



Accelerated Learning

August 2018 – April 2022

Accelerated Learning Programme

August 2018 – April 2022

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I. Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
BoM	Board of Management
CAG	County Advisory Group
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CoP	Community of Practice
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CREADIS	Community Research in Environment and Development Initiatives
DOL	Diocese of Lodwar
EE4A	Education Evidence for Action
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAG	National Advisory Group
NASMLA	National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement
PCK	Pedagogical Content Knowledge
RELI	Regional Education Learning Initiative
SCDE	Sub-County Director of Education
TA	Teacher Assistant
TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
TTC	Teachers Training College
PAL Network	People's Action for Learning Network
ZAF/ Zizi	Zizi Afrique Foundation



II. Partners

Safaricom Foundation

Safaricom Foundation is the Corporate Social arm of Safaricom PLC, founded in 2003. The Foundation's strategic goal for the period from 2018 to 2021 was to make a significant contribution towards Kenya's sustainable development through three strategic directions: ensuring healthy lives and promoting well being for Kenyans; ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for Kenyans; and ensuring full and productive employment and decent work for young Kenyans.



Zizi Afrique
Foundation

Zizi Afrique is a for-impact organisation committed to improving learning outcomes for learners and youth furthest behind. Founded in 2015 and formally incorporated in 2018, Zizi envisions a solid foundation for all learners, and a smooth transition for all youth—where learners are well equipped with the foundational skills for learning, and youth well equipped with skills for living and working.

About Maridhiano



Maridhiano is a community-based organisation which was formed and registered in 2003 with the Ministry of Social Services. The organisation was formed to bring together the diverse ethnic groups within Tana Delta which were perpetually involved in tribal clashes. Maridhiano envisions the existence of an empowered and united community.

About CREADIS



Community Research in Environment and Development Initiatives (CREADIS) is a registered NGO in Bungoma County, Kenya. It works in counties covering the former Western Province and North Rift. Its vision is for the people of Western Kenya to achieve and sustain a better quality of life for all.

About the Diocese of Lodwar



The Catholic Diocese of Lodwar (DoL) as a faith-based organisation (FBO) has been involved in development work in the County for over fifty years. Registered in Kenya in December 1968, the DoL works with the Turkana community at the grassroots level through its network of parishes and its functional departments.



III. Executive Summary

Learning poverty is a term now familiar to most people working in the education sector. It denotes learners who fail to acquire foundational reading competencies by age 10. The concept is now widely applied across the globe to justify the need for more investment to accelerate the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy competencies. It is a critical measure which reveals the inadequacies of our education systems with regards to quality learning. The World Bank has estimated an increase of children experiencing learning poverty globally, from 53 percent pre-Covid to 70 percent post-Covid. The already dire situation has further worsened.

The Accelerated Learning Programme is one of the many initiatives inspired by the Teaching at the Right Level Approach (TaRL). The approach applies principles of targeted instruction to help learners lagging behind to quickly catch up on these critical skillsets. In Kenya, Zizi Afrique championed the contextualisation efforts that have seen the programme work directly with 150 public primary schools, reaching 25,271 learners and a further 11,389 indirectly through 25 civil society partners in 119 schools. As of 2022, the project has had an impact on 36,660 learners in Kenya directly and indirectly.

The programme aims to support learners to read with comprehension and to be able to reason with numbers. The initiative focused on schools in Bungoma, Turkana and Tana River counties, which ranked among the bottom 10 as per the [Uwezo 2015](#) report, thus fitting the definition of counties lagging behind the most (in matters learning). The programme was launched in 2018 in Turkana, in an event graced by the Chief Executive Officer of the National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK). During the same year, the programme was rolled out in 11 schools. It later spread to 61 schools in 2019, 119 schools in 2020, and 150 schools in 2022.

Implementation at the county level was through local organisations, namely: Community Research in Environment and Development Initiatives (CREADIS - Bungoma), Maridhiano (Tana River) and the Diocese of Lodwar (Turkana). In each of these organisations, a programme support team comprising field officers was deployed to oversee the implementation. At the school level, teacher assistants, who had been retooled on targeted instruction, worked directly with the learners to manage the learning camps, under the direct supervision of head teachers.

The programme lead team at Zizi Afrique steered the contextualisation of the approach to the Kenyan context. This process aimed at packaging protocols that would guide training, teacher recruitment and school selection, assessment, partnership engagement, data management and impact monitoring. A “Do It Yourself” (DIY) strategy was applied in pre-testing all processes. As a result, the programme successfully packaged manuals and learning toolkits; mobilised and built the capacity of civil society organisations to adapt the approach which led to expanded implementation in over seven counties; enhanced capacities of teacher assistants to plan for and deliver targeted sessions that accelerate the acquisition of literacy and numeracy competencies; and yielded continuous engagement of policymakers and an eventual invitation to work alongside teacher training colleges through the recently established Communities of Practice (CoP) in Kenya for advocacy.

The programme also adapted and rolled out a community-based component that was delivered through technology (radio, SMS, and tablets). During the COVID-19 closures, the programme shifted to community-based implementation. To highlight but a few accomplishments:

- 9,699 learners were assessed in the community during the COVID-19 closures and learning sessions held for 4,526 learners in designated community spaces.
- 1,660 solar-powered radios were distributed to the neediest households and 23 weekly radio sessions aired in partnership with community radio stations.
- 3,882 learners received weekly, levelled SMS content in literacy and numeracy; and,
- A literacy and numeracy levelled workbook was introduced as a home learning resource. Three series of workbooks (1 to 3) have since been packaged and 17,690 copies distributed to the learners for use while at home.

These aspects have catalysed parental engagement in learning while ensuring learning continuity at home. Through the community initiatives, the programme also noted the opportunity to engage unemployed youths and parents residing in target communities as catalysts for community-based learning. In Turkana, 12 community-based youths were engaged in



organising and facilitating after-school literacy sessions, whereas 206 parent champions volunteered as custodians of tablets loaded with levelled content and opened up their homes for after-school learning sessions for 1,143 learners.

These gains were made possible through the collaborations established, through constant communication that ensured all partners and stakeholders were well acquainted with the programme objectives, and through investment in critical components such as the retooling of teachers, continuous monitoring, and periodic convening of policy actors at county and national levels, and ongoing support to implementing partners.

Among the challenges encountered include: high attrition of teacher assistants, lack of suitably qualified teacher assistants (resulting in programme closure in 26 schools in 2021 in Turkana), and partnership-related challenges in Turkana where the programme worked with three partners over the four-year period. Further, the programme recorded slow progress during intervention post-COVID and some disruptions arising due to the tightly packed school calendar to recover lost learning time during COVID-19 closures. High cases of absenteeism were recorded due to drought and lack of feeding programmes in school. These notwithstanding, evidence shows the suitability of ALP in mediating the foundational competency gaps amongst learners falling furthest behind. The programme:

- Impacted on 36,660 learners: 25,271 of these directly, in Bungoma, Turkana and Tana River counties and 11,389 indirectly, through 25 partners in seven counties.
- Resulted in 84 percent and 74 percent of learners improving by at least one competency level (over a 30-day period) in the literacy intervention, pre- and post-COVID respectively. The programme had estimated that 85 percent of learners would improve to at least one higher competency level within 10 days of the intervention.
- Successfully retooled 265 teacher assistants over the period and inducted 182 head teachers leading to successful partnerships with 269 schools, 150 of these directly through Zizi Afrique.
- Successfully packaged a compendium of learning resources including levelled story booklets in English, Kiswahili and Ng'aturkana, paragraph booklets, picture cards for oral skill development, levelled workbooks as well as assorted charts for literacy and numeracy concepts.
- Engaged policymakers at county and national levels through advisory groups. The engagement was conducted through policy forums organised for evidence sharing, programme launches hosted by the county advisory groups, as well as institutional engagements, such as the induction of the KICD team to ALP, and the experiential immersion of tutors and principals from teacher training colleges held in Egoji in late February 2022.

While delivering a similar programme in the future, a few recommendations emerge:

- i. Paying close attention to the language of instruction issues. It was evident that learners who were lagging behind were struggling with the language of instruction. Hence, the decision was made to step back and leverage the language competencies they had acquired from their homes, for facilitating the transition to L2 (Kiswahili) and L3 (English).
- ii. Animating a community of actors invested in adapting targeted approaches to various contexts as a pathway for scale. This also allows cross-context learning, leading to richer and stronger intervention programmes.
- iii. Bridging Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) capacities of teachers on foundational literacy and numeracy instruction. Even though teachers have an admirable understanding of the course content, there were challenges in delivering effective lessons for proper understanding of the basics of literacy and numeracy. Translating the content into lesson experiences proved challenging. As such, the programme recommends a heightened focus on strengthening PCK among teachers as this will translate to more effective lessons.
- iv. Interrogating place value as a foundational concept in numeracy. While assessing operations, most learners struggled with the concept of regrouping due to limited proficiency in place value as a concept. Furthermore, evidence from implementation shows much slower progress in mastering this concept as well as in applying it while working out operations that involve regrouping. The programme recommends further exploration of strategies for effective instruction of place value.



