

STUDY REPORT 3

Inventory of Best Practices to Stimulate Reading and Promote Literacy Skills

Mombasa. 2017

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1. Introduction

The basic reading literacy outcomes remain significantly deficient among large numbers of children in Kenya despite significant gains in expanding access to primary education. This is according to survey reports carried out annually by Uwezo Kenya, starting from the year 2009 in Kenya and other East African countries like Uganda and Tanzania. The report by Uwezo East Africa on the 2011 survey in Kenya revealed that 4 % of class 8 pupils could not read a class 2 story. The Annual Learning Assessment (ALA) carried out in Kenya in February year 2012 by Uwezo revealed that 7% of class 8 pupils could neither pass English or Kiswahili reading tests set at class 2 level. ¹

A report conducted by Uwezo in 2015 found that English literacy levels among children aged 7 - 13 years have remained almost unchanged over the four years between 2011 and 2014. The percentage of children who could not read letters of the alphabet was 5.7 in both 2011 and 2014. The percentage of those who could read a Class 2 story, has on the other hand registered only marginal improvement from 46% in 2011 to 50.9% in 2014. The percentage of children who could not read letters of the alphabet was 8.2 in 2011 and 7.6 % in 2014. The percentage of those who could read a Class 2 story improved marginally from 49.7% in 2011 to 53.9% in 2014. The case for numeracy is worse than literacy in both English and Kiswahili. Over the five year period, the percentage of children aged 7 – 13 years who could not count and match numbers actually rose from 4% in 2011 to 5% in 2014. The percentage of those who could do division, which is the highest level of the tests, registered less than 2 percentage points' improvement from 45.2% in 2011 to 46.9% in 2014. It is important to note that in all three tests; Kiswahili literacy, English literacy and numeracy, learning outcomes improved by less than 5 percentage points' over 5 years, from 2011 to 2015. On annual basis, this would be statistically insignificant. This report focuses on reading promotion and literacy projects in Kenya.²

Some of the projects supported by various organizations that aims to promote reading and

¹ Uwezo (2012). Are Our Children Learning? Literacy and Numeracy across East Africa. Retrieved from http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/RO_2012_UwezoEastAfricaReport.pdf

² Uwezo (2015). Are Our Children Learning? The State o Education in Kenya in 2015 and Beyond. Retrieved from <http://www.twaweza.org/uploads/files/kenya.pdf>

literacy skills are discussed in the annex. The information from these projects included in the annex was gathered from different sources such as final reports, website applications, news articles, and interviews. In Kenya sporting activities do not seem to be incorporated much in promoting reading and literacy skills. This forms a basis why the projects discussed at the annex just cover reading and literacy skills.

2. Findings

Enthusiasm

In spite of the fact that all of the projects reported here are different, they all have a common goal on reading and numeracy promotion in Kenya. All of the reports are essential to the success of the reading and literacy projects by the government and other partnership organization. In some cases the projects were considered “constructive”; “stimulating” and “beneficial” for the children, young people and adults who participated or participate in the ongoing reading and literacy projects. The projects’ development and ability to attract individual and organization’s partners have been avid to the key supporters and beneficiaries due to its intrinsic nature of motivating learners and their trainers. A good number of people have been attracted in these programmes for training and procurement of resources required in the project. This also calls upon parents and other members of community to take part in ensuring the success of reading and numeracy programmes in their respective communities and across Kenya. In order to create sustainability of the reading and numeracy projects all the key stakeholders including political leaders, church leaders, trainers, sport leaders, librarians, the community, members from private sectors and non governmental organizations should maintain their enthusiasm for the project.

Roles and pre-conditions

The different projects presented here represent different partnerships and different ways into reading and numeracy promotion. The partners of the reading and numeracy projects is well represented from a variety of organizations; including but not limited to government ministries, non governmental organizations, global organizations, individuals and private companies. The public organizations like libraries and schools have been at the fore front in ensuring that the reading and numeracy programmes are kicking. Other stakeholders like chess clubs has contributed massively in instituting critical thinking among young people which is essential in

instigating numeracy skills among children and young adults. Other conditions set among partner organizations ensure that the resources i.e. physical, human and capacity building is provided on time so as to meet the outcomes of the project. Monitoring and evaluation is also done internally and externally to ensure every stakeholder meets the assigned role on time.

Activities

The varieties of activities that have been generated in projects connected to reading promotion are much impressive and clear for implementation. Among these activities were not limited to program's report presentation in various conferences organized by the ministry of education and other stakeholders, but also extended to the following other activities depending on the program's objectives. These include;

- i. Designing a scope and sequence of curriculum-based content in Kiswahili, English, and mathematics.
- ii. Preparing lesson plans for Kiswahili, English, and mathematics for Classes 1 and 2.
- iii. Training teachers and head teachers to implement lessons.
- iv. Arranging for regular supervision and monitoring of teachers by Coaches and TAC tutors.
- v. Provision of reading and math materials for student use, integrated with teacher lesson plans.
- vi. Training teachers to employ continuous assessment methods, integrated into core content.
- vii. Using Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA) results to revise and update program materials.
- viii. Carrying out a policy study to inform MOE on issues related to education policy and the revisions needed to improve student outcomes in early primary levels across Kenya.
- ix. Improving teachers' capacity on reading and numeracy training
- x. Improving access to books and other supplementary materials that enhance reading and numeracy skills.
- xi. Enhance supervision of teachers by TACs, Coaches and Head-teachers
- xii. Establish effective and efficient Monitoring and Evaluation system to ensure utilization of provided materials for the project and also make sure that the implementation of set activities are met.

- xiii. Enhance use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in promoting reading and literacy skills among children and young adults.
- xiv. Enhancing the capacity of education sector to sustainably improve literacy outcomes,

Many projects majored on community mobilization and training of trainers on better ways to enhance reading and literacy skills among children and young adults in different districts in Kenya. The programmes also involved issuing of tablets in some schools especially in Kisumu by some partnership organizations, provision of English, Kiswahili and Mathematics books, supervising teachers among others.

Despite that Kenya has not yet appreciated the potential that lies between reading promotion programmes and sporting clubs or activities, the proposed education curriculum which is said to insist much on pragmatism than just studying to pass examination shed ripples of hope towards realization of the key goal of reading and numeracy projects in Kenya. In the mean time, the emerging national sporting clubs like chess club is anticipated to contribute effectively towards promotion of reading and numeracy skills among young people more especially through socialization and healthy competition. On the other hand swimming sporting club for juniors is

3. Conclusions

Enthusiasm

To achieve the enthusiasm needed to make planned activities of the reading and numeracy projects, there is a call for key trainers and leaders who are positive towards the programme, those who believe the project goal will be achieved by owning the big goal of the programme and mobilizing for more stakeholders. One of the trainer said that the Tusome (“Let’s Read” in Kiswahili) said, “Before the Tusome training, I used traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing, repetition, copying from the board or having the class respond as a chorus. Many of my pupils struggled with reading but few achieved fluency. Tusome technical training and the array of textbooks and learning materials have transformed the way I teach and the overall learning environment. My pupils now enjoy my lessons and are better able to understand the materials. Three of her pupils reached national literacy benchmarks after only several months of instruction, the others are closing in on the fluency goal”. This is a clear indication of enthusiasm

and positive mindset of the trainer towards programme.

