 YEARS**

For this group of users, we found that they were highly impressionable with most of their reading decisions being determined by outside influences, with their key influencer being their parents. One of our research participants in Kakamega told us that her dad would bring her books and newspapers and ask her to read them to him when she was little. This established a routine, and in turn encouraged her to read from a very early age.

Two other key influencers for this group are the community librarian, peers and friends, with the community librarian having the most influence if Lisa lives in a rural area. While librarians are seen as a figure of knowledge whom they can turn to if they want a new book recommendation, friends are also important as they borrow and share books from them and discuss their views of the books together.

**LISA AT 30 YEARS**

For Lisa at 30, peers and friends as well as the media are the biggest influence on her reading behaviours, with the latter having more influence if she lives in an urban area where there is more access to different media platforms (radio, television, print, social media) compared to rural areas. This group relies on their network to get information on what books they should read as well as where to get them from. For example, one woman in Kakamega told us that she bought most of her books from a local street vendor. He had become the biggest influence on her
reading, as he always kept her up to date with new books he was stocking and he advised her on what to read next based on the books he saw her buy. For other users we met, they used book review websites and social media to know what to read next.

**LISA AT 45 YEARS**

For this group of users, we found that their drivers and influencers were significantly different than the rest of the personas. This group tended to be mentors within the community, and because of their mentorship activities, their motivations for reading are driven largely by the needs of those who consider them a mentor. They usually choose to read books that are relevant to those who seek their advice, so that they can use the knowledge they gain to help them. One woman in Murang’a explained that teenage girls in her church were often coming to her for advice, especially around sex and relationships so she started reading books about these topics especially for them.

For the women who live in rural areas, we also noticed that they are often influenced by booksellers or librarians. They rely on them for information on what books are suitable for their mentorship and self-improvement goals.

**Future areas of inquiry**

In the next phase of our research, we will utilize these insights to find out the necessary conditions required to cultivate a positive reading behaviour. Specifically, we will explore how these drivers and attitudes can be used to engage more women and girls with mobile reading. Secondly, while we have found out more on who the key influencers for our readers are, we have not fully explored how this influence works at a psychological level. Further areas for investigation will attempt to address the following questions: when a student is influenced by the teacher to read, does she initially start doing so because she wants to please the teacher or do so in order to avoid a punitive measure? Or does she start reading (by the influence of her peers) so that she does not feel left out by the group? We will then explore how these psychological influencers can be utilized to generate uptake of the Worldreader app.
During this first phase of the research, we started exploring the concept of empowerment, especially related to women and girls. We also interviewed men to better understand their perspectives and discover the reading differences between the sexes. This section discusses how women and men define ‘women’s empowerment’ as well as what they consider to be empowering content.

**What does empowerment look like?**

*For women and girls:*

Empowerment is very individualistic when girls are young but it then moves beyond individual units to the family or community units as they grow older. For example, Lisa at 45 is very focused on mentorship, leadership and community development, while Lisa at 19 cares about the “self” (using words such as “self-confidence”, “self-identity”, “freedom”). A few words have been used across all personas to describe empowerment (“information”, “education”, “self-confidence”) but the definition of empowerment changes with age, as the word-cloud below shows us.
For men and boys:

For the majority of men and boys surveyed, women’s empowerment means women and girls receiving an education, being able to pursue their careers and becoming financially independent. On the other hand, we heard from a large number of men that they felt that women and girls today have become ‘over-empowered’. They feel that a lot of focus has been put on the girl-child and the boy-child has been neglected. They also feel that most empowered women and girls are too independent, not needing men which is threatening to their masculinity. There are also others who perceive empowered women and girls to not be ‘marriage material’. They think such women are stubborn, disrespectful to men (especially if they earn a higher income) and therefore cannot make good spouses. One man in Kakamega told us that although he can date educated and financially independent women, he wants to settle down with someone who is not because “she will need [him] and treat [him] like a man”. The implications of these negative attitudes towards women’s empowerment will need to be further explored as a potential barrier to women comfortably reading on mobile.

