

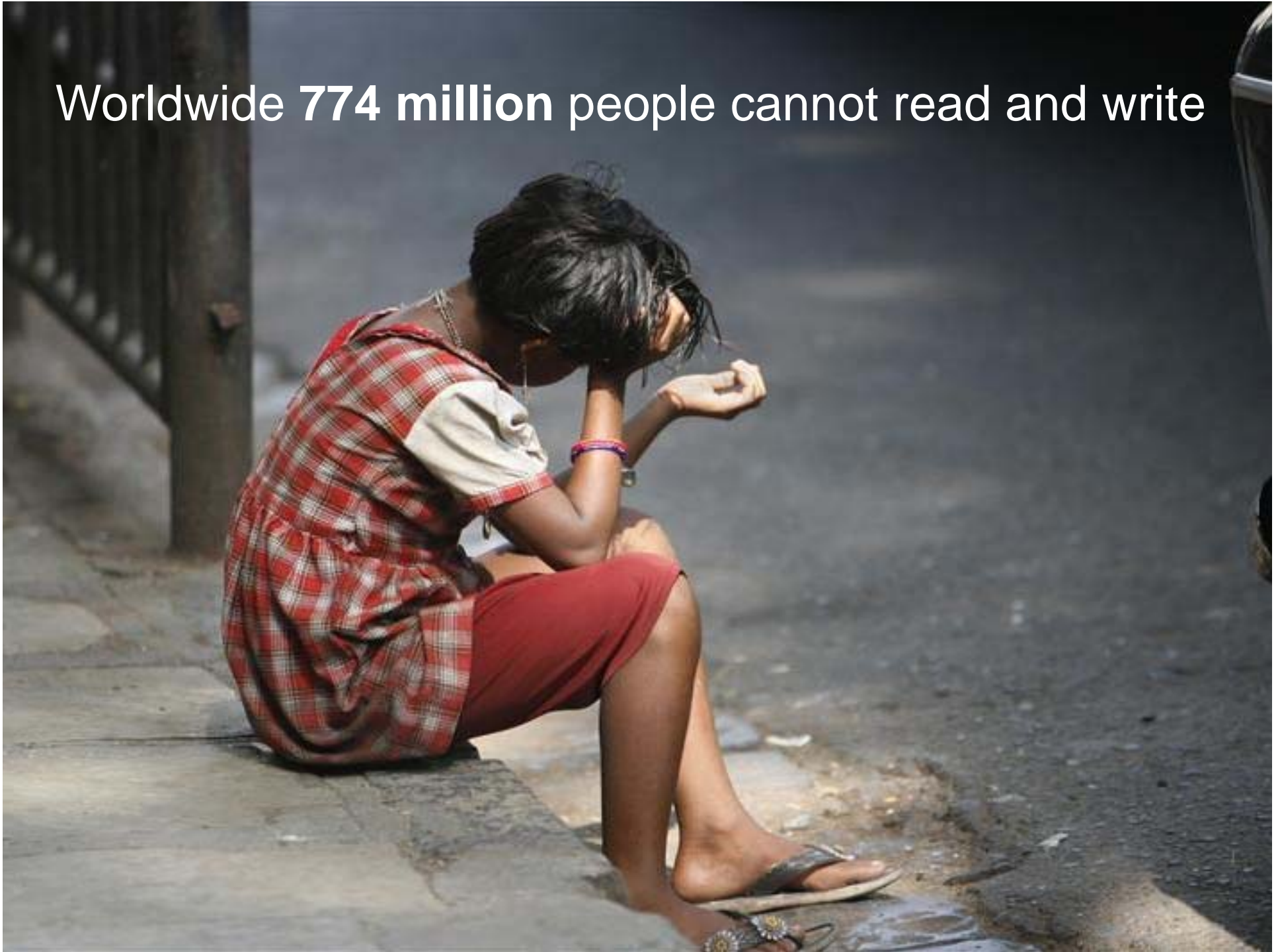
# Reading in the Mobile Era

## A Study of Mobile Reading in Developing Countries





Worldwide **774 million** people cannot read and write



Illiterate people in  
sub-Saharan Africa

+37%

Since 1990





Highly concentrated  
geographically



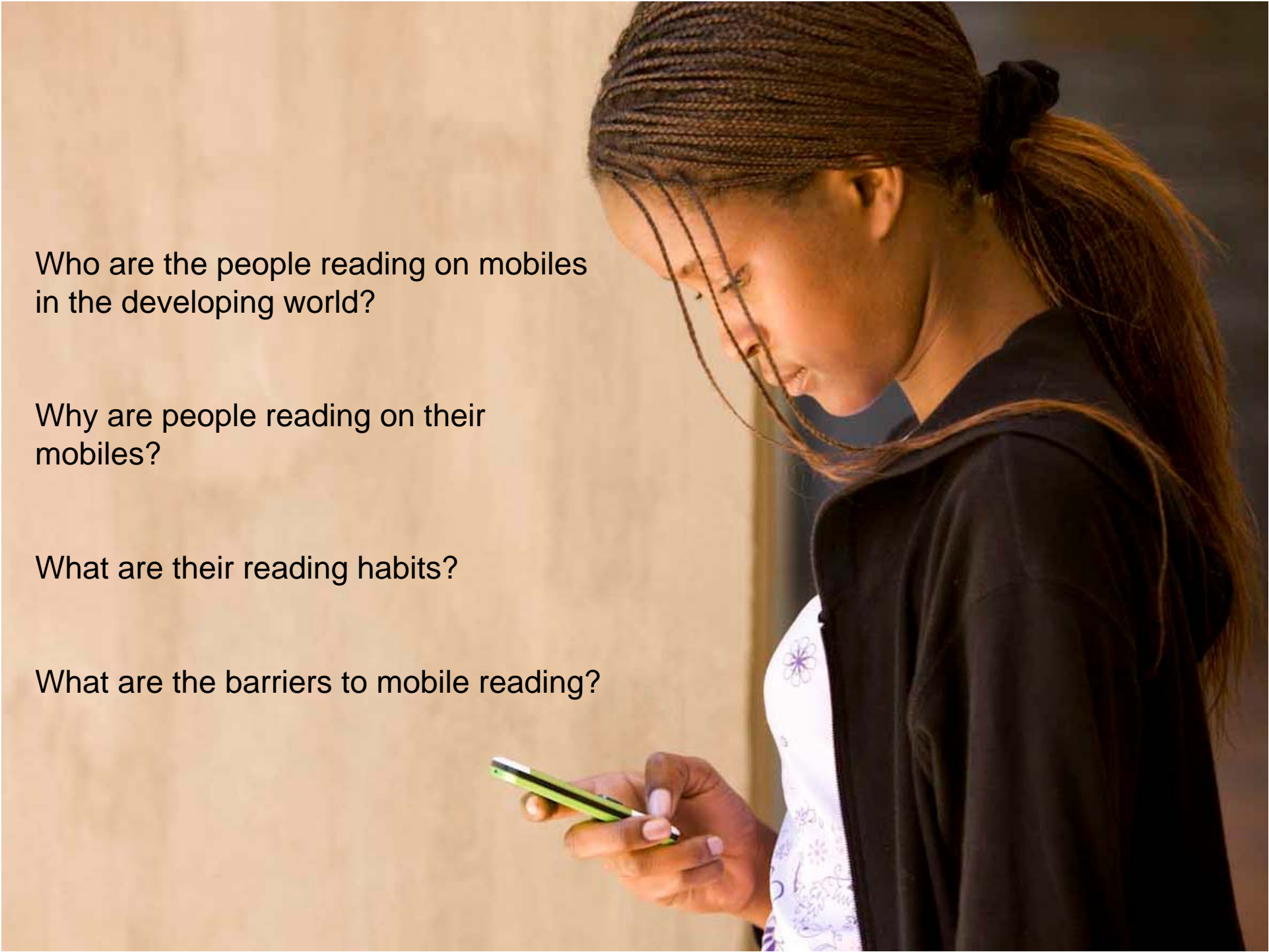
$\frac{3}{4}$

Of illiterate adults worldwide  
are in sub-Saharan Africa  
and Southwest Asia



2 out of 3  
illiterate  
people  
are  
women



A young woman with her hair in braids, wearing a dark hoodie over a white patterned shirt, is looking down at a green smartphone she is holding in her hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Who are the people reading on mobiles  
in the developing world?