- v. The critical role of government and established structures in sustaining FLN gains. The programme achieved constant engagement with county and national government through the national and county advisory groups. Further, policy and stakeholder forums organised to either launch the programme at the counties or share evidence at the national level provided a thriving ground for systemic uptake of ALP principles. Institutions such as KICD were inducted, principals and tutors from Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) oriented on the approaches to accelerated learning, and evidence shared in national, regional, and global conferences, such as the Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) People's Action for Learning (PAL) network conference, among others. Leveraging systemic structures will yield greater impact and sustainability.



Impact on learning



Total Learners Reached
36,660



Learners Reached Directly
25,271



Learners Reached indirectly (25 Partners)
11,389



Reading and learning resources distributed
100,394



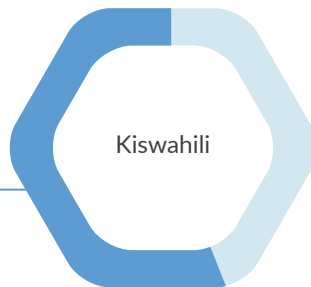
Schools
269



Teacher Assistants
265

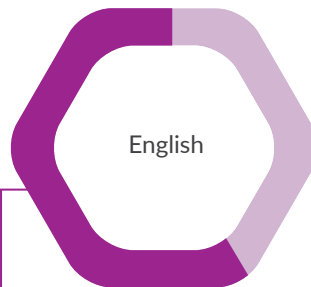


Head Teachers
182



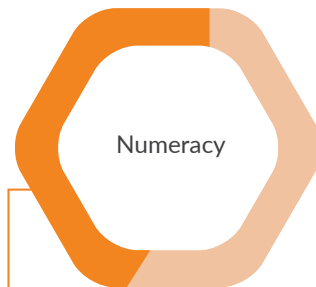
Kiswahili

Total cases 'n': **7,249**
Graduating (reading): **4,076**
% Impact: **56%**



English

Total cases 'n': **4,996**
Graduating (reading): **2,846**
% Impact: **57%**



Numeracy

Total cases 'n': **6,983**
Graduating: **2,841**
% Impact: **41%**

1 The total 'n' cases captured here represents the number of children who met the minimum 30-day threshold of intervention.



"COVID" Radio learning session in Tana River County

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Rationale

Schooling with little learning is a phenomenon that has characterised basic education in the last decade. With over 617 million learners globally lacking foundational literacy and numeracy skills (UIS, 2017), it is evident that governments and actors in education need to reimagine quality basic education for all. Of the 617 million (53%), 202 million were in Africa, with the World Bank projecting a 17 percent increase (to 70%) due to learning losses occasioned by COVID-19-related closures.

In Kenya, the Uwezo assessments conducted between 2010 and 2021 pointed to a sizeable proportion of learners in Grade 3 lagging behind by at least one year. For instance, in the 2015 assessment, only 30 percent of learners in Grade 3 were proficient in reading a Grade 2-level text. Eight per cent of those in Grade 8 could not read a similar text. Similarly, a national assessment by the Ministry of Education in Kenya conducted in 2020, [the NASMLA assessment](#), established that out of the total number of Grade 3s assessed, only 53 percent had met the expected reading levels. The [Usawa Agenda report of 2021](#) echoes a similar message, with only 40 percent of those in Grade 4 meeting the reading expectations of Grade 3.

The Sustainable Development Goal urges countries to not only reach out to those **left behind** but emphasises the need to reach those who are the **furthest behind first**. At Zizi Afrique, this commitment is articulated in her vision of working towards a world in which children and youth are equipped with skills for learning, working, and living. Low learning outcomes are more pronounced in some counties and in most cases, marginalised regions bear the greatest brunt of this disadvantage. From the [2015 Uwezo study](#), 7 out of 10 bottom counties were either arid, semi-arid, or rural poor counties. Three of these were selected for the implementation of the ALP.

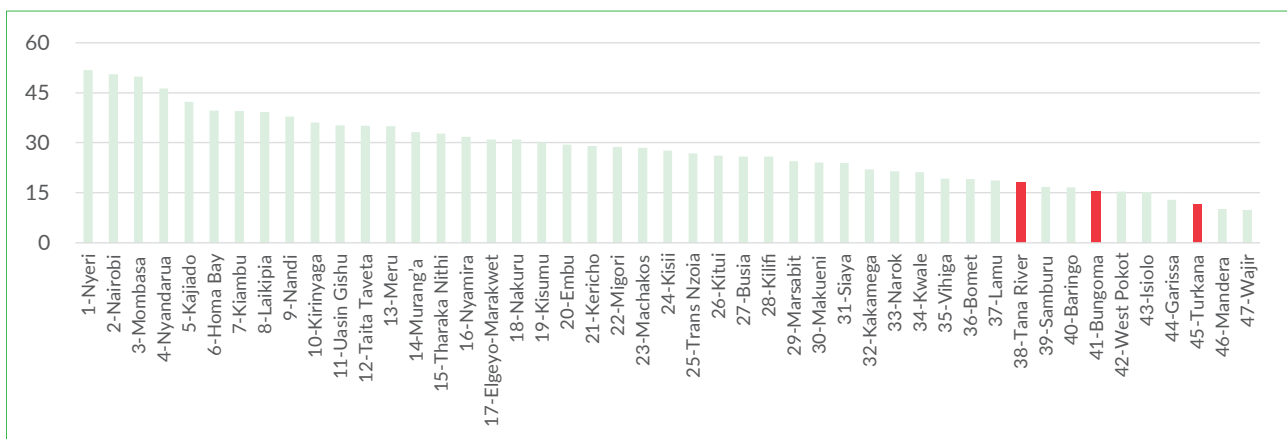


Figure 1: Counties of Focus (Uwezo Ranking)

1.2 About the Accelerated Learning Programme

The programme was launched in 2018 in Bungoma, Turkana, and Tana River counties. These counties were selected from among the bottom 10 counties as per the Uwezo county ranking of 2015. In addition to the ranking, three strata were identified, and one county was selected from each. These strata were: i) ASAL Pastoralist; ii) ASAL Coastal; and iii) Non-ASAL, urban poor from which Turkana, Tana River and Bungoma counties were selected respectively. Whereas 30 percent of all Grade 3 learners assessed were competent in Grade 2 nationally (which is significantly low), only 11 percent of learners in Turkana had attained Grade 2-level competencies, compared to 15 percent in Bungoma and 18 percent in Tana River. The programme aimed at ensuring that the targeted learners would **read with understanding** and **reason with numbers** through an intensive time-bound, evidence-based programme over a period of 30–50 days. The five outcome areas pursued during the period include:



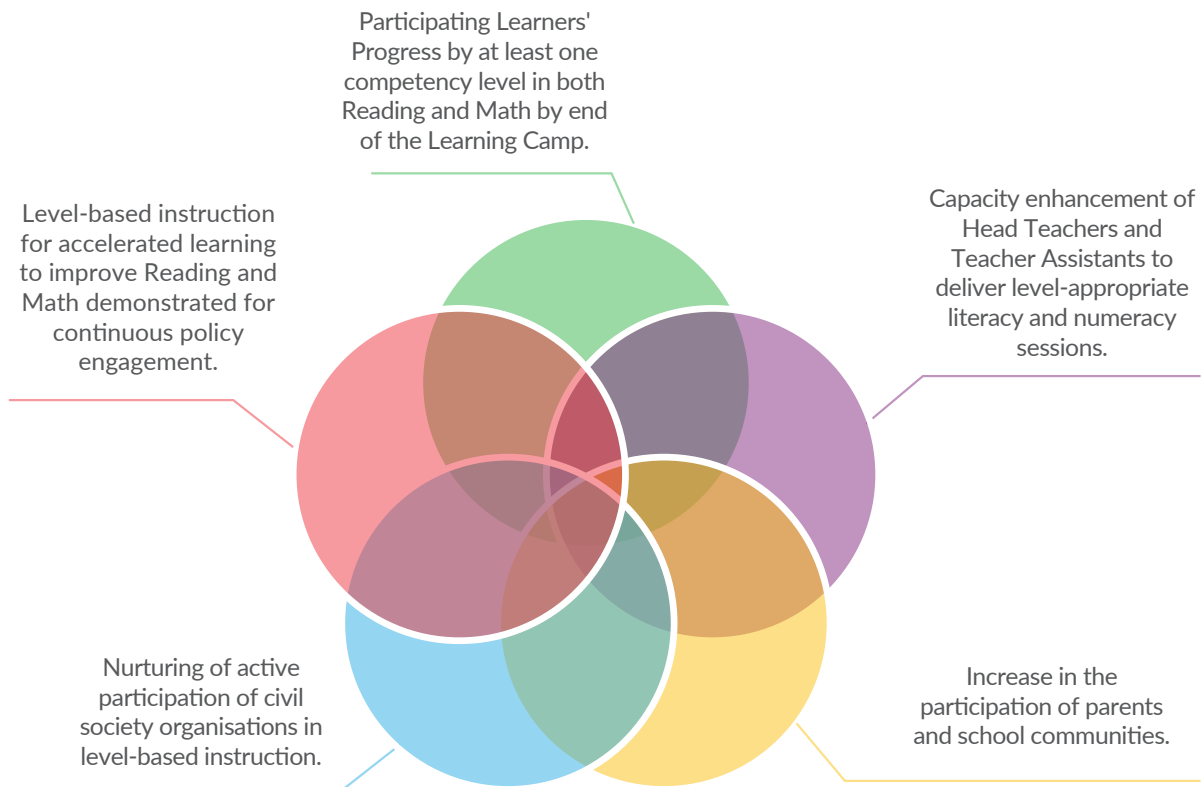


Figure 2: Five outcome areas

In the focus counties, the programme again considered sub-county-level evidence on learning outcomes and selected the least performing sub-county for the intervention. In selecting the focus schools, the programme engaged the sub-county-level education leadership and the county advisory groups to recommend low performing, rural-based schools. A baseline was conducted and schools with less than 60 percent of learners reading at story level were selected for partnership. In short, the school selection considered: i) schools with supportive head teachers; ii) rural remote schools situated away from the urban centres; iii) schools with active parents and community; and iv) schools with low learning levels, that is, less than 60 percent of learners assessed at baseline reading at the story level. This report outlines the progress, achievements, lessons learnt, and recommendations for the period between 2018 and 2022.

1.3 Overview of the Implementation

Strategies Adopted During Implementation

Zizi Afrique was inspired by Pratham's Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) [approach](#) and adapted it for implementation in Kenya, targeting learners lagging behind in foundational literacy and numeracy competencies in Grades 3 to 5. Dubbed, "The Accelerated Learning Programme in Kenya," the five main strategies through which implementation took place are described below:

1.3.1 Retooling of Teachers and Head Teachers on Targeted Literacy and Numeracy Instruction. The programme appreciates the role of training in retooling teachers to ensure good mastery of the content as well as equipping them with the pedagogical content skills in foundational literacy and numeracy. Once identified and contracted, teachers were taken through six days of intensive training, aimed at immersing them in the ALP approach for a clear understanding of how to assess learners for camp placement, group them for instruction, use appropriate strategies and activities to aid learners to acquire the needed foundational skills and lastly, how to plan for the delivery of the literacy and numeracy sessions. The first three days were dedicated to retooling on literacy instruction whereas for the last three days, teachers were utilised for numeracy training. On the other hand, head teachers attended an inaugural one-day induction on the approach, complemented by quarterly review meetings.



1.3.2 Sensitisation and Engagement of Parents. This was achieved through school-based community conversations and home visits for absentee learners. Teacher assistants, supported by the programme officer and head teachers, convened and facilitated school-based community conversations before the start of learning camps, during which the baseline results, in the form of report cards, were shared. It was also during these sessions that parents committed to social pacts on tangible actions they would take to reduce absenteeism and support the learning of their child both at home and in school. Besides these conversations, home visits were conducted for learners who were absent for two cumulative sessions on any given week during the camp. During the home visits, discussions were held on the learning progress made by the individual learner, challenges deterring regular attendance, and on a support plan to ensure regular attendance agreed upon with the parent.

1.3.3 Implementation of Learning Camps. A complete intervention cycle consisted of a minimum of three and a maximum of five learning camps. Each camp lasted a total of 10 days, with a 10-day break in between camps. After every 10 days of intervention, an assessment was conducted to establish new learning levels, and inform regrouping in subsequent camps. As such, assessments were conducted every 10th, 20th up to 50th day (as applicable). During the learning camps, the learners were engaged in a series of learning activities both in numeracy and literacy for 2 hours daily (1 hour each in literacy and numeracy). The learners in various groups were engaged in learning activities that solely focused on their learning needs. Illustrating the Learning Camp Cycle

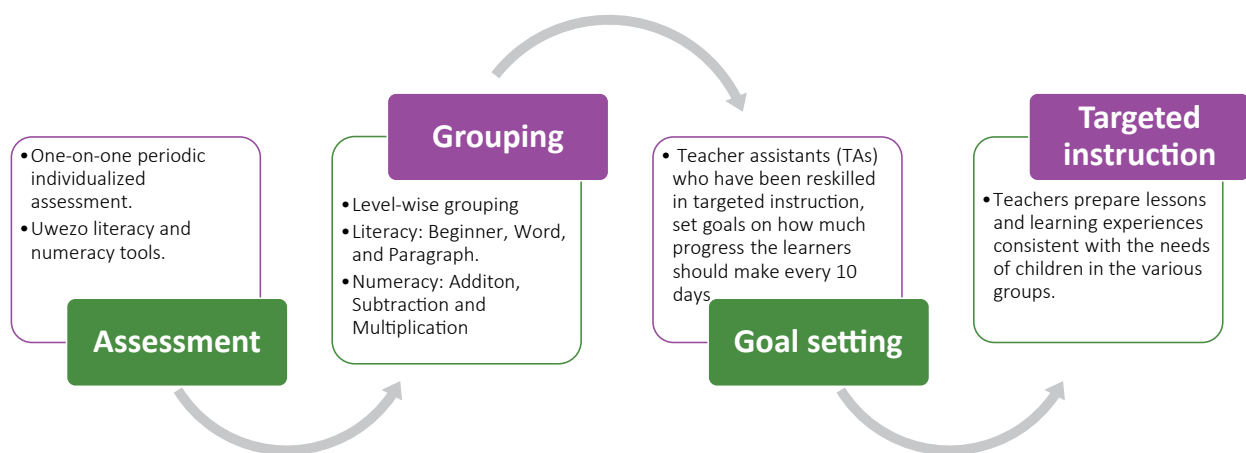


Figure 3: Stages that marked the implementation of ALP

Figure 3 above shows the stages that marked the implementation of ALP:

- Each camp cycle was marked with an assessment, grouping, goal setting, and targeted instruction. For assessments, the Uwezo (literacy) and [ICAN](#) (numeracy) tools were used. Grouping was done as per the learning levels: beginner/letter, word, paragraph in literacy and addition (comprising of learners at number recognition and addition), subtraction and multiplication (comprising of learners at multiplication and division) in numeracy. Regrouping was done at the beginning of every camp, based on assessment results from the preceding camp.
- On the other hand, goal setting was done based on: i) the learning level of each group; ii) the competencies lacking amongst learners in the various groups; and iii) preparation of learning experiences targeting the acquisition of higher competencies. With goals defined according to learning levels, TAs prepared a lesson plan with varied activities for each group. Consequently, learners were taught at their level using different activities and materials.
- Learners who attained story level left the camp. To sustain the foundational gains made during the intervention period, and to ensure such learners acquired higher-order literacy competencies, schools organised reading clubs (during the library hour), occasional read-aloud sessions, as well as participation during digital reading sessions held at the community level using content loaded on tablets.
- Throughout the sessions, learners had the opportunity to manipulate materials, use multiple senses to facilitate learning, and engage in fun activities characterised by movement and peer interactions. In a one-hour session, learners start-



ed as a whole class (all groups together for a read-aloud and warm-up session) before splitting into the levelled groups where they interacted either in pairs or in smaller groups. To conclude the sessions, TAs organised a whole class activity, bringing together the various groups.

- Nurturing a positive attitude towards reading requires access to level-appropriate, assorted and fun-to-read resources. The programme invested considerable resources to put together training manuals for the teacher assistants and head teachers, and levelled reading resources for use by children during the various camps, including a 3-series workbook for practice while at home.

1.3.4 Adaptation and packaging of levelled learning resources. Nurturing a positive attitude towards reading requires access to level-appropriate, assorted and fun to read resources. The program packaged different types of materials for the various audiences including, levelled readers, workbooks for the learners; assorted charts in literacy and numeracy for use during the sessions; and training manuals with head teachers and teacher assistants.

1.3.5. Use of Data and Evidence. Before every learning camp, an assessment was conducted to determine the learning level of each child in literacy and numeracy. This data informed the grouping of learners described in the next section and aided the TA's planning of the activities for the learner's learning needs. Evidence from assessments was used to validate the feasibility of the approach at policy levels. It also continuously informed classroom decision making by TAs on what to teach and how to teach. Besides, insights from monitoring by the ZAF and donor teams guided decisions on areas of capacity strengthening for partners, programme design, as well as areas of further research.

1.3.6. Implementation and Scale up Through Partnerships. Three partners were identified in each county to lead the implementation of the programme activities. They received ongoing support through field visits, targeted trainings on planning, and budget management and reporting, leading to the successful execution of the programme plan. Further, Zizi Afrique and the PAL Network mentored other civil society organisations on the approach, leading to the replication of the innovation to at least seven counties in Kenya.