What type of content is empowering?

Content that is considered to be empowering depends on the overall message portrayed by the book and the author. Through our preliminary research, women and girls we talked to found books written by women, especially African women, very empowering. Solutions-focused content was also often mentioned in our interviews. For example, one woman in Nairobi told us that she really enjoyed reading books that gave her practical solutions that she can apply in her everyday life. Any research participants who appreciated realistic content, often described the holistic picture of a person’s life, mentioning both career and family life. They often emphasized a necessity for balance between career and family life, not focusing on a single aspect and neglecting the other.

Preferred content by women and girls

What was considered engaging and empowering books differed according to the persona. Below are some hypotheses we will further investigate and validate during the second phase of the research.
**LISA AT 19 YEARS**
For this group of users, outside of the set books that they have to read for school, they really enjoy romance and thriller novels with strong female protagonists. We believe that there is a need for “escapism” and entertainment through reading for this persona. This is something we want to investigate further in our next research sprint.

**LISA AT 30 YEARS**
This persona is unique when it comes to books she finds empowering. Most of the participants we interviewed from this group were reading fiction books as well as books around career, business and family. In the next sprint of research, we will confirm whether this persona is focused on self-growth in terms of careers while at the same time balancing with her family life.

**LISA AT 45 YEARS**
For this group of users, their focus is on learning, inspiration and knowledge. Inspirational and motivational books are extremely popular for this persona who does not usually read for entertainment. It would be interesting in the next research sprint to find out whether this group of users feels satisfied at work and therefore feels the need to support others. We can also assume that for this group, children have left home which would free up more time for personal development.
TOP RATED EMPOWERING BOOKS FOR FEMALE READERS

4 TOP RATED BOOKS

TOP RATED BOOKS

HIGHLY RATED BOOKS

4 MAJOR GENRES

Source: Ethnographic research
Further areas of inquiry:

The second phase of the research will attempt to further understand what women, men and youth in Kenya consider empowering. The goal of the research will be to find a common ground between what women consider empowering while keeping men engaged and interested. As such, different messaging on empowerment will be tested with a diverse group of women, men and youth to ensure that while attempting to get more women reading, we do not lose our male audience and on the contrary we encourage more men and boys to read about women’s empowerment.
Through our research, we wanted to understand our Worldreader readers and their perceptions of the app. We found that readers had varied experiences reading on the mobile app that were mostly due to how long someone had been using the mobile app as well as how much one read on other reading sites. We categorized some of the feedback below, as well as recommendations for future research.

**Positive Experiences**

What most readers loved about the Worldreader mobile app is that they could access full books for free. On most online websites or apps, books are not free. A few users also told us that while some websites advertised that they had free books, in reality only abstracts could be accessed, which led to disappointment amongst readers.

Readers were very satisfied with the number of books in stock on the Worldreader mobile app, as well as the variety of genres, topics and languages. A participant in Nairobi told us that she could spend hours on the Worldreader mobile app because there are thousands of books to choose from and she never got bored.

The Worldreader mobile app was very easy for readers to use, in terms of navigation and book categorization. One woman in Nairobi told us that she liked that she could start reading right away without needing to register. When our research participants did register, the process did not cause any confusion and was described as “very easy” and “straightforward” because of the Facebook or email login. One user in Murang’a told us that in other apps, she usually has to fill in so many fields that sometimes she gives up because of the elongated process. She also told us that she liked the multiple options of either downloading the mobile app from Google Play or using Opera Mini (a web browser).

Finally, readers mentioned that they really enjoyed being able to download books so that they can save on time, data costs and battery charges.
Negative Experiences

The majority of dissatisfaction with the mobile app was focused around the search function. The search capability of the mobile app was described as “not precise”, books were in multiple categories and the users did not know the search was occurring because of the lack of an indicator such as text or an icon. One girl reader in Kakamega told us that when she searched for an academic topic, the results that came up included novels as well. She said that once the search took so long that she quit the mobile app because she thought nothing was happening, even though the app was searching in the background.