In order for the project to be successful, the community which happens to be among the project stakeholders should be taken through the goal and objectives of the programme in order to be supportive and cooperative in the project. In addition, in order to deepen the enthusiasm for the project among leaders and other stakeholders, there has to be improved communication on the programme progress so as to settle matters that result in friction or alteration of project's activities implementation.

Roles and pre-conditions

There were, however, problems arising from working across involved sectors. These problems arise as a result of poor communication among implementers and other stakeholders of the programme. Some trainers from public libraries, trained individuals from the community, work with RTI international, the key implementing entity of many reading and numeracy programmes as volunteers. Therefore, when some of these people have other appointments, they may fail to take part in the programme.

Activities

It was clear that the level of ambition was quite high in these projects. Sometimes the amount of activities was overwhelming. This has been noted through amazing improvement in literacy and numeracy skills among pupils that has reflected from the continuous assessment tests. In addition, the enthusiasm of trainers toward the reading and numeracy promoting programmes has also been noted through their committed support in ensuring implementation of programmes' activities.

4. Recommendations

Enthusiasm

The findings of a variety of surveys conducted in the area of reading and numeracy promotion by Uwezo and other supporting organizations from various parts of Kenya serve to identify any loopholes that may derail the programmes in the efforts to achieve the main goal of promoting reading and numeracy skills among learners. In order to support enthusiasm among key players of the program, it is clear that communication on the programme progress and achievements should be made paramount so as to bring a consensus among all partners and credibility among

procured organizations. In addition, all activities that can promote reading and numeracy should be identified and supported so as to enhance the sustainability of the programme. This will be a way of motivation to the service providers thus initiating another milestone in encouraging more children to read and participate in ventured innovative activities which can improve their reading and numeracy skills.

Roles and pre-conditions

Clarification of the roles and pre-conditions of the project partners at the inception stage of the programme is much easier and convenient than termination of their roles when the project is on going. The parents and entire community should be informed prior to the project inception on their expected support towards the success of the project. Inclusion at the initial stages of the project and good, efficient communication throughout seems to be essential. Being clear about the target and the project goals is also important. Motivation of volunteers through incentives and other forms of gifts would ensure their commitment in the project. This can be accounted through their improved passion towards the programme thus achieving the intended goal by the programme.

Activities

In order to manage the constraint of time that has been focal in all reading and numeracy promoting programmes in Kenya, selecting smart objectives and deriving specific activities that enhance the sustainability of the programme is crucial. Besides, a comprehensive implementation matrix is important as it clearly stipulates the timelines and assignments of every partnership organization or individual. The conditions set should also be welcoming and easy to cope with so as to encourage flexibility among key players of the programme. It is also good to ensure an effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation system so as to oversee the achievements and weak points of the programme implementation plan. The stronger and effective the partners are the more sustainable the projects would be.

ANNEX

Project I

Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Program: Kenya

Completed: August 15, 2011 – August 14, 2014

Background on the PRIMR Initiative

PRIMR was a three-year applied research program, led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), funded by USAID/Kenya and implemented by RTI International, that eventually covered 547 formal public schools and low-cost private schools across Kenya. It focused on improving numeracy and reading outcomes in Classes (grades) 1 and 2. As a task order under the Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II) project, PRIMR's scope was to apply innovative, *data-based* instructional improvement methods to increase students' fundamental skills in reading and mathematics. Further, it assessed how a sustainable reading and mathematics program could be implemented at scale. PRIMR also tested and monitored several scenarios within the public education system to determine which activities would most efficiently and cost-effectively improve pupil achievement. By design, the MoEST played a major role in advising and determining the purpose and direction of the USAID program as well as participating directly in implementation.³

The idea for the PRIMR design came from a much smaller scale randomized controlled trial in 2007–2008. “EGRA–Kenya” was implemented in Malindi District, Coastal Province, in 40 schools, with half classified as treatment schools and receiving remedial reading interventions, and the other half serving as a control. The post-treatment assessment conducted in November 2008 showed surprisingly large improvements in reading scores after only about nine months of the intervention.

Aims

³ USAID (2012). Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Programme in Kenya: Education Policy Study Report. Retrieved from http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00HX76.pdf

The PRIMR Initiative's main objective was to improve the reading and math outcomes for pupils in Classes 1 and 2. Because low-cost, syllabus based materials that were organized in a structured and scaffold manner to ensure early learning success were not available, reaching these outcomes required developing a set of instructional materials in English, Kiswahili, and math, as well as training and supporting teachers to implement the new approach to instruction. The following is a summary of the core activities undertaken by the PRIMR Initiative to create and then improve the quality of materials in order to achieve the project's objective;

- i. Develop an experimental design that comprises a baseline, midterm, and endline evaluation with randomly assigned treatment groups.
- ii. Design a scope and sequence of curriculum-based content in Kiswahili, English, and mathematics.
- iii. Prepare 150 lesson plans for Kiswahili, English, and mathematics for Classes 1 and 2.
- iv. Train teachers and head teachers to implement lessons.
- v. Arrange for regular supervision and monitoring of teachers by Coaches and TAC tutors.
- vi. Provide reading and math materials for student use, integrated with teacher lesson plans.
- vii. Train teachers to employ continuous assessment methods, integrated into core content.
- viii. Use EGRA and EGMA results to revise and update program materials.
- ix. Carry out a policy study to inform MOE on issues related to education policy and the revisions needed to improve student outcomes in early primary levels across Kenya.

Partnership Organizations

The PRIMR team oversaw the work of several national and international organizations assigned to implement major components of the Initiative. The implementing organization, RTI International, partnered with the following organizations including; Worldreader, SIL International, CfBT education Trust(formerly Centre for British Teachers), Civil Society-Elimu Yetu Coalition, and Multilingual Education Network (MLEN).

Worldreader

For the implementation of the PRIMR ICT study in Kisumu County, RTI subcontracted with Worldreader to manage the e-reader subcomponent. Under this program, 1,080 e-readers were distributed to 10 schools in Otonglo zone and another 10 schools in Kodingo zone, both in

Kisumu County. The Worldreader contributions were distributing and managing e-readers; loading e-readers with the required number of book titles and updating them each term; training TAC Tutors and teachers, especially in e-reader zones; and supervising TAC Tutors. Worldreader provided a total of \$967,213 in leveraging. Worldreader also undertook community sensitization and awareness of the program and in particular, community collaboration in ensuring that e-readers were safe for the pupils to use. The technical staff ensured that teachers were well trained to support pupils in using e-readers and they were on hand to offer technical support in cases of e-reader breakdowns.

CfBT Education Trust (formerly Centre for British Teachers)

CfBT partnered with RTI in the implementation of PRIMR. Whereas for formal schools, TAC Tutors were in charge of zones, through CfBT, RTI hired coaches to be in charge of teacher support in school clusters. The role of coaches in clusters was similar to that of TAC Tutors in zones. Apart from supervising and supporting teachers, they led reading and math contests and exhibitions, and cluster meetings. On a monthly basis, the CfBT-supported coaches participated in debriefing meetings that were centrally held. All activities were geared toward improving literacy and numeracy outcomes.

SIL International

RTI collaborated with consultants and literacy organizations on some aspects of the development of the teaching and learning materials. For example, SIL International contributed to the scope and sequence activities, development of the initial lesson plans, and lesson plan revisions in subsequent years, with particular focus on Kiswahili. SIL also later supported the development of instructional materials for mother-tongue programs in the Lubukusu and Kikamba languages, funded under the DFID Rural Expansion Programme.