2.0. Key Achievements

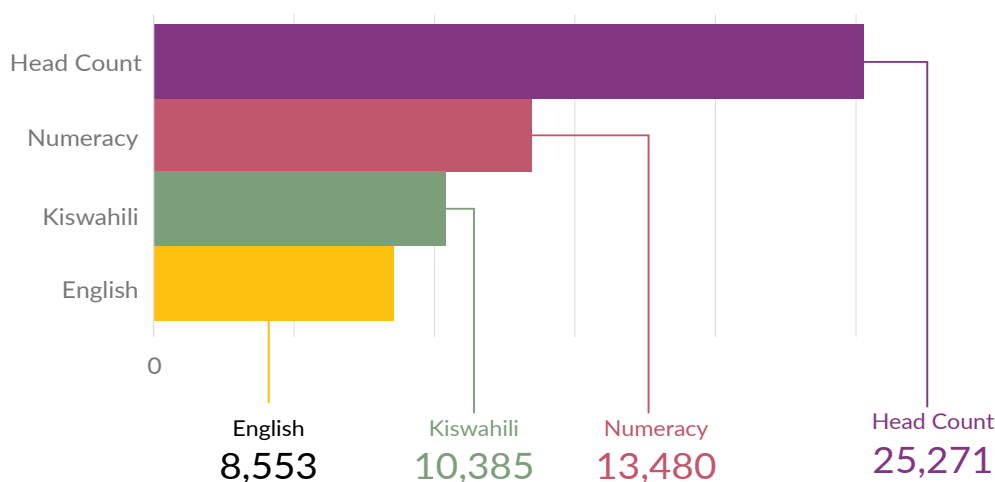
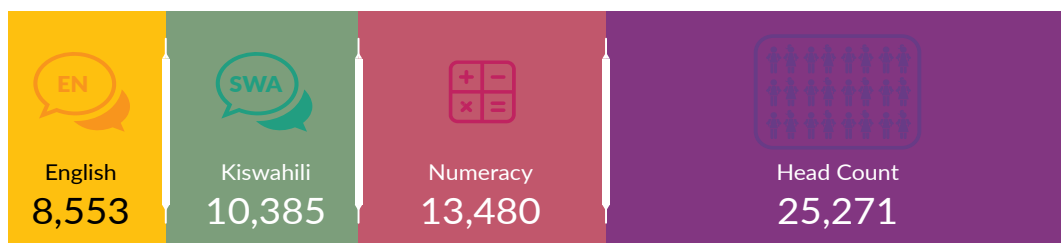
Outcome Area 1

Participating Learners' Progress by At least One Competency Level in Both Reading and Math by end of the Learning Camp.

The focus of ALP was learners in Grades 3 to 5 who could not read a Grade 2 text. At school every day, such learners engage little with the curriculum content due to illiteracy. Results under this outcome were expressed in several ways: i) proportion of learners progressing by at least one competency level every 10 days in literacy and numeracy; ii) proportion of learners proficient at story reading (reading of a basic Grade 2 text); and iii) proportion of learners proficient in the four basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division). Over the years, the programme assessed learners every 10 days to ascertain progress, regroup, and to inform decisions on when to graduate them out of the intervention.

1.1 36,660 learners have gone through the programme directly and indirectly since its launch in 2018. ALP began in 11 schools in Turkana County in 2018 and gradually expanded to 62 schools in 2019, 119 schools by 2020, and up to 150 schools by 2021. The programme reached an additional 119 schools through collaborations with like-minded civil society organisations, bringing the number of schools to 269. These were schools falling furthest behind, as they were rural and had low learning outcomes. Considering the baseline results, for instance, the best-performing school in the programme in Turkana had 40 percent of its learners in Grades 3 to 5 proficient in reading a basic text, compared to 18 percent in the worst-performing school.

Supported by 265 TAs, the intervention benefitted a total of 25,271 learners (directly), spread across the 150 schools, all of which fit the criteria of furthest behind. The entry intervention subject was Kiswahili in Bungoma and Turkana, and English in Tana River. The baseline results in Tana River showed that most learners in selected schools were proficient in Kiswahili; hence a decision was made to begin intervention in English. Turkana and Bungoma progressed to English after the 30–50 day period. Subject-wise, participation is as shown below:



1.2 Seventy six percent of learners in literacy camps progressed by at least one competency level. At the onset, the programme rationalised that within every 10 days, at least 85 percent of the learners involved should progress by at least one competency level in either literacy or numeracy. The programme analysed this rate for learners in the various literacy cohorts. On average, 76 percent of them progressed by at least one competency level within any given 10 days during the intervention period. Comparing pre- and post-COVID progress, the former period had much more learners, 84 percent, progressing by at least one level, compared to 74 percent post COVID, a 10 percentage points decline.

Progress slowed slightly post COVID. Forty seven percent of respondents reached during a study commissioned to interrogate reasons behind this slow progression cited absenteeism as the major cause. The post-COVID intervention period witnessed spurts of drought, which increased the prevalence of hunger at the household. With no access to a school feeding programme, most sessions recorded low attendance, as learners absconded school, which affected overall progression. Absenteeism was highest in Tana River and Turkana counties.

1.3. Seventy five percent of learners in numeracy camps progressed by at least one competency level within any given 10 days. The programme also analysed progress in numeracy. Of the 13,000 learners who participated in the learning camps, 9,754 progressed by at least one competency level, representing 75 percent of the learners reached. This rate favourably compares with the rate in literacy, 76 percent. It is therefore evident that well implemented accelerated learning approaches have the potential to reduce innumeracy within a relatively short time.

Comparing pre- and post-COVID-19 periods, there were more learners, 76 percent, progressing to at least one higher competency level after COVID-19, compared to 74 percent before COVID-19. This trend is the inverse of what was observed in literacy progression.

1.4. Overall, 12,538 learners attained proficiency in reading and basic operations. Over the three-and-a-half year period, the programme has seen 8,311 learners proficient in reading² and an additional 4,227 proficient in numeracy³, hence a cumulative impact of 12,538 learners proficient in foundational competencies. Seventy five percent of those who joined the intervention at paragraph level progressed to story level, in at least 10 days. Thus, the contextualisation of TaRL for the Kenyan context is not an exercise in futility and if scaled up, it could significantly reduce the number of learners experiencing learning poverty.

During the period, the programme scaled up the intervention into seven counties through 25 partners (civil society organisations), reaching 11,389 learners in total. The counties were either ASAL or rural poor including Marsabit (through the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction - IIRR), Kajiado (through Women Educational Researchers of Kenya – WERK, Dupoto e Maa & GRIC), Nairobi urban slums (through PACEMaker International), Migori (through Lwala Community Alliance), and Kisumu (through Rafiki Sawa). In these regions, there has been a commendable improvement in targeted learners, cementing the feasibility of ALP-like approaches in enhancing foundational learning.

1.5. Infrastructural support as a pathway to sustaining learning gains. Nurturing a culture of reading is a more strategic way of ensuring that learners continue to practice and advance the nascent skills acquired during the intervention. Besides, a whole-school approach works better in bolstering the place of reading in learning. During the programme period, the Safaricom Foundation funded the construction and equipping of six libraries. Over the period, the programme distributed 100,394 copies of levelled readers and workbooks.

Besides targeting the learners in the intervention, the setting up of libraries also targeted operationalising the library lesson for each grade as allocated in the school timetable. The beneficiary schools have adapted to the practice of spending time in the library during library lessons. This has heightened the love of reading among learners, improved learning outcomes, and increased enrolment in schools.

² Learners who attained story level and graduated out of the intervention.

³ Learners who were proficient in the four basic operations (involving regrouping) and graduated out of the intervention.



Outcome Area 2

Capacity Enhancement of Head Teachers and Teacher Assistants to Deliver Level-Appropriate Literacy and Numeracy Sessions.

According to Griffin (2013), the quality of leadership of an educational institution makes the difference between success and failure in the academic achievement of learners. Instructional leadership means that school heads provide support to teachers in their teaching practice, professional development, and resource management. The availability of qualified teachers determines the performance of students in schools.

Head teachers and teacher assistants were critical to the successful implementation of ALP. Whereas head teachers attended a one-day induction and thereafter, quarterly one-day review meetings, the TAs underwent six days of intensive training on the literacy and numeracy modules (3 days for each module), followed by a two-day refresher session after the first quarter of implementation. Highlights of lessons learned/achieved during the period with regards to teacher capacities in FLN include:

2.1. Sharpened Perspective of the Head Teachers on FLN. Over the years, the programme has continuously trained and engaged 182 school heads. To begin with, there was a need to expose them to the challenges of learning in their schools based on evidence from the baseline assessments. The results, summarised in the form of school report cards, captured the proportion of Grade 5 learners who could not read a Grade 2-level story.