Why are people reading on their  
mobiles?

What are their reading habits?

What are the barriers to mobile reading?





Surveys



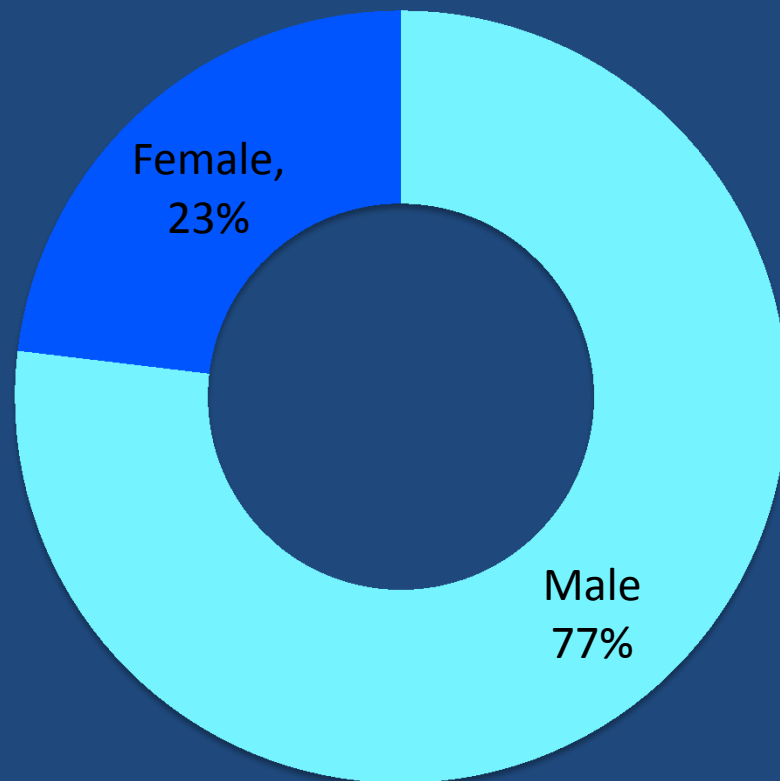
Back End Data



Qualitative  
interviews

## Finding #1

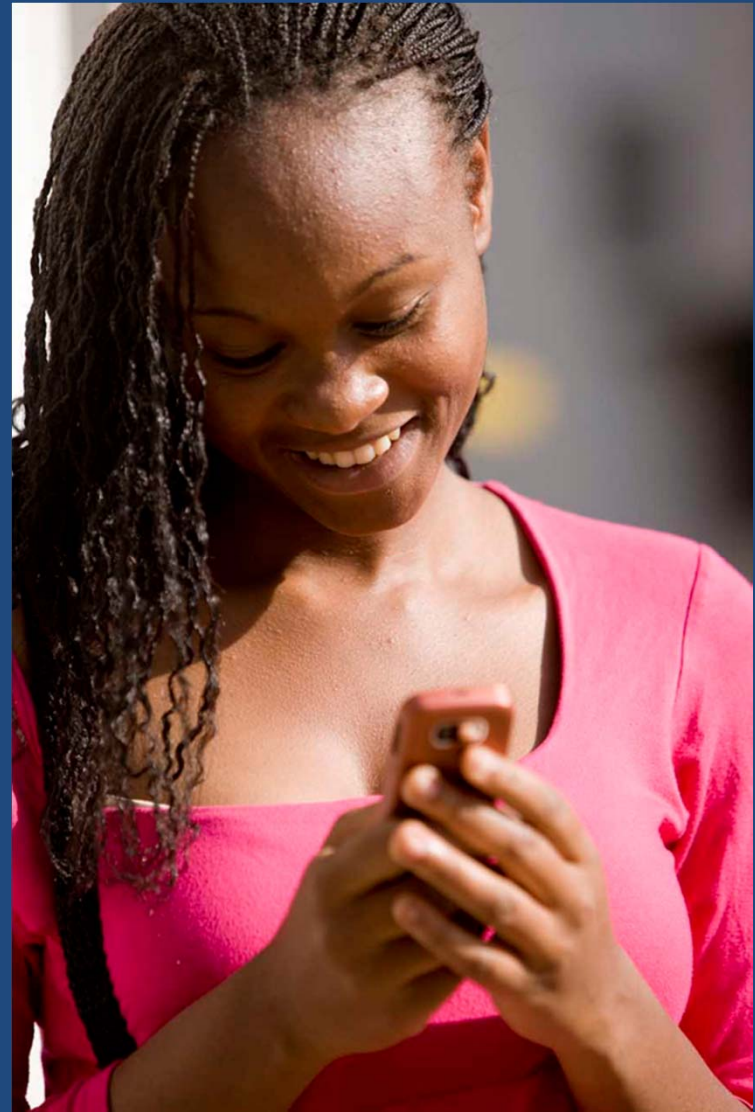
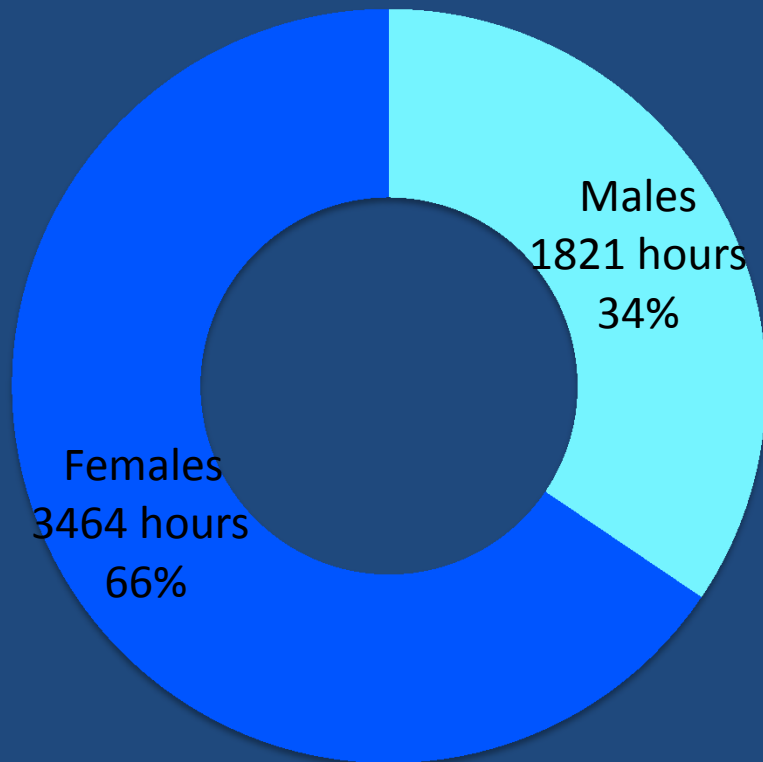
Mobile readers in developing countries are primarily male





## Finding #2

Women spend far more time reading on mobiles than men



## Recommendations:

Teach women and girls how to use a mobile phone for reading

Target outreach to men and offer more content targeted to men





## Finding #3

Mobile reading positively impacts children

1 in 3



## Recommendations:

Create dedicated portals for parents, caregivers and teachers, making it easy for them to find books and stories for young people