Civil Society – Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC)

RTI is a member of the Elimu Yetu Coalition (EYC), which is a forum recognized by over 100 organizations for policy engagement with the Kenyan government on issues related to education. PRIMR engaged with the EYC on two main policy issues:

- i. The Fifth Civil Society Organization Conference on Education for All ICT for Equalizing Education Opportunities for all in Kenya, which was conducted at KICD, 25–27 September 2013. PRIMR and EYC’s participation in policy issues continued through development of a communiqué submitted to MoEST, as an effort to influence the direction the Ministry takes on issues of ICT, especially the need to use ICT for instructional support.
- ii. PRIMR staff wrote and submitted an article to the EYC newsletter in November 2013 focused on ICT for equalizing education opportunities for all in Kenya. The article aimed to inform and advocate for the use of ICT for improving classroom instruction, and was titled “Primary Maths and Reading (PRIMR) Kisumu County Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Pilot: 2013 Results.”

Multilingual Education Network (MLEN)

PRIMR, through RTI, joined the Multilingual Education Network, an organization that fosters use of first/indigenous languages in education settings. Its membership encompasses universities, NGOs, and government agencies. Examples of member organizations are Kenyatta University, United States International University, University of Nairobi, Bible Translation and Learning Institute, Education Development Center, KICD, Save the Children, World Vision, and Partners in Literacy Ministry. Through the network, RTI shared PRIMR lessons learned, as well as best practices in research and material development, since it has been involved in research on reading in local languages such as Kiswahili, Lubukusu, Kikamba, Luo, and Gikuyu. RTI participated in MLEN’s International Mother Language Day celebrations held at Kenyatta University in February 2014. The keynote address on “African Languages in Education and Development” was delivered by Prof. Kithaka wa Mberia of the University of Nairobi.

RTI and PRIMR also participated in a meeting of network members in July 2014 at BTL Christian International Conference Centre in Ruiru. During this meeting, RTI International presented a document on the mother-tongue-reading aspects of the PRIMR Initiative. The presentation highlighted PRIMR’s impact on pupil performance in reading, and the key elements behind the tremendous success that the program had posted with regard to early grade literacy.

Target Group

Young people at class 1 and 2 in urban and rural formal and non-formal schools together with primary school teachers were the main target by the project, where a new approach focusing on improving student achievement in reading in Kiswahili and English as well as developing numeracy skills.

Project's Description

The PRIMR Initiative was borne out of the concern to improve the quality of reading and numeracy in early grades in Kenya. It was a partnership between the Kenyan Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It was implemented by RTI International from August 2011 to August 2014, as a task order under USAID's Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II) project, which is focused on using data to improve education decision-making, and in the case of PRIMR, student outcomes. Specifically, PRIMR aimed at achieving the following outcomes:

- i. Grade-appropriate reading fluency and comprehension increased for children in Classes (grades) 1 and 2;
- ii. Grade-appropriate mathematical abilities increased for children in Classes 1 and 2;
- iii. MoEST equipped and prepared to scale up successful Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessment (EGRA/EGMA) features and approaches.

Although this final report covers the implementation and accomplishments of the USAID-funded activities, two efforts underwritten by DFID/Kenya were closely intertwined with USAID's: the Rural Expansion Programme (Dec 2012–Feb 2015) and National Tablets Programme (Aug 2013–Feb 2015).

Results

Pupils' Reading and Comprehension, in English and Kiswahili

The PRIMR Initiative's major accomplishment was a dramatic improvement of early grade literacy outcomes. By the last phase of implementation, the number of schools reached under the intervention in the five counties of Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kiambu, and Murang'a had increased from 125 to 547. On the same note, the number of pupils benefitting from the

intervention increased from 12,755 in January 2012 to 56,036 in the final year of implementation.

Trends in performance in English and Kiswahili showed improvement from baseline to endline. This improvement was tracked against the KNEC benchmark reading levels. Recall from Exhibit 13 that for English, the “emergent” fluency level was 30 cwpm while “fluency” level was at least 65 cwpm. In PRIMR schools, the percentage of pupils reaching the emergent level on the EGRA16 in Class 1 was 6.3% at baseline (January 2012); 45.0% at midterm (October 2012), and 47.6% at endline (October 2013). In Class 2, 8.6% of pupils reached the 65 cwpm threshold at baseline, 34.0% at midterm, and 47.3% at endline.⁴

A similar trend was observed in Kiswahili. Again from Exhibit 13, the benchmark rates were 17 cwpm for the emergent level and at least 45 cwpm for the fluent level. In Class 1, 9.9% of pupils taking the Kiswahili EGRA reached emergent level at baseline, 55.8% at midterm, and 55.6% at endline. In Class 2, 5.8% were reading at the required fluency level of 45 cwpm at baseline. After almost 10 months of intervention (at midterm), this percentage increased to 27.1%, but it dropped slightly to 24.5% after almost 20 months of intervention (at endline). Despite the decrease in the percentage, however, the absolute number of pupils increased in every new phase of the intervention.⁵

The improvement in reading scores was accompanied by improvements in comprehension levels. In English, the percentage of pupils scoring at least 80% on the comprehension questions in Class 1 increased from 0.3% at baseline to 5.9% at endline, while that in Class 2 grew from 5.2% to 23.8% in the same period. Growth in Kiswahili comprehension levels was similar: 0.3% of Class 1 at baseline and 5.2% at endline were able to answer at least four out of five comprehension questions correctly. In Class 2 and at the same measure, the percentage improved

⁴ USAID (2014). USAID/ Kenya Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative: Final Report. Retrieved from

https://globalreadingnetwork.net/sites/default/files/reading_program_info_files/FR_Kenya.pdf

⁵ Ibid

from 6.9% to 22.2%. All these measures surpassed the anticipated gains by between two and three times.⁶

Although the number of pupils supported in 2013 nearly tripled from the year before, the proportion of pupils reading at benchmark by the time of the endline assessment was more than twice as high in treatment (28.3%) than control schools (12.6%). The impact of PRIMR also was felt on the proportion of pupils reading at the KNEC benchmark for English (65 or more cwpm), with more than twice as many treatment pupils reading at benchmark in both Classes 1 and 2.

Pupils' Basic Math Abilities

Even though the EGMA measures involved more than seven subtasks, for the purpose of measuring basic improvements in mathematics outcomes, the PRIMR M&E team focused on basic addition and subtraction. Further, they established two levels of benchmarks for both measures, as follows: percentage of Class 1 pupils scoring at least 8 capm or cspm and percentage of Class 2 pupils scoring at least 12 capm or cspm.

Overall, the success of PRIMR is shown in the increment from baseline to endline of the number of pupils by class who reached the established numeracy benchmarks. In Class 1, the percentage of pupils who scored at least 8 capm in addition was 12.0% at baseline, 43.5% at midterm, and 53.2% at endline. Similarly, in Class 2, those who scored at least 12 capm were 13.3% at baseline, 41.6% at midterm, and 61.0% at endline. Improvement in subtraction was also noted, although low when compared to that in addition. At baseline, 3.8% of pupils in Class 1 scored at least 8 cspm at baseline, 15.9% at midterm, and 29.4% at endline. In Class 2, those scoring at least 12 cspm increased from 2.9% at baseline to 24.7% at midterm.⁷

Lessons Learned

Some of the key lessons learned from PRIMR in a variety of key areas focused on quality improvement in Kenya's primary schools included;

⁶ Ibid

⁷ USAID (2014). USAID/ Kenya Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative: Final Report. Retrieved from https://globalreadingnetwork.net/sites/default/files/reading_program_info_files/FR_Kenya.pdf

Training for TAC Tutors: As the assessment results showed, TAC Tutors' visits to schools were critical for supporting teachers and improving pupil's outcomes. Proper training of TAC Tutors is essential so that they can effectively support teachers. The results also indicated that schools visited frequently were likely to have stronger pupil performance; hence, TAC Tutors should focus on making frequent and consistent classroom observations, even in the face of their heavy workload.