When Zizi presented to us the results of the baseline assessment, I protested the learning levels in my school. However, after participating in assessing learners at Mwibale, I agree that learning levels are low, and swift action to remedy this is critical.

Head Teacher, Sang'alo primary and a member of the County Advisory in Group (KEPSHA representative).

This shared understanding, a result of constant engagement, yielded increased ownership and support at the institutional level. These school heads created a skills bridge between the teacher assistants and the regular teachers to enhance the impact on learning outcomes. A study conducted in November 2019 rated the commitment and attitude of regular teachers and head teachers at 81 percent and 79 percent, respectively

2.2. Bridging Pedagogical Content Knowledge gaps for 265 teachers. Evidence shows a disconnect between the content and pedagogy, with teachers demonstrating good understanding of the content but lacking skills on how to deliver this content to the learners. To curb this, the ALP had to retool the teachers on level-based content and on the specific and appropriate pedagogy to deliver the content. As a result, improvement was continuously observed in the delivery of the content. This was achieved through assessment of learners, identification of different FLN competencies that learners lacked (evident through the assessment process and results), and session planning aimed at delivering targeted instruction. This translated in a large number of learners progressing through the various learning levels.

For capacity building, six teacher assistants across the three counties were identified and groomed as trainers of trainees. Apart from training their colleagues, two of them from Bungoma have had the opportunity to impart training on foundational literacy and numeracy instruction to trainees from other civil society organisations. They have also participated in the training of tutors at Egoji TTC. In addition, five teacher assistants were selected as programme officers in their counties due to their exemplary performance in classroom delivery. There was a noticeable personal development, with teachers demonstrating increased confidence and creativity in the delivery of the sessions.



I taught for one week after which I was selected as a Programme Officer (PO) under CREADIS when the Safaricom team visited our schools. I have experienced a lot since I became a PO. I have learned leadership skills and gained a lot through workshops, meetings, and fieldwork. I never imagined I could one day become a leader in the county and address a congregation of other leaders. I have gained courage and determination since then and without any fear, I can speak with confidence wherever I go.

Programme Officer, Bungoma County.



2.3. Head teachers as the link between the programme and the parents. With the shift to the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), parental empowerment and engagement came to the forefront. The head teachers played a critical role in ensuring that parents were informed about the programme. From mobilising parents for community conversations, observing and providing feedback on sessions with TAs as well as accompanying TAs during home visits, head teachers have been a solid bridge between the programme and the community.



“I normally go to homesteads in the evening to personally check on the learners and find out what could be happening at home.”

Head Teacher, Mwibale Primary School.

The programme leveraged these linkages with communities during the COVID-19 closures and successfully conducted community-based assessments for over 9,000 learners, distributed learning kits to over 6,400 learners at home, conducted 23 weekly radio sessions in Tana River and Turkana as well as conducted structured community camp sessions for over 4,500 learners. Parents voluntarily released their children for the sessions. They also coordinated with TAs and local leaders to identify where the sessions would be conducted, which happened mostly in churches, homes, and schools in some instances.

2.4. Institutional uptake to enhance Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). Mwibale Primary is among the pioneer intervention schools in Bungoma. The baseline assessments conducted at the beginning showed that only half of the learners in Grade 5 could read a Grade 2-level text. The head teacher was struck by the result of the assessments. He yearned for a solution to turn around the story of his school. Today, Mwibale is a model school of literacy, having instituted a literacy hour targeting all grades. Learners in Grades 1-3 return to school in the afternoon for a reading hour. The rate of attendance and level of buy-in by parents is impressive, as these sessions record 100 percent attendance. The [story](#) of Mwibale demonstrates the power of leadership in instituting change geared towards improved FLN.

In Tana River County, the head teacher of Arap Moi Primary School (one of the programme schools) organised training for all the regular teachers as part of the sustainability of the programme. The impact of literacy noted during the implementation period in this school attracted five neighbouring non-programme schools, whose regular teachers participated in the training. As a result, 16 regular teachers were trained. These schools form a cluster of FLN support in Tana Delta Sub-County. Arap Moi is among the schools that have retained the TAs, paid through the BoM, to continue with the ALP intervention.



Outcome Area 3

Participation of Parents and School Communities Increased.

Parents embraced the learning innovation introduced by the ALP programme and have taken initiatives to support learning. During the COVID-19 closure, the programme witnessed an awakening of parents to keep their children learning. In Galili village in Tana River County, for instance, the community contracted an extra teacher to support community-based learning in the village during the period, as is evident in this [feature story](#).

Two other strategies applied with communities—community conversations and home visits—achieved the following:

3.1. Strengthened linkages between home and school.

Home visits were essential in curbing absenteeism. During community conversations, parents agreed on some ground rules which included consistent attendance of the learning sessions by the learners. Consequently, every week, TAs identified learners who were absent for a minimum of two days and visited them at home with the aim of involving their parents in exploring practical solutions to mitigate this. Absenteeism was often blamed on unpaid school levies, illness, lack of feeding programmes, or household responsibilities, such as grazing and fishing which are critical tasks among nomadic and pastoralist communities. Home visits often left parents feeling obliged to ensure consistent school attendance of their learners.

3.2. Developed social pacts. Before the establishment of learning camps, school-community conversations were held in all schools. Parents, regular school teachers, community and opinion leaders, including village elders and chiefs, were all invited to participate in the discussion. The agenda centred on the evidence gathered and illustrated in the school report cards which included information on enrolment, attendance, learner's learning levels, and general information on the teaching and learning. The forum informed and sensitised participants about the ALP intervention and the involvement of selected learners for two extra hours daily during the learning intervention period.

Social pacts were made with the parents and communities on actionable steps to improve the learning outcomes. Parents were tasked with ensuring that their learners attended the sessions and community leaders were nominated to support the Teacher Assistants in the home visits as programme champions. During the implementation period, 119 school report cards and three county report cards were printed and distributed. The chiefs and the respective school heads received a copy of the report card while the county report cards were distributed to the implementing partner and the Ministry of Education offices.

One notable achievement worth mentioning here is the commitment by schools to ensure learners met for 2 hours daily during the camp sessions. This is no mean feat given the highly structured school calendar. However, due to the evidence from the assessments, head teachers and school communities were compelled to act and change the story of their schools.

3.3. Revitalised the role of the local leadership as a catalyst to promote learning. The local leaders, area chiefs and nyumba kumi elders were the first points of entry into the community. They accompanied and introduced the Teacher Assistants to the households during the baseline assessment during the COVID-19 closures and participated in community conversations. The programme applauds head teachers for their contribution to bringing parents together for community meetings, for championing the selection of parent champions to support community-based digital learning in Bungoma and for their continued follow-ups during home visits. When the community-based learning began, they determined the venues for the learning camps. In some cases, their role extended to custodians of learning. One such custodian was the chief in Abaganda



“Parents felt more at ease discussing their learner’s learning progress with me after we interacted with them during home visits. They freely discussed with me the challenges they were experiencing while supporting their learner at home.”

Teacher Assistant, Bungoma County.



village, Tana River County, who volunteered to let his homestead be used for learning, received SMS content on behalf of parents who could not read Kiswahili and who invited his son to facilitate learning sessions based on SMS content.

3.4. Heightened parental involvement through community conversations and home visits. During the rollout of the community digital learning programme in Bungoma County, ALP received a warm reception where 206 parent champions volunteered to host learning sessions. This initiative has directly impacted 1,143 learners. Similarly, due to teacher shortage in Turkana County, ZAF launched a learning challenge where youths volunteered to support learners in their community to improve learning. Through these efforts, 12 volunteers trained for three days and facilitated learning sessions at least twice or thrice a week in the community.



Fifteen of us were initially called at Musikoma Primary school for a one-day training. Other parents entrusted me with six learners who I support through digital learning using the tablet. I have seen a significant improvement in their reading skills.

Parent champion-Bungoma County (Wekelekha Village).

Findings at the end of the pilot study conducted in Bungoma show that 91 percent of learners participating in the digital pilot, guided by parent champions, sustained their reading levels. It is also worth noting that children connected to the household of champions recorded better outcomes, due to increased access to devices. The report further outlines increased parental engagement and unity among community members, a broader understanding of career paths and aspirations, improved self-confidence, communication, and a sense of responsibility among participating learners (Zizi Afrique, 2022). These aspects demonstrate how critical the involvement of parents is in supporting learning.

3.5. Parents as pillars for continuity of learning and sustainability. During the prolonged COVID-19 school closures, the intervention took a hybrid approach, incorporating low-technology and print media. Parents guided their learners to develop household routines which incorporated learning time. This freed their learners for weekly radio learning sessions while parents supervised the completion of take-away tasks on the workbooks provided. In Turkana and Tana River Counties where SMS learning was implemented, parents were encouraged to share their mobile phones with their learners to enable them to access the learning content. A survey conducted in 2020 showed that:

83%

Eighty three percent of learners reported having tuned in to the weekly radio lessons, hence increasing the opportunity to learn.