Another area of dissatisfaction amongst readers was the overall reading experience. For some readers, the landing pages are small and sometimes the zoom buttons don’t work. For others, speed of navigation especially when selecting the next page to read is too slow. The readers who download the mobile app on their phone through the Google Play store rather than reading on the mobile app were concerned that the more they download books, the more space the mobile app takes up and they are forced to delete some of these books sometimes without having completed them. A number of other readers would like to tailor their reading experience by choosing their preferred font types, a feature they perceive is not available on the mobile app thereby making reading difficult.

We also heard from some readers aged 25 or under that the mobile app was not very “fun” to use. One girl mentioned that she needs a break from reading sometimes and a puzzle or a game within the mobile app would have been a good addition. A few other research participants also mentioned that the mobile app was lacking topical books addressing the needs of young people e.g. books on growing up, such as sex, and relationships.

Finally, another gap within the mobile app was the need to add more diverse books. Readers mentioned they would like best sellers included from both Kenya and the rest of the world, as well as further categorization of books based on age group needs (e.g. sex and relationships, drug abuse, etc.) and books in additional languages, such as other local languages but also French and German.
Research Limitations & Future Areas of Inquiry

Due to time limitations, most of the mobile app readers we interviewed were recruited through the libraries with which Worldreader has an existing partnership. While best efforts were made to get objective answers from our respondents, still a number of these may have been biased with them giving us likeable responses that they thought were more appropriate. Furthermore, since we located them through libraries, the sample may be bias towards appreciating the value of reading and books in their community.

We were also not able to include an equal number of mobile app readers from the three age groups, (18-29, 30-44 and >45 years) in Nairobi. All the interviewees here were aged 18-29 years, and therefore we were unable to capture the user experience of the urban app reader in the other two age groups. Additionally, a majority of these were students and therefore our data lacked user experience feedback from people who have other occupations or who did not complete high school. During the next research phase, we hope to address this gap through our book clubs and another sprint of ethnographic research that will provide relevant data.

User experience will be a thematic focus in our next research sprint. From our research so far, we have found that perceptions play an important role in determining behaviour and therefore it will be important to find out what readers associate our brand with and how this affects uptake and use of our mobile app. Additionally, we will also be seeking to find out how social media can be utilized as an outreach strategy to create awareness and promote reading on the mobile app.
NEXT STEPS
The present findings are based on the results of the first phase of our HCD research. On the basis of the initial findings, we will design the second phase of the research focusing on expanding the ethnographic research, especially in terms of ensuring that a wider variety of women, men and youth are interviewed and on further understanding the user experience, barriers, drivers and influencers to mobile reading.

Our goal is to create and test strategies to address the challenges and barriers identified in the present research, within the limit of our expertise and comparative advantage. The hope is that other stakeholders and partners working on the broader field of literacy and economic empowerment will make advancements to address the root causes of the challenges we have identified. The results of the research, tested strategies and solutions will then be incorporated into the outreach strategy to increase female participation in mobile reading.

This research has identified a hierarchy of barriers which we need to address in order to convert more women into readers. The bottom of the pyramid is what we have the least influence over (“phone ownership” and “literacy”). Once our potential readers have overcome these barriers, it is very likely that the next barrier will be “understanding the value of reading”. Once this barrier is addressed, the next barrier that our readers will face will be “affordability” and so on. Therefore we believe that there is a hierarchy of barriers in the sense that the top of the pyramid is what we have the most influence on and what we should start addressing first (“user experience” as well as “product awareness”). The barriers at the bottom of the pyramid are beyond our scope and would require a different type of intervention. We also highlighted the persona who is most affected by each specific barrier. This does not automatically mean that the other personas are not affected, however the pyramid is meant to provide us with guidance in order to develop a strategy for each targeted persona according to the barrier that they are facing the most.