Travel reimbursement structures: PRIMR successfully facilitated TAC Tutors' classroom visits. This involved a modest reimbursement that incentivized TAC Tutors to visit classrooms consistently. The method that was most successful reimbursed TAC Tutors against the proportion of teachers from whom they successfully uploaded classroom observational data on a monthly basis.

Teacher training: Training of teachers is a complex task that must assume that teachers are adult learners who learn best by doing and interacting with other professionals. This implies that teacher training should be organized around modeling and practice, and that having brief trainings with follow-up and refresher meetings are more effective than longer trainings. The PRIMR training models improved when a "mastery checklist" was instituted, this provided a focus and a target for teachers to use when being trained.

Distribution of classroom materials: Distribution of materials to schools is a complex task. It requires accurate school enrollment data, prior planning, and a sophisticated distribution network. Ensuring that materials reach the schools on time was an essential PRIMR task. The PRIMR program showed that data can be collected from schools consistently. We hope that UNICEF school mapping data that became available in 2014 can be used to implement a high-quality mapping program to help the distribution process.

Priorities in the school calendar: During the implementation of PRIMR, it became apparent that at certain times of the academic year, the TAC Tutors had to spend significant time away from the classroom. This occurred primarily during extracurricular activity periods. These are clearly important for a balanced learning experience for pupils, but better understanding of how these extracurricular activities could be organized so that they do not impede the TAC Tutors' ability to support instruction is important.

In-service training: During PRIMR assessments and implementation, the evidence suggested that most of the teachers supported by PRIMR had not attended professional development courses or in-service courses for several years since leaving college or becoming teachers. The PRIMR Initiative's regular professional development through training and other activities filled a demand for increased instructional practice and support. Collaboration between TSC and the MoEST is essential for this to happen successfully.

Changes in instructional approaches: Old habits take time to change, and the shift from traditional teaching to more active, sequenced, pupil-focused approaches was the central focus of PRIMR. Some teachers continued to use the two approaches concurrently at the beginning of PRIMR, in part because of concern about whether the lessons properly covered the material that would appear in the national end-of-year examinations. Advocacy was needed to change the mindset of some teachers.

Instructional change takes time: Any scale-up of PRIMR or other methods should recognize that large-scale instructional improvements are difficult. They require face to face time, practice, and ongoing feedback. The programs should be structured to allow for that.

Incentives and choice matter. Large-scale instructional improvement is expensive, so the incentives included should not necessarily be monetary. But programs that introduce choice and competition as a prerequisite for participation are more likely to have teachers implementing consistently, and to see the program as something that they have ownership and control over. This is essential for them to implement it well.

Understanding costs is essential. The ICT program in Kisumu County showed that while effectiveness is possible, costs matter more. Without taking into account the cost of interventions, poor policy decisions are likely. Similarly, in the area of books, the PRIMR program showed that book costs are significantly higher in Kenya than they should be. Active policy advocacy is necessary to ensure that pupils get high-quality materials for low cost.

Materials revision should be built in. PRIMR's materials were significantly better in 2014 than they were in 2012. Kenya's scale-up of PRIMR will benefit because PRIMR had sufficient time to innovate, improve and change. This is essential part of the design of successful programs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations come from the endline assessment as well as an overall evaluation of PRIMR implementation. Some of them are specific to Kenya at the policy level, and others are relevant for the *Tusome* literacy scale-up or the GPE mathematics scale-up.

PRIMR's results showed remarkable improvements in pupils' literacy and numeracy abilities, especially for pupils starting at the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy. The MoEST should therefore consider scaling up PRIMR activities to improve the quality of instruction in Classes 1 and 2 in the *Tusome* program.

The results indicated that, overall, girls were performing at the same level as if not better than boys, especially in literacy. Teachers should be trained in strategies for motivating girls so that they remain competitive as they move to upper primary.

The results showed that TAC Tutors in large zones were less likely to have a significant impact on pupil outcomes than those in smaller zones. Considerations should be made to limit the number of schools that the TAC Tutors are responsible for. This would make TAC tutors more effective in supporting teachers frequently.

Provision of books to pupils at a 1:1 ratio is paramount in improving pupils' literacy and numeracy. The PRIMR analysis suggested that the government's current allocation would be enough to have a 1:1 ratio of books for all pupils in Kenya at low cost, if the cost of the books was more competitive.

The language of instruction remains a complex issue for the Kenyan education system. Any attempt to scale up PRIMR activities without resolving this issue is likely to increase complexity during the implementation. The DFID PRIMR study, which is funding instructional materials and support in two mother tongues, will provide evidence as to the effectiveness of mother tongue compared with a basic instructional support program.

The findings on cost and impact suggest a need to consider the guidelines regarding vetting and selection of textbooks for use in schools. The complexity of multilingual literacy and numeracy instruction requires vetting guidelines that are tailored to the instructional characteristics of Kenya's system. In addition, the PRIMR team recommends revising the textbook policy to allow for an evaluation and design process that will lead to higher quality materials produced by publishers in Kenya.

The PRIMR policy study on pre-service reform suggests that the pre-service education and training sector should be reorganized fundamentally. The focus on early literacy and numeracy is lacking, and the mismatch in the curriculum used in the pre-service sector and the KICD school curriculum is exacerbated by the limited experience that pre-service lecturers have with the instructional realities of primary classrooms, particularly in lower primary. This suggests a revision of this subsector to ensure higher quality literacy and numeracy outcomes.

The PRIMR findings showed that the LCPSs in Kenya do contribute to improving the quality of education in Kenya. A PRIMR policy study carried out for the MoEST suggested a range of options to capitalize on the subsector, from a limited-choice model, to a relaxed registration model, and the status quo. PRIMR recommends that the LCPSs be seen as an asset to the Kenyan system, and that they be used to put more pressure on existing schools to produce better learning outcomes for pupils.

Most of the schools that PRIMR worked with purchased examinations from printers in Nairobi and other towns. These exams were not closely related to the KICD syllabus, not targeted to the content in the most frequently used books, and emphasized items that were nonessential to successful literacy and numeracy acquisition. Many zones set their own exams, which is commendable. That should be the required practice or a single exam should be set.

Lesson time could be revised to accommodate more literacy and numeracy instructional time during the week. This is true not only because Kenya's literacy and numeracy allocations are paltry compared to the rest of East Africa, but also because of the evidence that in control schools, pupils spent very little time actually reading texts.

PRIMR advocated that the transfer of teachers trained in its methods should be minimized to avoid the need for repeated onboarding and introductory training on a rolling basis. The TSC worked tirelessly to ensure that transfers were kept to a minimum, and it is hoped that this type of accommodation can continue in future programming.