67%

Halfway through the intervention, nearly half of the learners had completed 67% of the tasks in the workbook.

69%

Sixty nine percent of the parents reported having supported learning at home by supervising the completion of tasks in the workbooks, as well as providing phones and taking part during the radio sessions.



Outcome Area 4:

Active Participation of Civil Society Organisations in Level-based Instruction Nurtured.

This decade of learning has seen many actors join the education space with myriad interventions, but the learning needle has not moved, hence the challenge articulated in ZAF's strategy, *Crowded Interventions, yet Insignificant Impact*. During the implementation, the programme conceptualised a threefold role of civil societies:

4.1 Locally rooted civil society organisations as champions of FLN in their communities. ZAF led the contextualisation and design of the ALP, but implementation was entrusted to locally-based partners in Turkana, Bungoma and Tana River counties. Maridhiano CBO, the Diocese of Lodwar, and CREADIS championed the implementation efforts in Tana River, Turkana and Bungoma counties respectively.

These partners, among other things, established and maintained linkages with the educational and political leadership in the county, provided oversight in all schools to ensure that the programme activities were delivered with fidelity, and convened county-based meetings and forums to engage with targeted stakeholders. As a result:

- a. Nine field officers have been fully immersed in the ALP cycle and have provided ongoing monitoring and support to teacher assistants at the school level. Their capacities in the design of ALP interventions, implementation, monitoring, interpretation of assessment data, and targeted teacher support were enhanced during the programme period.
- b. 265 teacher assistants were identified and groomed over two years to take over the training roles in their counties. The five county-based trainers have trained over 200 teacher assistants during initial induction and refresher training sessions. Some have also extended their support during the induction of like-minded civil society organisations keen on implementing the approach, as well as during the experiential learning sessions with teacher educators, held in Meru in February 2022.
- c. These organisations have earned credibility in the eyes of county leaderships in matters of education, earning them a decision-making seat during education stakeholder meetings. For instance, CREADIS in Bungoma was nominated to champion digital literacy through the Office of the County Commissioner, whereas Maridhiano has got a seat in the Sub-County Education Committee where critical decisions around learning are made.

4.2 Civil society organisations as a learning community. Engaging with like-minded civil societies through the Regional Education and Learning Initiative (RELI) and the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network has catalysed a community of learning in Kenya and in the Global South. Reflecting on the value of these partnerships, the programme successfully:

- a. Nurtured a budding team of master trainers who have contributed to the expansion of similar initiatives in the region. In 2019, Kenya was part of the master training team that inducted Tanzania on the approach and supported the contextualisation process. As a result, the Jifunze initiative was born, which has gained traction from the grassroots through to the policy level.
- b. Contextualised the numeracy intervention. After six months of implementing the literacy intervention and validating its impact, Zizi convened a team from the Global South comprising Mozambique, India, and Kenyan CSOs (Pacemaker International, Lwala Community Alliance and PAL network secretariat) to design the numeracy intervention. This was done in Bungoma, during a week-long workshop where in-house workshops and school visits were combined to validate the tools, structure, and delivery approach of numeracy sessions.
- c. Held evidence-based conversations in FLN. Over the years, Zizi Afrique has consolidated data from various partners to author papers for submission to conferences. In 2019, two papers were presented during the Africa Knows! conference. One paper was authored by Kenya and Mozambique, whereas the second paper compiled evidence from seven Kenyan CSOs who had implemented the approach in various counties. In 2021, evidence from the ALP was presented alongside evidence from Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Botswana during the PAL Network conference. This presentation will be published in a book as a conference output. Similarly, Zizi has held joint webinars during occasions such as the International Literacy Day where evidence across programmes was synthesised and shared.



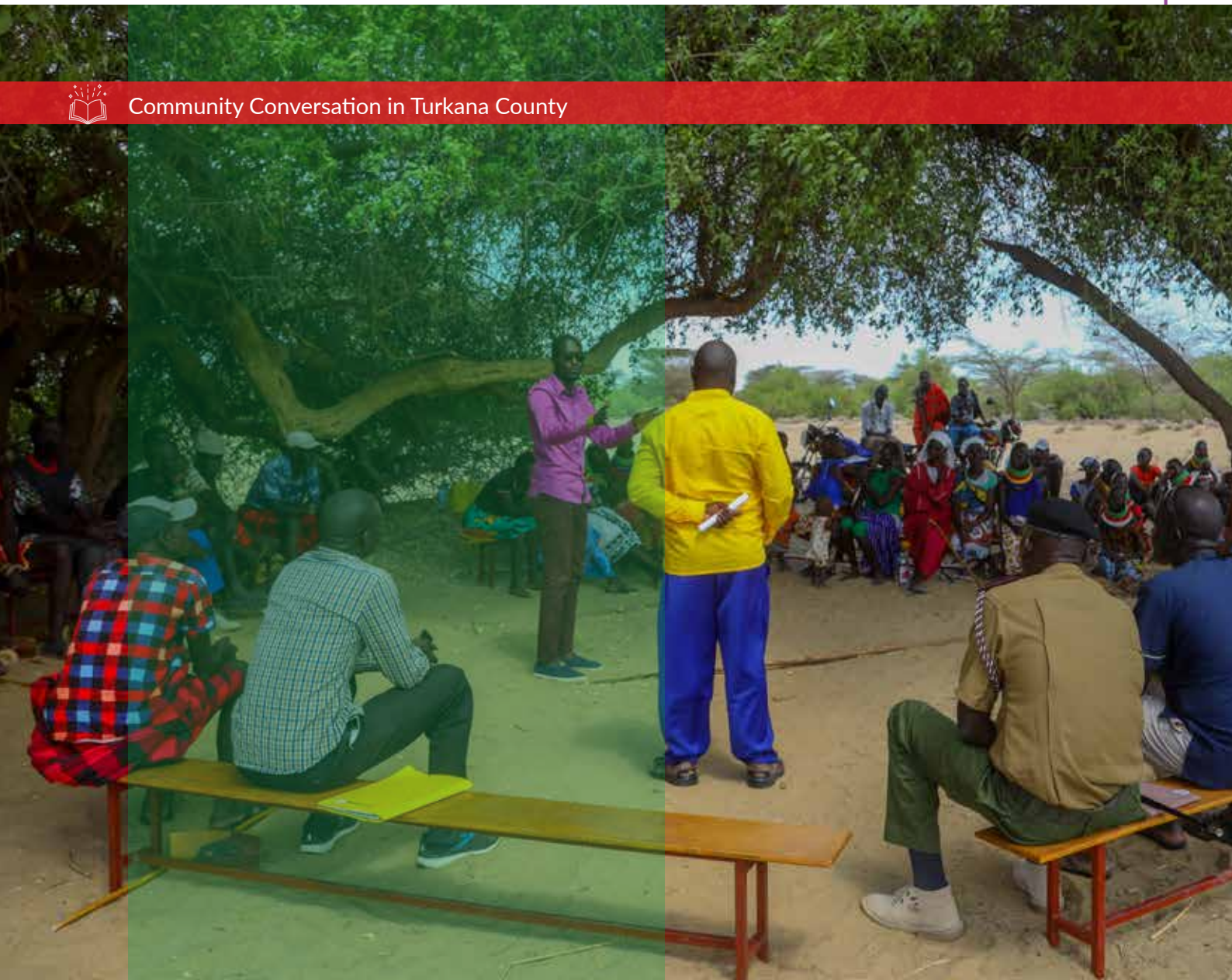
- d. Shifted focus to strengthening teacher education, by embedding principles of innovative pedagogies during teacher training, and by continuing to work closely with RELI and PAL Network in co-creating a handbook detailing the approach and how it can be infused into teacher training.
- e. Contextualised reading materials and collated a learning toolkit through a collaborative process with PAL Network and RELI. These include a series of three workbooks, two training manuals, assessment tools, three training handbooks, paragraph booklets, and story booklets.

4.3 Civil society organisations as pathways for scale. The ALP initiative had expanded to over seven counties by early 2020 and benefitted over 24,000 learners in Kenya. This was no mean feat given that Zizi had only reached 4,526 during the period. The numbers clearly demonstrated the power of civil society in scaling up best practices and initiatives. Over the past three and a half years, Zizi has continuously grown her network of civil society actors, inducting them into the approach and supporting the rollout of similar interventions. To date, there are 25 civil society organisations trained on the approach, majority of which are under the umbrella of Grassroots Nest for Innovation and Change (GRIC), through whom Zizi has reached 14 grassroots organisations in Kajiado and Laikipia North.

Partnerships were therefore critical in facilitating the nature of impact achieved to date. These efforts require a strategy to sustain, and two actions are considered as pivotal to achieving lasting collaborations in the FLN space in Kenya: i) certifying a pool of trainers through the ALP academy to support the induction of partners interested in the approach; and ii) sustaining a vibrant community of practice, through which Zizi continues to monitor and report impact as a team, while also learning from and about each other.



