Each Learner Counts: Evidence on Improving Learning Outcomes in Kenya

National Annual Learning Forum
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Introduction

Since 2018, organizations from the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) have implemented evidence based interventions to hasten the skilling of basic literacy and numeracy competencies. This booklet shares evidence from 8 programs that collectively reached 24,151 children across 213 schools located in 12 Counties. The key message is that it is possible to support a significant number of learners lagging behind to acquire basic skills within a short period. For instance, evidence from Zizi Afrique shows that more than half of the learners participating in the program could read a grade 2 level story in only 30 days.

Key facts from Implementation

1. Despite huge input investments in education, the needle has not moved. 
   In Bungoma, only 43% of children in grade 3-5 were able to read a grade two level text in 2018 as compared to 50% in 2015.

2. Low competency levels affect boys and girls in almost equal measure 
   Of all the learners in the program in Turkana, Bungoma and Tana River, there were 52% boys and 48% girls.

3. In numeracy, PLACE VALUE stands out as the biggest challenge. 
   In Turkana, Bungoma and Tana River, 79% of all learners in the program struggled with addition and subtraction with regrouping (39% addition and 40% subtraction)

4. Within at least 30 days of intervention, it is possible to significantly increase the ability of learners to read and reason with numbers. 
   In only 30 days, 59% of learners in Turkana were supported to acquire numeracy skills
Curriculum Equity Program

2019 Evidence

An analysis of Kiswahili reading levels in which 1,020 learners in grade 1-3 were reached from 34 schools across 7 counties.

**Learners who could read a grade 2 level text in Kiswahili in regular schools**

- **Only three out of ten** in Kajiado & Migori
- **Only two out of five** in Tana River
- **One out of two** in Nairobi & Tharaka Nithi

**Learners who could read a grade 2 level text in Kiswahili in special needs schools**

- **Only three out of ten** in Isiolo
- **Only two out of five** in West Pokot
Accelerated Learning Program

2018/19 Highlights

We identify children at risk of being left behind in Turkana, Bungoma and Tana River Counties and support them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

At the end of 30 Days...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One out of two children could read a grade 2 level story</th>
<th>Three out of five children could do grade 2 basic math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of learners reached: 7,394

Number of learners supported: 4,526 (61%)

Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story: 2,403 (53%)
The overall goal of the program is to attain universal literacy levels among the Kajiado Pastoralist children.

**At the end of 30 Days...**

Two out of three children could read a grade 2 level story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 - 5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of learners reached</th>
<th>936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners supported</td>
<td>436 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story</td>
<td>291 (67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunity Schools

The program aims to improve learning outcomes for increased enrollment, attendance, progression and completion in Kajiado County.

At the end of 30 Days...

Two out of five children could read a grade 2 level story

Number of schools: 20
Grades: 4 - 5

Total number of learners reached: 2,078
Number of learners supported: 1,864 (90%)
Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story: 746 (40%)
Teaching at the Right Level

The program supports pastoralist children especially girls to complete primary education and acquire critical skills by strengthening support systems both in and out of school in Marsabit County.

**2019 Highlights**

At the end of 30 Days...

Three out of seven children could read a grade 2 level story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 - 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number of learners reached</th>
<th>1,075</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners supported</td>
<td>1,075 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story</td>
<td>460 (43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the end of 30 Days...

Three out of four children could read a grade 2 level story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>4 - 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of learners reached: 7,500

Number of learners supported: 1,442 (19%)

Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story: 1,082 (75%)
Teaching at the Right Level

2019 Highlights

Our aim is to lift those at the bottom of the pyramid to acquire basic reading skills in Migori County.

At the end of 10 Days...

Two out of five children could read a grade 2 level story

Number of schools 5
Grades 4 - 5

Total number of learners reached 450
Number of learners supported 260 (58%)
Number of children who could read a grade 2 level story 104 (40%)
Teaching at the Right Level

2019 Highlights

The program focused on improving literacy levels of children within selected schools in Nairobi County through student fellows.

At the end of 10 Days...

Two out of five children could read a grade 2 level story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>4 - 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of learners reached: 3,698

Number of learners supported: 3,506 (96%)

Number of learners who could read a grade 2 level story: 1,402 (40%)
Evidence Implications

1. **Focus on competencies, not just content:** At the foundational level, children will learn best from ‘where they are’ rather than ‘where they ought to be’. The Primary focus should be on understanding which competencies learners need to acquire, their current levels and thereafter challenge them to move towards the desired levels.

2. **Start with the Language the learner has Competency in:** Learners come to class endowed with language abilities that are rarely tapped on to build a foundation for learning. In homogeneous environments where learners are only exposed to one language since birth, deliberate efforts to promote a smooth transition from home to school is necessary. One strategy that worked in the program was use of teacher assistants with local language competencies, as some learners could only communicate in their first language.

   ‘Mwalimu akiongea siskii’ translated as ‘I have trouble hearing what the teacher says’ was one learners’ response to the question on whether he had hearing difficulties. It later turned out that this learner ‘could not understand’ the language of the teacher in class. He interpreted this as difficulty in hearing on his part.

3. **Assessment for learning:** Assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning is the way to go. The teacher is central to assessment, and if equipped with simple tools, teachers can determine where each child is on the scale of acquiring foundational literacy and numeracy. Such information helps them ‘plan’ for the individual learner’s needs.

4. **Retooling teachers:** Teacher support needs to focus on practical classroom strategies centred on the child. Majority of trained teachers are well equipped with content, however strategies of delivery need strengthening. Instituting a support structure that stresses on how children learn will yield a more responsive teaching force.
...before I joined this program, I couldn't read but now, I can read and write.... Learner, Bungoma, 2019

...my child can now read and form words...Parent, Bungoma 2019

....because of ALP, absenteeism cases have reduced significantly...Head Teacher, Bungoma, 2019

..With the skills I gained, I can identify learners who are struggling and support them better...Teacher Assistant, Turkana, 2020

.....program has benefitted those lagging behind in normal lessons. Our regular teachers have also benefitted. We have encouraged the regular teachers to adopt that model...Head Teacher, Bungoma, 2019