PRIMR's findings suggested that the most effective ICT focused on helping teachers improve instruction. This required the target of ICT *not* to be just the hardware, or just the content, but instead the connections among hardware, content, and the instructional core. The advantage to ICT in Kenya is that it can be easily accessible, and it can help the most complicated part of

educational reform, which is the interaction among teachers, students and content. Investments targeted thoughtfully at improving that core in simple and manageable ways is important.

Implementing these recommendations would increase the likelihood of PRIMR and any successor program having high levels of uptake by teachers and head teachers, as well as enthusiasm for the program from the County Education offices and TSC offices. Most critically, the objective ensuring that all pupils are literate and numerate by Class 2 would be realized.

Assessments

i) Periodic Student Assessments and Test Development

Continuous Assessment

Undertaking periodic or continuous assessment is a vital aspect of teaching and learning. The PRIMR team discovered that as a whole, teachers had limited capacity to develop and apply appropriate assessments. In response, PRIMR intervened through training and support specifically to help teachers develop assessments. All TAC tutor, coach, and teacher trainings had components on undertaking assessments. The sessions emphasized unbiased assessments that would provide precise and accurate findings on learner abilities. Students were assessed on letter sounds, reading passages, and basic mathematics assessments on the content that had been covered.

End-of-Term Assessments

During the second and the third years of PRIMR implementation, the PRIMR technical team identified the “examination culture” as influencing parallel teaching in the formal and LCPS PRIMR intervention schools. That is, some teachers and head teachers were convinced that solely using the PRIMR materials would negatively affect students’ performance on the KNEC end-of-term examinations.

Because teaching to the exam drove many instructional decisions in classrooms, PRIMR developed a two-pronged response. First, PRIMR engaged the TAC Tutors and coaches to guide the schools in their zones and clusters on how to assess pupil mastery of reading skills and key math ideas as outlined in the PRIMR lesson plans. The technical teams then created model

examinations, each covering a certain number of lessons in a term, for distribution to the respective zones. All zones prepared their own midterm and end-of-term examinations using the PRIMR models. Later, teachers were allowed to give their own examinations on content that matched the instructional methods used in PRIMR.

Second, given that these zonally set exams were not frequently used, the PRIMR team contributed to the development of end-of-term examinations that would specifically examine whether pupils had acquired the skills outlined in the KICD syllabus and reflected in the PRIMR lesson plans and books. In undertaking this task, PRIMR team members agreed to work jointly with District and Regional Education Offices, teachers, and head teachers to develop the examinations. These exams supplanted the examinations typically used at the end of school terms and instead reflected exactly what the children in PRIMR-supported public and LCPS schools were to have been taught that term, as well as building on knowledge from previous terms.

ii) Assessment by Communities: Reading and Math Exhibitions

Reading and math contests, a critical component of PRIMR, had two key purposes. One was to create a forum and motivation for developing and administering tests to measure pupil progress, and to encourage the teachers and pupils that their hard work was paying off. The other was to focus on the community—that is, to support the creation and expansion of a reading culture in the target schools, to involve the local community in the creation and expansion of a reading culture, and to engage the local community leadership to be part of PRIMR.

During these events, children could showcase their skills in reading and math. It should be emphasized that these contests were not meant to be overly competitive, but instead provided a fun way to evaluate pupils' progress in reading and mathematics without losing focus on the bigger picture of “improved reading and math outcomes.” The contests brought together children and their parents, teachers, head teachers, central government officials, county government representatives, business people, and church leaders, among other stakeholders.

Exhibitions were held once per term. Each school was invited to bring its best readers in both Classes 1 and 2, who would then compete at the zonal and cluster level. Some clusters and zones first held semifinals for a handful of schools, in order to make the finals more easily manageable. Gifts (in various forms, including books, pencils and other prizes) were awarded to the best learners, while most participants were appreciated with certificates. The exhibitions helped to raise the PRIMR Initiative's profile across schools and within the community among leaders and parents.

During Year 1 and the first part of Year 2, the PRIMR team prepared the test materials for the exhibitions on the teachers' behalf. However, after that point, teachers were allowed to develop and manage these exercises with modest support from PRIMR technical staff. PRIMR was confident that the schools (head teachers and teachers alike) had the capacity and the interest to manage the exhibitions.

Capacity Building and Sustainability

GOK Partners

In the implementation, RTI worked closely with the MoEST, mainly through a Programme Development and Implementation Team (PDIT). The PDIT consisted of representatives from MoEST and its constituent Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs): the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), Teachers' Service Commission (TSC), Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), and Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE).

The PDIT

Professor George Godia, then Education Secretary at the MoEST and later the Permanent Secretary at the MOEST, appointed the PRIMR coordinating team, the PDIT, in 2011 at the start of the Initiative. Its membership was drawn from key MoEST directorates; for example, participants included Kiswahili, English, and math subject specialists from within the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS); Basic Education; Policy, Partnership, and East Africa Community Affairs (DPP&EACA); and Field and Other Services, as well as a

representative from the Education Secretary’s Office. The PRIMR team worked with PDIT members to ensure that the following were done, with this approximate chronology:

- i. Development of “scope and sequence” for the new type of early grade reading and mathematics instruction that would take place in Kenya under PRIMR Initiative. The goal was to determine what aspects of the Kenyan language and reading curriculum pupils needed to learn at their grade level, and in what order. PDIT members participated in a workshop in October 2011 at which their capacity to develop the scope and sequence was enhanced by RTI technical advisors and a team of consultants from the Kenyan universities. The resulting PRIMR scope and sequence then guided the content for new pupil textbooks, teacher guides, and supplementary materials developed under PRIMR for Kiswahili, English, and mathematics, both Class 1 and Class 2.
- ii. Participation in a strategic aspect of PRIMR’s design: intensive initial and recurring training in teaching reading and mathematics for all classroom personnel from the PRIMR treatment schools. These were TAC Tutors who supported formal schools; instructional coaches working with teachers in LCPSs; head teachers; and classroom teachers. PDIT members participated in the PRIMR workshops that took place each term, enabling them to learn about PRIMR’s implementation of the early grade reading and early grade math intervention, as well as enhancing their own support for program monitoring.
- iii. For each program year, PDIT members discussed with the PRIMR senior management team the Initiative’s annual plan, giving feedback and approval before the plan moved forward.
- iv. PDIT members were instrumental in coordinating the flow of participation of the representatives from the MoEST and SAGAs in all key PRIMR activities. This included processing invitation letters to workshops and other events; approving data collection for the EGRA, EGMA, and SSME surveys at baseline, midterm, and endline, as well as for “mini-EGRAs” for small-scale periodic monitoring; observing classrooms; reviewing key PRIMR reports and giving input (especially for the baseline, midterm, and endline reports); and attending all PRIMR workshops and bi-monthly meetings of the PRIMR senior management team.

From this consistent participation and coordination of PRIMR activities, the capacity of PDIT members to implement early grade reading and early grade math programs substantially increased. It should be noted that this was the first time key MoEST staff had been involved in consistent coordination and implementation of such a program over a sustained period (in this case, about three years). These PDIT members are currently the key personnel designing the new Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant design, meaning that the experience in PRIMR gave them the expertise and knowledge to help the MoEST implement larger-scale initiatives. During the course of PRIMR Initiative implementation, the MoEST also arranged for the Center for Mathematics and Science Teaching in Africa (CEMASTEA) to become part of the PDIT, as they became instrumental in supporting implementation of the math portion of the program in the country.