Community Conversation in Turkana County



Outcome Area 5

Level-based Instruction for Accelerated Learning to Improve Reading and Math is Demonstrated for Continuous Policy Engagement.

Catalysing evidence-based decision making at the policy level is enshrined in our work at Zizi Afrique. Since 2018, the Accelerated Learning Programme has engaged policymakers and implementers of existing policies with an aim of exploring further how evidence could be applied to inform and guide best practices. Policy initiatives targeted decision-makers such as the Teacher Service Commission (the entity mandated with teacher certification, deployment, and management), the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (mandated on curriculum development, monitoring, and review), county-level leadership, including County Directors of Education, and curriculum support officers (charged with curriculum monitoring at the school level).

For a solid structure to govern engagement, the programme constituted county and national level advisory groups, with representation from the aforementioned offices as well as from civil society organisations interested in FLN. Through DIY sessions in schools and quarterly meetings, the programme succeeded in achieving the following:

5.1. Operationalising engagement with county and national level offices through the advisory groups. The county advisory groups were constituted in each county and chaired by the respective Sub-County Director of Education. This team offered technical support on policy matters to the implementing organisation, convened all county-level, programme related activities, and provided support to schools to ease the implementation of ALP. As a result, the programme held successful county-based programme launches in Turkana, Bungoma and Tana River counties, participated in joint programme monitoring visits with donors and members of the national advisory group hosted by respective county advisory groups, as well as convened a successful policymakers' forum in 2020 bringing together over 150 participants (civil society and policymakers) to discuss evidence generated from the ALP implementation. Through the national advisory groups, the programme had the opportunity to engage directly with the KICD and CoP to embed principles of the ALP in curriculum design and teacher education respectively.

5.2. Contributing evidence through presentations during conferences and webinars. There were deliberate efforts to disseminate and communicate the evidence generated from the implementation process. This way, Zizi got the audience to engage with other actors in the FLN space as well as receive insights into areas requiring new evidence.

Since 2018, Zizi has shared ALP evidence, alongside other evidence from like-minded civil society organisations in nine forums. These include: the Pratham Conference in South Africa (2018), TaRL Africa Conference in Botswana in 2019, Africa Knows! Conference (virtual) in 2021, two policy dialogues virtually hosted by the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network in 2020, one webinar by the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) hub of the PAL Network in 2020, the 2021 International Literacy Day Webinar hosted by the LCT group of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI), the Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) Conference in 2021 and the PAL Network Conference in November 2021. For the PAL Network Conference, Zizi co-authored a paper with Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Botswana for inclusion in the PAL Network book. In 2022, the ALP evidence on the use of low-cost tech for learning was shared during the AFICANNXT webinar hosted by TEP Center in Nigeria, a member of the PAL network, and two papers presented during the CIES Conference.

Additionally, in 2019, Zizi co-hosted the Languages Pre-conference, one of the 11 pre-conferences preceding the National Education Conference by the Ministry of Education. As a member of the planning committee, Zizi contributed to shaping the outlook of the pre-conference session, shared evidence during the pre-conference and chaired a panel of university students and practitioners on the effective application of the Language of Instruction policy.

5.3. Engaging media at the grassroots, national and regional/global levels. Our work attracted the attention of the media in numerous ways:

- For instance, Citizen TV (a national TV station) broadcast our community-based implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic in [this Pandemic Gains Feature](#). This [documentation](#) by the Safaricom Foundation shows how combining low-tech (use of radio, SMS) and print resources (such as levelled readers and workbooks) served to heighten parental involvement and continued learning.



- Throughout the implementation period, the ALP work was featured in nine TV/YouTube appearances and in 20 Op-eds/blogs in newspapers/websites by Zizi staff. This work also appealed to international media outlets. [Hundred.org](https://www.hundred.org) featured the ALP among the top 100 promising and innovative solutions in addressing low FLN. Financial Times and Reuters published articles on ALP in 2021.

These breakthroughs are proof of the potential of ALP as an innovative solution for low resource settings, but most importantly for learners and communities lagging furthest behind in bridging the FLN competency gaps. In accelerating their learning, ALP stands out as a scalable solution in such settings.

5.4. Influencing systemic uptake for sustainability. Over the years, Zizi has learnt that influencing systemic uptake and application of the ALP principles in schools as well as teacher training institutions is the most sustainable route to bringing about a difference in the low, yet static foundational outcomes over the years. Three achievements stand out for us:

- Immersion of staff from the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) in ALP.** These 3-day experiential training sessions were held for over 90 policymakers in the Institute, followed by a one-and-a-half week monitoring and practice visit to over 15 counties in Kenya. At school, policymakers spent the first two days conducting lesson observations and one week conducting and facilitating lessons with learners, while applying principles of targeted instructions, based on the recently released curriculum designs for schools. Following the school visits, members attended a two-day debrief within the institution, reflecting on implications going forward. Acknowledging the need for piloting curriculum designs, the institute adopted DIY as an approach to evaluate the feasibility of the designs in varied contexts.
- Convening a policymakers' forum to share evidence. In March 2020,** the ALP mobilised members from RELI, who were implementing the programme in other counties, to make a presentation during a policymakers' forum held at KICD. This event was graced by the Director General from the Ministry of Education and attended by over 150 participants drawn from the government, civil society, and media. This evidence [booklet](#) summarises the potential of ALP when scaled up in different contexts. During the period, Zizi and her partners had impacted over 24,000 learners.
- Experiential Sessions with members of the Indigenous Languages Community of Practice.** Effective literacy instruction begins with an effective teacher. Reflecting on the feedback from teacher assistants, it was evident that there were gaps in teacher training. The trainees who graduated were not fully equipped to apply and handle foundational literacy and numeracy concepts for the early grades. Leveraging the recently established communities of practice, Zizi, RELI and PAL Network co-facilitated a week-long workshop with 15 chief principals and tutors from Meru, Egoji and Kigari Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), introducing them to ALP and exploring how those principles can be applied during teacher training. From practical sessions at school to assessing learners who were lagging behind and giving sessions to them, the team agreed that this approach should be repackaged for teacher educators and immersion sessions conducted for all TTCs. This is the new frontier of our work, as the programme seeks to first onboard all chief principals before scaling this up to include the tutors.

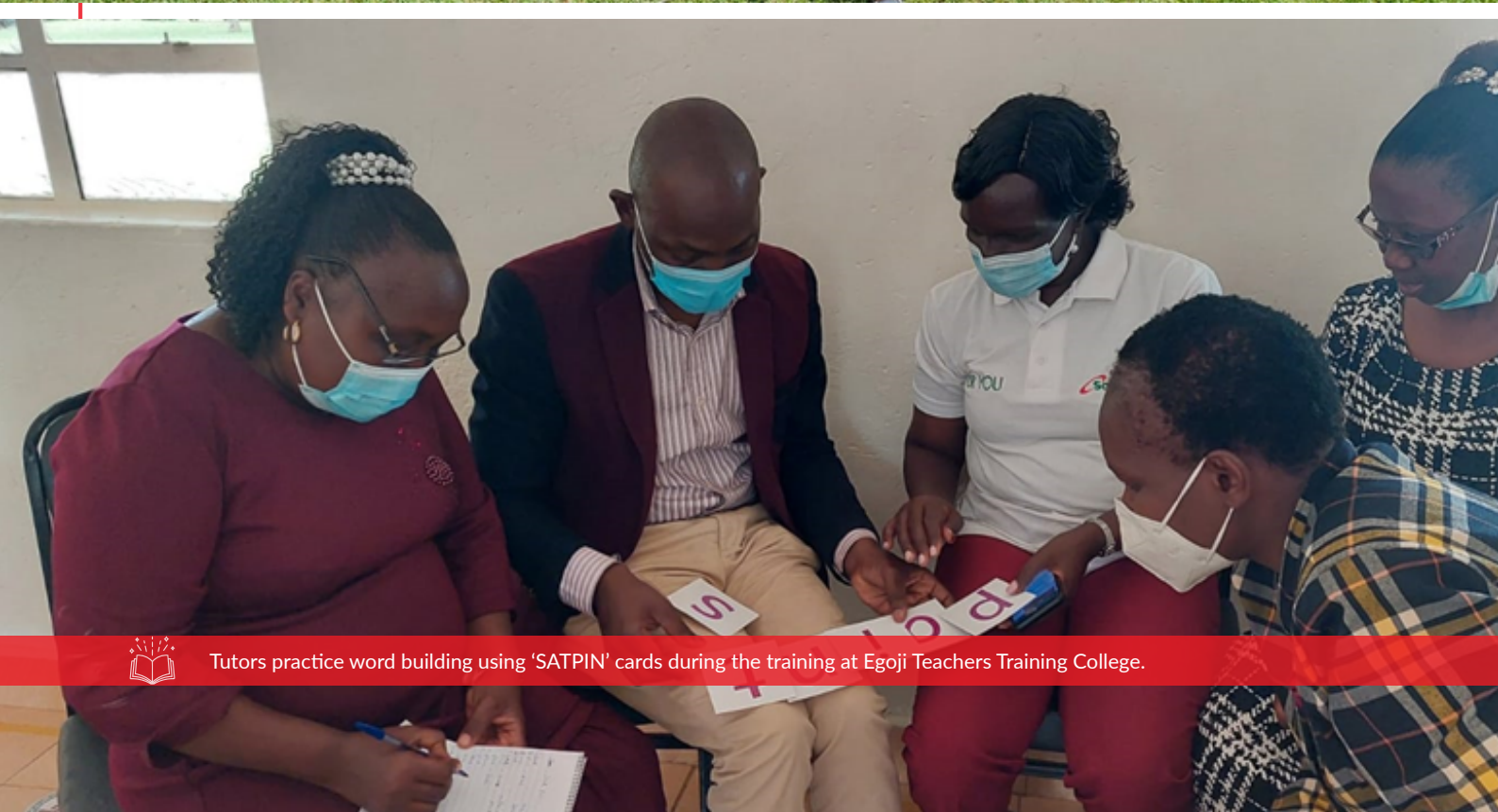




Tutors facilitating sessions with beginner- and paragraph-level learners as part of the training at Egoji.