It is also critical to reiterate that those are the barriers for the specific personas identified within a small cohort of individuals that were to a certain extent exposed to the Worldreader mobile app or the library. As a result, it is highly likely that the personas and barriers may change when a different cohort of individuals will be interviewed during the next sprint of research.
Anasoma Mid-Term Report 2017

**Phone ownership** is the biggest barrier for Mary at 19. However, this is outside of our project scope.

**Literacy** is Esther at 30 and Esther at 40’s biggest barriers. Because they are not core future users, we will not be addressing this barrier in this project.

**Understanding the value of reading** is Mary at 19’s biggest barrier. She does not see the point of reading and we want to see how we can address this barrier with the help of Lisa at 45, among other strategies. Once this barrier is addressed, Mary at 19 could face the affordability barrier.

**Affordability** is Lisa at 19’s biggest barrier. Whilst the app is free, phone and data cost can prohibit potential users from accessing the app. Once this barrier is addressed, Lisa at 19 could face the product awareness barrier.

**Product Awareness** is a barrier, especially for Lisa at 30, as she hasn’t heard of the app. Addressing product awareness would be the best way to convert her into a potential reader. After addressing this barrier, she may also face a problem with user experience.

**User Experience** is the biggest barrier for Lisa at 45. UX testing should be helpful in addressing this barrier. Our research showed that Lisa at 45 has either overcome the other barriers and/or other barriers are not as important.
The research will first further validate the understanding and identification of personas as for the above differentiation between the Lisas, Mary and Esther. Below we have outlined some preliminary next steps to addressing each of the barriers outlined in the pyramid. We will continue the research to further profile our readers and confirm if they are within the target group that the preliminary findings have identified.

The first barrier is **user experience**, especially for Lisa at 45. In the next phase of the research, our plan is to conduct rapid UX testing to understand why users are not converting to using the mobile app and further investigate if there are challenges in downloading the mobile app, especially for personas like Lisa at 45. The result of the UX testing will inform the addition of new features to further test the mobile app and address any UX barriers that are keeping potential readers from engaging.

**Product awareness** is another barrier to women and girls becoming Worldreader mobile readers. In the next phase of the research, we will do further investigation to validate which segments of our potential target group are experiencing this the most and create targeted campaigns to reach these populations.

It was also found that **affordability** was a barrier for users, specifically for young people. Whilst the mobile app is free, data cost can prohibit potential readers from accessing the mobile app. In the next phase, we are planning to identify the highest affected groups of non-readers and look for strategies or partnerships which could overcome this barrier. Another strategy is to attempt to change the perception on the cost of data by testing new features in the mobile app, for example, by indicating the amount of data spent or making the download option more visible.

**Not understanding the value of reading** is another barrier. In the next phase of the research, we want to further investigate the needs, barriers and influencers of one persona (Mary at 19) to understand how they can be converted into future readers, with the help of influencers such as Lisa at 45. We will also test messaging on different platforms, like social media, to promote behaviour change that will encourage more women, men and youth to recognise the value of reading. The predicted method may change depending on whether the target are the potential readers or the influencers.

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**A book is considered read if the user reads at least 2 pages of the book.**

**Presently we do not have reliable estimates for unregistered users because we do not have the wherewithal to reliably track unregistered users.**
Literacy and phone ownership were also identified as barriers, but, as previously explained, this is beyond the scope of the project.

When it comes to the empowerment piece of our research, we are planning to acquire and create new books that will be tested to assess if they match and respond to the perception of women and girls around empowerment. To further our understanding, we will test our hypotheses within book clubs and a review panel composed of students who will be established to further test and assess the perceptions and reactions to specific books. The ultimate aim of the research is to identify empowering and engaging books that women and girls in Kenya can relate to and that can empower them, to challenge negative gender social norms and stereotypes. The identification of the new content will also be based on the preferences identified by the different personas we have outlined.

As we advance to the next stage of the Anasoma project, we look forward to using these personas as a starting point to dig further into the research, curate and create new empowering content and begin the design of an outreach strategy for 2018.