Primary Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs)

The MoEST appointed representatives from the PTTCs to attend various events in the interest of fully involving these pre-service training institutions in PRIMR's methods and policies. PTTC educators attended the project's scope and sequence workshop; participated in the official dissemination of the midterm report in September 2013; and engaged in other activities and studies.

Contacts

RTI International Africa Regional Office,

Vale Close, off Ring Road Parklands, 5th Floor, The Westwood; PO Box 1181 Village Market Nairobi (Westlands), Kenya 00621

Tel: +254 20 42 41000

Project II

Tusome Early Literacy Programme

Duration: August 2014-July 2019

General Background

Since Independence in 1963, the Government of Kenya has recognized the importance of education both as a basic right as well as a tool for achieving Social Economic development. The current primary school population is estimated at 10.4 million children in both public and private primary schools. This rapid growth in primary school population is largely attributed to the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) by the Government in 2002 and other interventions. The enrolment in schools indicated that Kenya was on track to achieve the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Commitments by 2015.

Kenya has made progress in moving forward the quality of Education. This can be reflected in the number of programmes specifically designed to address the quality issues. MOEST has had an increasing focus on quality of education in Lower Primary, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. In 2007, the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGMA) was piloted to assess literacy outcomes in Malindi. After piloting of Programmes that aimed at improving English, Kiswahili and Mathematics between 2007 and 2009, the country adopted the two models and carried out a research on Literacy and numeracy where the findings indicated that pupils at class 1 to 3 have low literacy and numeracy skills. The analysis of the research suggested that Lower Primary received less interest and attention from Head teachers, parents and teachers who were found to be using instructional methods that were wanting.

The results of the studies formed the basis of the Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative, a program implemented by MOEST with financial support from USAID and technical support from an NGO namely RTI International from 2011 to 2014. PRIMR Implementation indicated that Teacher Advisory Centre (TAC) tutors and teachers can improve the quality of Instruction and pupil outcomes significantly. The results indicated that PRIMR initiated well designed

syllabus based teacher guides, Intensive teacher training and targeted ongoing support through TAC Tutors can improve Instruction leading to significant gains in Pupil Literacy and Numeric Performance. In order to achieve the PRIMR recommendations and other loopholes in reading and literacy promotion among grade 1 and 2 pupils, Tusome Programme was instigated.

Tusome Programme

The above mentioned PRIMR results were achieved using the existing MOEST and TSC personal, confirming that education quality can be achieved using innovative methods within the current structures. In an effort to cover the gains of PRIMR, the TUSOME Programme was conceptualized and developed as a National Literacy Programme. It targets approximately 70,000 Teachers, 23,500 Schools for Improvement in Literacy Instruction and Outcomes. It is envisaged that 5.4 Million class 1 and 2 pupils will be twice as likely to meet MOEST benchmarks for literacy.

Aims

The overall Goal of Tusome Programme is improving literacy outcomes for Classes 1 and 2 pupils. The following objectives will be used to realize the goal of the programme;

- i. Improve the reading skills of the approximately 5.4 million individual Kenyan children beginning primary school during the 2015 - 2019 school years
- ii. Improve the English and Kiswahili skills of primary school children in the approximately 23,500 formal and alternative basic education institutions across the country
- iii. Build the capacity of 70,000 primary school teachers, over 1,100 Curriculum Support Officers, 67 coaches for non-formal schools, and 300 senior education personnel.

The key activities to ensure the achievements of the programme objectives are:

- i. Improve teachers' capacity
- ii. Improve access to books and supplementary material
- iii. Enhance supervision of teachers by TACs, Coaches and Headteachers
- iv. Establish effective and efficient Monitoring and Evaluation system.
- v. Enhance use of ICT
- vi. Enhance capacity of the education sector to sustainably improve literacy outcomes.
- vii. Enhance effective monitoring and evaluation system.

In order to deliver on the objectives of the Programme, the following strategies will be employed:

- i. Establish Co-ordination committees at both National and County levels
- ii. Build capacity for effective implementation
- iii. Provide support and supervision
- iv. Provide appropriate Institutional Support Materials
- v. Enhance Partnerships and Collaborations

Partnership

RTI International which is the implementing entity of Tusome Programme has partnered with various organizations to ensure the programme success which include; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development, Kenya National Examinations Council, and Kenya Institute of Special Education.

The programme will be coordinated by a National Steering Committee chaired by the cabinet Secretary and comprising of Senior MOEST officers, and CEOs from TSC, KNEC and MOEST SAGAs. KNUT, KEPSHA, USAID, DFID, representatives from Parliamentary Education Committee and Education Development Partners Co-ordination group. Other Management teams include National technical Committee and County Steering Committee.

2.2 The Target group

The programme will be implemented in all Public Primary Schools and 1000 alternative basic education institutions serving Low Cost Urban Settlements Countywide. The programme targets the following beneficiaries:

- i. 5.4 million Children in public primary schools.
- ii. 100,000 learners in alternative basic institutions.
- iii. 48,000 teachers in public primary schools
- iv. 2000 Teachers in alternative basic education institutions
- v. 1052 Tact tutors who will participate in training and supervision

vi. 67 instructional coaches who will participate in implementation.

Description

The *Tusome* (“Let’s Read” in Kiswahili) Early Grade Reading activity is a flagship partnership launched in 2015 between USAID and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST). *Tusome*, now being implemented through Ministry systems in every primary school in the country, will improve the reading skills of 5.4 million pupils. The *Tusome* technical approach employs research-driven learning materials, proven teaching methodologies and a cutting edge tablet-based feedback and monitoring system implanted by MOEST officials. The program is also being introduced in 1,000 Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET) institutions in Kenya.

Tusome increases the availability and use of appropriate textbooks and learning materials to support literacy development and foster a culture of reading in the schools and the country at large. Each student receives his or her own textbook and over 16 million books will be developed and distributed over the next five years. Consequently, Kenya is one of the only countries in sub-Saharan Africa with a 1:1 pupil textbook ratio. Additional learning materials for special needs learners are also in development.

Tusome trains MOEST Curriculum Support officers (CSOs), head teachers, teachers, and instructional coaches in proven learning techniques. The trainings are designed to give participants practical experience through classroom-based experiential learning. Head teachers are trained to provide instructional leadership for their schools while managing the development and utilization of the new learning materials. CSOs provide teaching support to teachers within a cluster or zone as do instructional coaches in APBET institutions (low cost private schools). Both CSOs and coaches build pedagogical skills in critical technical areas such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, lesson planning, and curriculum coverage. Training for CSOs and instructional coaches focuses on delivering literacy lessons using the direct instruction methodology, a teaching approach that uses straightforward, explicit teaching techniques to improve literacy skills.

The activity also trains Senior County and national education leaders in the new reading techniques, and addresses gaps in relevant laws, policies, strategies, and regulations and their

impact on early-grade reading. To create reading champions and foster accountability throughout the system, real time learner performance data is now uploaded and made available to local and national education stakeholders.

Tusome includes two special funds to support reading outcomes: the Youth Fund and the Partnership Fund. The Youth Fund empowers local youth groups to work with younger children to improve reading skills. The Partnership Fund links public and private-sector partners to lead local reading programs and instill a reading culture in their respective communities.

Outcomes

The overall goal of improved literacy outcomes for class 1 and 2 will be realized through:

- i. Improved delivery methods and instruction
- ii. Improved access to text books and supplementary materials
- iii. Enhanced support supervision of teachers by TACs, Coaches and Head teachers
- iv. Enhanced of ICT to support literacy
- v. Enhanced capacity of education sector.