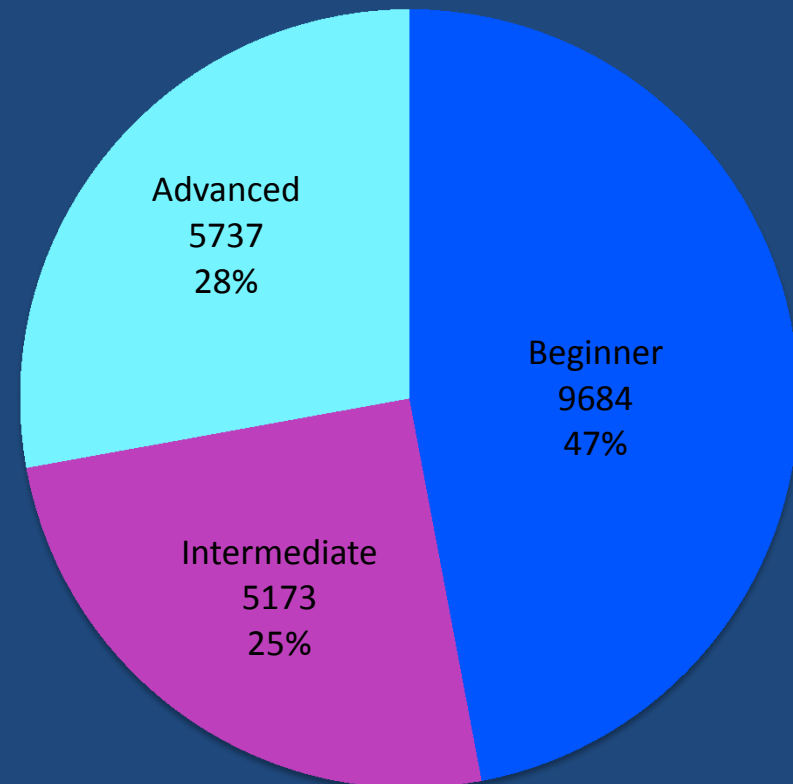
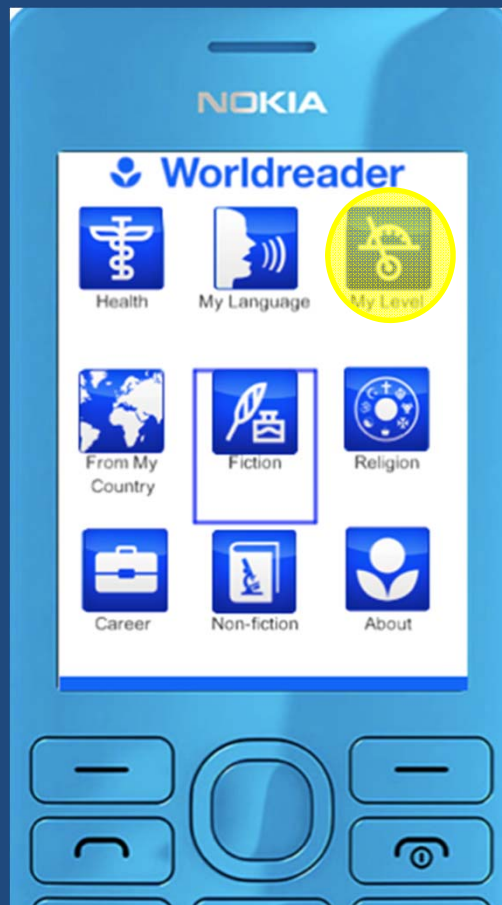
Increase early childhood education content offered on mobiles





## Finding #5

Mobile reading appeals to (and can benefit) neo-literate and semi-literate adults and adolescents