Assessment

Emily Okoth who is a Class One teacher at Ngata Primary School in Nakuru County said, “Before the Tusome training, I used traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing, repetition, copying from the board or having the class respond as a chorus. Many of my pupils struggled with reading but few achieved fluency. Tusome technical training and the array of textbooks and learning materials have transformed the way I teach and the overall learning environment. My pupils now enjoy my lessons and are better able to understand the materials. Three of her pupils reached national literacy benchmarks after only several months of instruction, the others are closing in on the fluency goal”. Inspired, Ms. Okoth adapted the new teaching methods to work with older students who never learned to read in primary school. Ms. Okoth’s success and personal drive is attributed to the inspiration of seeing her young students quickly grasp the fundamentals of reading and thrive in her classroom.

Sustainability

Through RTI, Tusome Programme will be supported by the following Partners; □ Women's Educational Researchers of Kenya, Dalberg, Worldreader, Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO), Elimu Yetu Coalition, National Youth Bunge Association, Homeboyz, E-limu, Africa Population Health Research Centre, Uwezo Kenya, Medicare and SIL. The different contributions that will be provided by the partners towards supporting the programme will attract more beneficiaries including members of the communities across Kenya and other bordering nations.

Contacts

USAID Contacts: Mr. Wick Powers-Chief, Office of Education and Youth; Tel: +254 20 862 2755;

Email: rpowers@usaid.gov

Lilian Gangla: Program Management Specialist, Office of Education and Youth; Tel: +254 20 862 2000;

Email: lgangla@usaid.gov

Tusome National Coordinator: Maria Cheronon, Senior Deputy Director Ministry of Education, Science and Technology; Tel: + 254 020 331 8581; Email: mariakcherono@gmail.com

Tusome Contact: Dr. Benjamin Piper, Chief of Party RTI International; Tel: +254 20 374 9921;

Email: bpiper@tusome.rti.org

Project III

Uwezo Kenya learning and literacy program

Status: Active

Background

Uwezo, meaning “capability” in Kiswahili, is an initiative to improve competencies in literacy and numeracy among children aged 5-16 years in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda through an innovative, civic -driven and public accountability approach to social change. Uwezo was started to enable policy makers as well as ordinary citizens like parents, students, local communities and public at large to become aware of actual levels of children’s literacy and numeracy, and build on that awareness to stimulate practical and policy change across East Africa. Increased attention to education has resulted from a combined set of presidential orders and decentralized funding. However, the push for qualitative reforms can be attributed to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and supported by various collaborating groups. Concerned with the lack of focus on learning outcomes, MoE and UNICEF piloted assessments to Monitoring Achievement in Lower Primary (MALP) in 12 arid districts in 2004, though this program has been fraught by numerous logistic difficulties. In 2005, the MoE developed the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (KESSP). This program is supposed to aid the government attain the targets spelt out in the Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 on a Policy Framework for Education, Training and Research; the official planning document guiding the education sector. The 2013 Uwezo assessment measured the ability of children to read and comprehend English and Kiswahili, as well as complete basic numeracy tasks, all pegged at the Standard 2 level and thus provide rich insight into progress towards the education for all goal (EFA).

Non Governmental organizations (NGOs) have also focused on learning achievements, such as the Aga Khan Foundation supported Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in English and Kiswahili in the coast province, Mombasa. In addition, Dream achievers youth organization(DAYO) in Mombasa that is led by a group of young volunteers who needed to mitigate challenges among young people through community theatre as a participatory strategy of disseminating, educating and informing the community on various issues including literacy

and numeracy skills. DAYO works to sensitize the community on the importance of education and works to improve the quality of education currently available. They have collaborated with Uwezo Kenya to improve the quality education in public schools by seeking to assess basic literacy and numeracy of children between 6-16 years by carrying out an Annual Learning Assessment (ALA). The aim is to create an educational community that collectively seeks to achieve quality education for all. Dream Achievers Youth Organization is implementing this project in Coast Province within Mombasa County under Women Educational Researchers of Kenya.⁸

Aims

Uwezo's core purpose is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of education so that children learn and develop greater competencies, particularly in basic literacy and numeracy. The specific goal is to contribute to an improvement of at least 10 percentage points in literacy and numeracy levels among children aged 6-16 years in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda by end of 2015. The primary method for tracking progress on this is through Uwezo's own assessment, as well as independent evaluations.⁹

Partnership

Twaweza which is the implementing entity of Uwezo reading and literacy programme, recognizes that the most effective way of achieving its objectives is through collaboration with key individuals, organizations and government departments. Uwezo has therefore identified the critical parties whom it collaborate with and has rationalized the tenets that govern the proposed partnership. The collaboration is incorporated in Uwezo's governance structure, such as the National Advisory Committees, as well as the establishment of flexible networks with organizations in education and the media sectors. The key partnerships that have been built are with:

⁸ DAYO (2014). Establishment of a Youth Entrepreneur Resource Centre for Mombasa County Youths. Retrieved from https://onepercentclub.com/media/task_files/DAYO_Youth_Empowerment_proposal_2014.doc.

⁹ Uwezo (2013). Improving Learning Outcomes in East Africa 2009-2013 Strategy. Retrieved from http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/RO_20092013_StrategicPlan_Updated.pdf

Government Ministries: Buy-in from relevant departments and individuals has been prioritized in a formal and practical manner. Uwezo has informed the relevant ministries about the processes and has incorporated selected members (drawn from specialist departments like curriculum, examinations, and bureaus of statistics) in the National Advisory Committees. Practically, Uwezo has involved technical experts drawn from two main line ministries (Education and Planning) in key aspects such as developing the assessment tests and sampling framework. In future, Uwezo will expand and build strategic alliances with sister ministries in order to inform the Ministry of Education, who holds the public mandate for regulating education. Ministries in charge of economic planning (such as Vision 2030); or those seeking enhanced equity (such as Ministry of Northern Kenya and other arid lands) will be sought to build alliances from ‘within government’. Overall, cooperation with government will be sought where possible, provided doing so does not unduly delay Uwezo’s schedule of work or undermine its independence.

Individuals and Organizations: The selection of key individuals and organizations to partner with has observed a very basic tenet of partnership: that it be a reciprocal relationship in which both parties have something to offer and to benefit. Uwezo standards on partners and volunteers have been developed and will continue to offer guidance on who can partner with Uwezo, how they are identified, and terms of partnership. Individuals, who support crucial areas, has also continued to be involved in program aspects like training and communicating Uwezo results. Partnerships with professional associations, specialist organizations, editors and individuals of influence has continued to be built to further the Uwezo program objectives. Uwezo also participate in forums of influence. This implies continuing with active engagement, including accepting offers to sit in the executive committees and boards of coalitions of education, civil society actors or donor education groups.

ASER Centre: Uwezo shall not seek to reinvent the wheel and shall continue to benchmark its design and processes against ASER India. Experience has shown that better learning occurs when ASER or Uwezo staff members participate during actual implementation (as opposed to created activities). Uwezo will no longer sponsor delegations to India for broad based participation. Instead, there will be limited cross-country engagements aimed at broadening learning in specific aspects. Uwezo shall continue to engage with ASER in expert meetings

similar to the one ASER attended on Tests Standards or in specific activities such as the annual ASER national training. A more united front will be forged to communicate Uwezo-ASER methodology externally, for instance in international conferences or in participating in learning sessions that enhance our collective expertise (such as in large scale data analysis).