## Recommendations:

Offer more content targeted to beginner readers

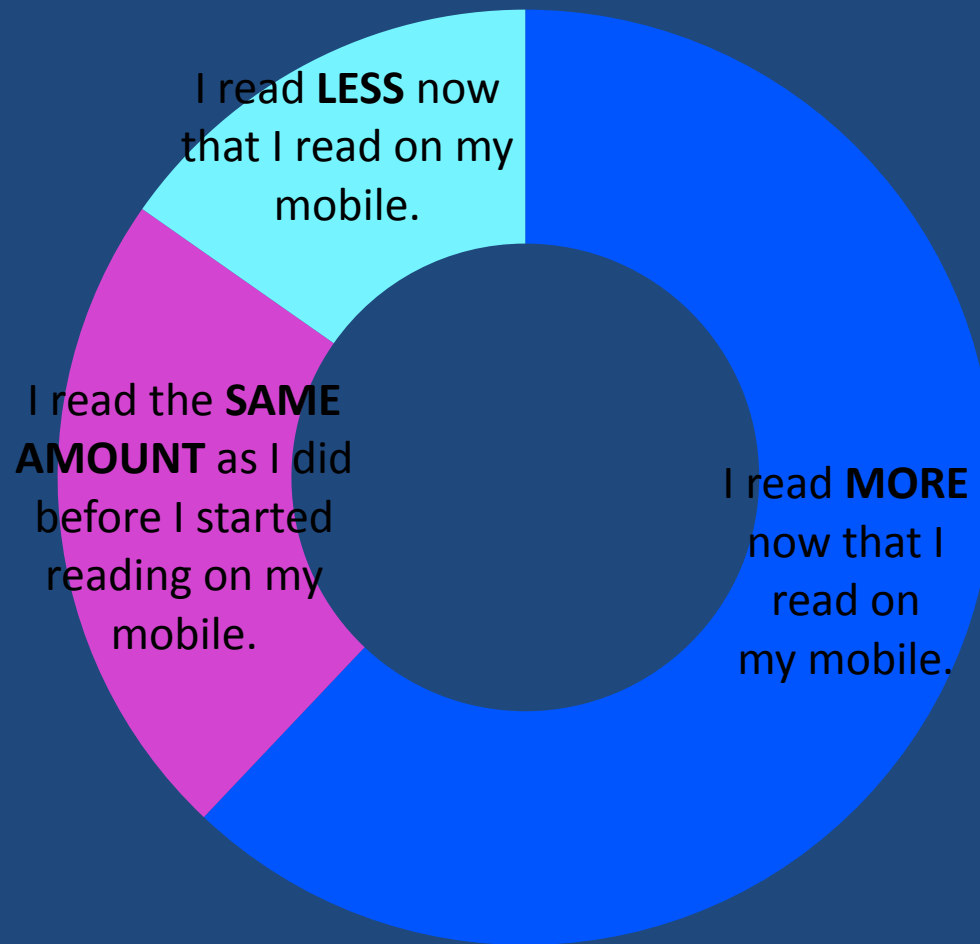
Develop dedicated applications and portals for neo-literate adults





## Finding #6

People who read on mobile devices read more in total



## Recommendations:

Increased funding and promotion of reading applications

Government and mobile operator support of mobile reading





## Finding #7

There are three core barriers to mobile reading

Lack of relevant context

Poor connectivity

Cost of data



## Recommendations:

Offer diverse content,  
across genres, levels and  
languages

Improve infrastructure  
and mobile internet  
coverage

Continue to lower  
connectivity costs and  
encourage mobile  
operators to zero rate  
data for reading  
applications





## The faces of mobile reading...



Nancy in Nigeria.