Target group

The programme targets young people at Early childhood, Pre-primary, Primary and Lower secondary levels.

Description

Uwezo is a four-year initiative aimed at improving literacy and numeracy levels among children between the ages of 5-16 years in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The program aims to achieve this by shifting the education focus from access and infrastructure to what children are actually learning. Uwezo conducts large scale, citizen-led, household-based assessments of children's actual literacy and numeracy levels. Findings from these surveys are shared with communities from the local to national levels to create broad public awareness and debate, with the ultimate goal of stimulating policy and practical change.

Uwezo's approach includes the following components:

- i. Surveys are conducted in randomly-selected households across all districts in each of the three focus countries. The household component allows the Uwezo assessment to differ from national exam systems in two important ways: a) conducting assessment in households creates an environment of comfort and trust for students taking the tests, and b) allows the assessment to measure learning of children who might not be attending school.
- ii. Volunteers from each community conduct the surveys, to engender trust between families and surveyors and to build skills and capacity among volunteers. Volunteers have tended to return each year to implement the survey, and in the meantime, skills picked up by volunteers have been used to improve livelihoods in other ways, creating a positive side effect of training for the communities.
- iii. Simple survey tools are used that are easily administered by volunteers and understood by families.

- iv. Instant feedback of the assessment results is provided by volunteers to families and communities, and survey results are communicated to communities to create broad public awareness, dialogue and engagement.
- v. A thoughtful monitoring and evaluation framework is implemented to inform ongoing work and broader awareness and policy debates.
- vi. The assessment is repeated each year to create opportunity for analysis of impact and momentum for change.

Uwezo has achieved scale by implementing through country partners and building capacity of regional trainers to implement the survey in decentralized manner. The concept of citizen led assessments, originally pioneered in India and then Pakistan through the ASER program, has also been replicated not only in Kenya but also in Mali and Senegal.

Lesson Learnt

Uwezo has continued to explore support in other countries such as Uganda and Tanzania, as well as working out modalities of how the initiative would need to be structured and governed in new countries. It is highly unlikely that Uwezo itself will manage work in the new countries; much more likely that we will share ideas, approaches and lessons, similar to the relationship ASER has had with Uwezo. The revised budget includes funds for exchange visits (also similar to ones undertaken in early days between East Africa and ASER in India) and participation in selected global events and conferences. Building on current informal efforts, Uwezo will explore teaming up with ASER and think tanks/ foundations in a more concerted fashion to promote shared learning objectives through joint global advocacy.

Results after three Years

Uwezo 3 survey report, undertaken in Kenya, Mainland Tanzania and Uganda in 2012; summarizes the main findings covering virtually all districts in these countries, with large sample sizes within each district, the Uwezo surveys represented an extremely rich source of information to monitor trends in learning and to compare such outcomes both within and between countries across the region. The Uwezo 3 survey results are highly consistent with those of the previous rounds. The survey found that many children who attend school are not learning basic skills within the first few years of education. Moreover, a substantial proportion of children in their

final years of primary school have not mastered Grade 2 level competencies. Thus, the education system was failing many children. As previous surveys have shown differences between and within countries are large. Kenyan and Tanzanian children perform similarly with respect to numeracy skills; however, Kenyan children show higher literacy skills. The survey also found very large differences in learning outcomes between districts and between socio-economic groups in Kenya. This indicates that despite a commitment to universal primary education, large disparities in educational opportunities remain. Considering the results from different rounds of the Uwezo surveys, there is little evidence of large changes in learning outcomes. Whilst it is difficult to establish robust trends over time with only three data points, the results suggest that learning outcomes in Kenya have remained extremely stable.¹⁰

Conclusions and Policy Recommendation

Improving learning must be a policy priority: Children in Kenya continue to acquire basic skills of literacy in English and of numeracy rather late. It is only in class 5 and above that a majority of pupils are fully successful at the class 2 level reading and arithmetic tasks that Uwezo assesses. Even at class 8, the final year of the primary education cycle, at least 2 out of 10 children are unable to complete reading and arithmetic tasks at class 2 level. This implies that a substantial number of children continue to complete primary education without ever having acquired the basic numeracy and literacy competencies critical to further learning and independent and social living.

Provide more support to disadvantaged populations to reduce inequality in basic education outcomes: The sixth Uwezo report has highlighted the inequalities in learning outcomes. These are largely associated with socio-economic status including household resources, the length of pre-primary attendance, whether children attend public or private school, and the geographic locations where children live. Children in poorer families, in rural settings and those in the Northern and Eastern regions continue to underperform relative to their peers in wealthier, urban households.

¹⁰ Uwezo (2013). Improving Learning Outcomes in East Africa 2009-2013 Strategy. Retrieved from http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/RO_20092013_StrategicPlan_Updated.pdf

Maintain and enhance targeted support to the teaching of literacy in local languages: There is ample evidence in international literature that shows that competence in your mother tongue affects second language acquisition and learning. In Kenya the acquisition of reading skills in the local language is easier than for English.

Teacher accountability seems to make a difference: Although private schools had a lower proportion of trained teachers than government-aided schools, they had a lower pupil-teacher ratio, higher rates of teacher presence and higher learning outcomes than government schools. Although further research can help to establish the extent to which different factors affecting teaching including accountability, incentives and skills matter, the indication here is that even when teachers do not possess the full range of teaching skills, they can deliver. What matters is the environment in which they work, and the pressure to Sperform which keeps them in class and teaching

Assessment

Before the introduction of Uwezo, there were at least three major regional and national learning assessments in East Africa. These are: the Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) projects under the auspices of UNICEF; the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) project spearheaded by IIEP/UNESCO; and country propelled national assessments, for example the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) in Kenya.

The first national assessment of student achievement for in-school children outside of public examinations in East Africa is credited to SACMEQ I, which was conducted in 1995-1998. Both Kenya and Tanzania were among the seven African countries that participated then and in the two subsequent assessments. MLA, SACMEQ and NAPE like assessments were all conceived as higher-end policy related, involving mainly planners and managers, and designed primarily to provide information for policymaking (and not to increase public awareness and/or stimulate public debate). The value of these assessments, however, is limited where the ‘research-policy-implementation’ linkages are not effective, such as in East Africa. Much is made of using

SACMEQ to study achievement changes over about a five-year period. However, there is little evidence to show that they have helped trigger greater policy clarity or change. The overly technical nature of these assessments may have made the findings inaccessible to the very audience they had targeted. In addition, “there has often been quite a gap between the data collection and the publication of (SACMEQ) results”. The government of Kenya has propelled national assessment center which have in the past two years sought to chart alternative paths of communicating the findings to policy implementers (such as district education officers and head teachers). Efforts have been made to develop friendly and understandable communication material aimed at inducing changes in practice. The Uwezo approach offers a complementary approach that can stimulate wider public action from the bottom up to refocus education systems. An opportunity exists for Uwezo to capitalize on the change of perspective in the Ministry of Education assessment departments to include more broad based participation and affect more policy related actions.

Sustainability

This project is supported by Hewlett Foundation, UK Department for International Development (DFID), The Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos), Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and the World Bank. This maintains the sustainability of the Uwezo Programme.

Contact

Uwezo Kenya at Twaweza
Gatundu Road, 3328
P.O. Box 13784-00800 Nairobi
Email: kenya@uwezo.net