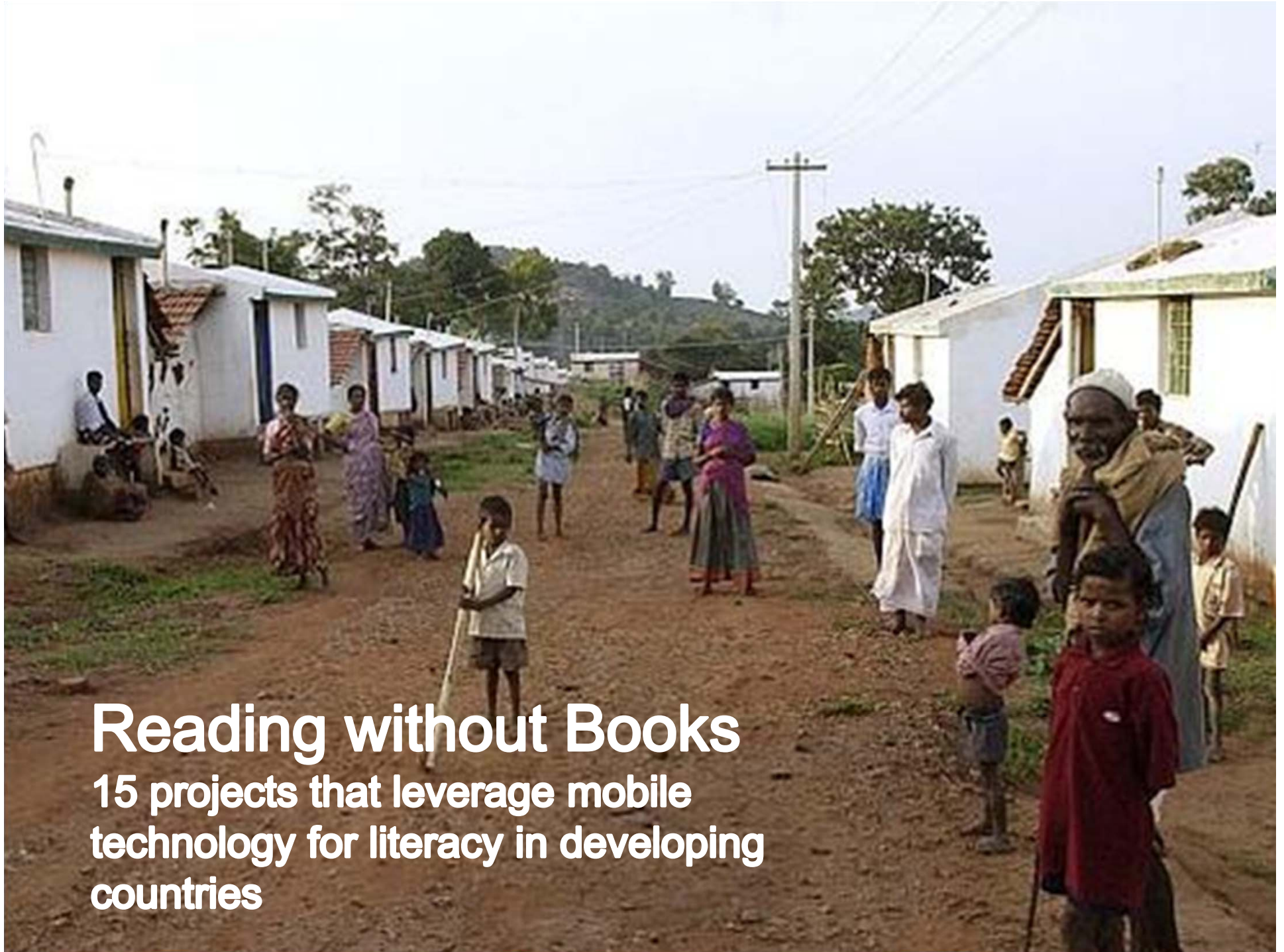
Charles in Zimbabwe



Michael in Ghana

Tdnash in Zimbabwe



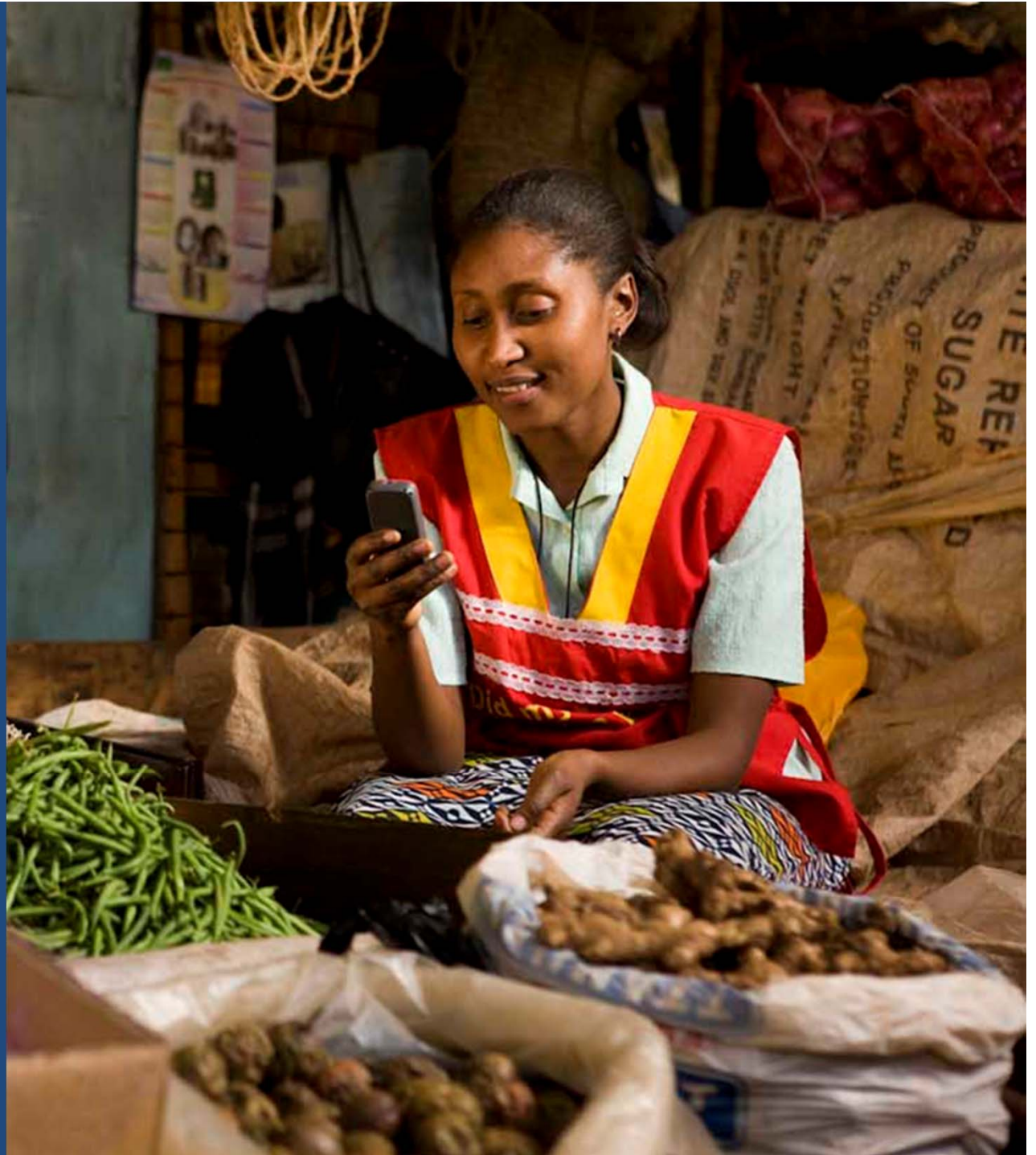


# Reading without Books

15 projects that leverage mobile technology for literacy in developing countries



- Jokko Initiative
- Afghan Institute of Learning
- Mobile Literacy Programme
- Project ABC
- UNESCO Mobile-based
- Literacy Programme
- Ustad Mobil
- Mobile and Immersive
- Learning for Literacy in Emerging Economies
- Mobiliteracy Uganda
- mWord
- SenMobile
- BooksInMyPhone
- FunDza
- Yoza Cellphone Stories
- Worldreader
- BBC Janala
- Nokia Life





Questions?