Chief Principals, tutors and RELI members pose for a group photo during the training at Egoji Teachers Training College.



Tutors practice word building using 'SATPIN' cards during the training at Egoji Teachers Training College.

3.0 Programme Sustainability & Partnerships

This section discusses two broad strategies applied for sustainability: i) capacity building for target stakeholders (including the local communities); and ii) leveraging established structures for systemic uptake. On the latter, Zizi is keen to always align to existing structures within the policy framework guiding the delivery of education in Kenya.

3.1 Sustainability through capacity building and information sharing. All along, the programme invited varied stakeholders critical to the FLN learning process. They included parents/communities, head teachers, regular teachers, county, and national education leadership teams as well as civil society organisations invested in this aspect. For each audience, the programme invested in building capacities required to harness optimal support for learning. With parents/communities, there were ongoing conversations during meetings at school as well as during home visits, where learning levels and how parents could step up support at home and school were discussed.

Head teachers and teachers attended training sessions targeted at FLN instruction and received ongoing support through session observations, feedback and modelling by head teachers, programme officers, and the programme lead team. Civil society organisation teams also engaged in co-designing the programme, packaging training modules, evidence sharing and synthesis of lessons, which deepened the understanding of what works, persistent bottlenecks and opportunities for scaling and sustaining the interventions. As a result, the programme has youth-led, parent-led and teacher-led initiatives, or a hybrid of these in various contexts.

3.2 Sustainability by leveraging existing structures for systemic uptake. Acknowledging that the provision of quality education is a mandate of the government, Zizi has actively engaged with the various arms of the Ministry of Education, to embed these practices into the system.

At the outset, the programme constituted advisory groups at county and national levels, inviting the participation of representatives from the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and civil society representatives. These spaces provided a forum for conversational exchanges with policymakers on pertinent insights emerging from ALP implementation, and offered an opportunity to scale up such conversations into policy-making forums.

Secondly, the programme has built and stocked libraries, demonstrated how tablets provided to schools can be leveraged to enhance literacy, has instituted reading clubs (leading to the operationalisation of the library hour in most schools) and has trained regular teachers so that they can continue using these practices with the entire school. The national and county level advisory groups were also rich forums to discuss policy orientation and how this could change to better address low FLN outcomes. On this aspect, the programme applauds the recognition of the county-based partners as thought leaders in education decision making. Further, Zizi Afrique is rightly positioned at the national level, with the recent invitation of the Executive Director to be a national CBC champion.

In terms of leveraging structures, Zizi has been invited to train policymakers (KICD) on ALP principles, culminating in the uptake of a DIY lens in evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum designs. Presently, the programme is working with the newly established Community of Practice closer than before to equip tutors and principals in teacher training colleges on effective training of teachers on FLN instruction. This is the next frontier of work.





4.0 Integrating Technology

4.1 Leveraging low-tech for learning continuity during COVID-19 closures. Figure 4 below summarises the four-pillar strategy adopted to guide programming when schools closed in March 2020, halting school-based implementation. The four pillars: Identification, Enabling, Engaging, and Equalising informed the implementation posture between May and December 2020.

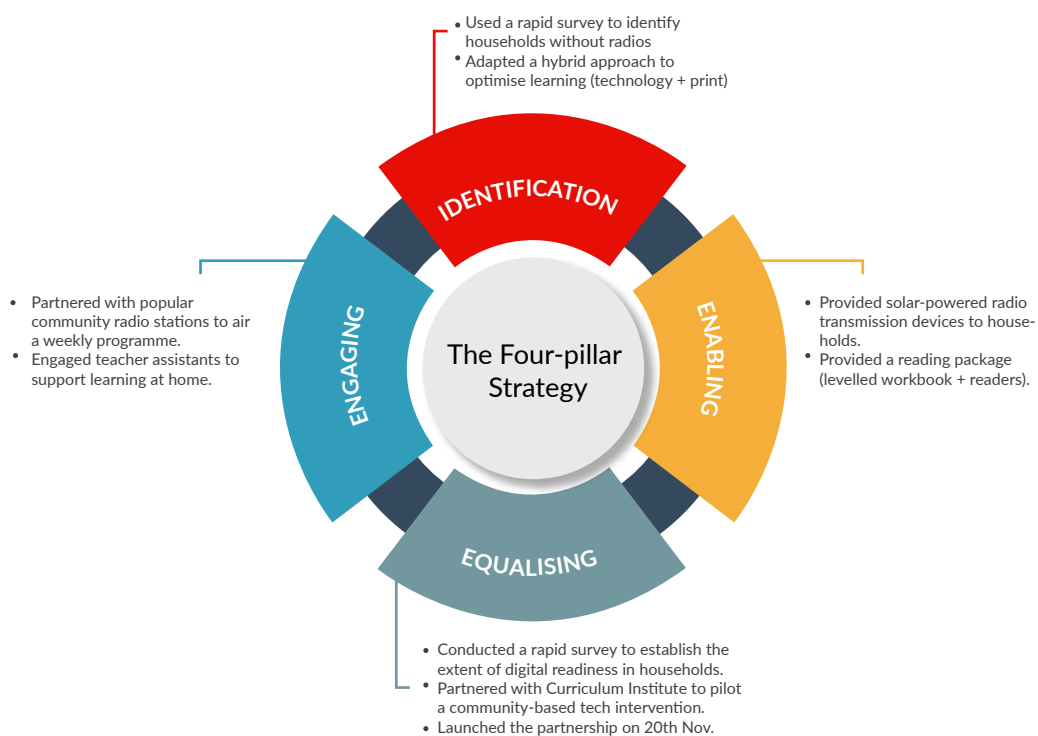


Figure 4: The four-pillar strategy



To actualise the rapid survey, the team adapted data collection tools via KoBo Collect and trained teacher assistants virtually, ahead of the data collection exercise. The result was data collection in over 4,500 households. The findings from the survey informed the specific actions to be taken for the targeted households.

- The findings did show that only a third of the households had children learning during the period, with limited information about remote learning and lack of radio/TV identified as key barriers. To increase the opportunity for continued learning, the programme distributed 1,660 solar-powered radios to the neediest households. The radios were used to participate in radio learning programmes, while the bulbs provided for household lighting enabled studies in the evenings.
- Further, the programme launched a radio and SMS programme, sharing and airing targeted content. Monitoring data showed that 83 percent of the learners reached, tuned in during the weekly radio lessons. Additionally, 69 percent of the parents reported to having supported their children with tasks in the workbook, thus increasing parental engagement. Besides, the programme was part of a consortium of partners who implemented the KawaidaMpya (New Normal) campaign during the COVID-19 period. KawaidaMpya reached 1 million parents, with a call to develop value-based household routines for meaningful engagement for learners as well as learning continuity.

4.2. Parent champions as facilitators of learning at the community level in Bungoma. In 2021, the programme stepped up the use of technology for implementation by instituting a community-based digital learning pilot. Through the community (head teachers, local leaders, implementing partners), 206 parent champions were selected to support community-based learning. To catalyse action:

- The programme team teamed up with KICD, who loaded 250 tablets with appropriate content (readers in Kiswahili and English). At a later stage, the programme further collaborated with Paukwa for audio-visual content. Inclusion of this content was done after the approval of the KICD team.
- Learners who had graduated from the programme were made into groups (five members per group based on how close they were to each other). They were assigned to a parent champion who was selected through the community. A total of 1,143 learners were thus grouped for peer learning.
- Parent champions were instructed on their role, use of the devices and expectations concerning the involvement of other parents. In consultation with fellow parents, the champions instituted a reading routine during sessions hosted in their households.

A post-pilot study conducted in 2022 shows that:

- The deployment of tablets at the household/community level led to increased interest in peer learning, evident through self-enrolment during the sessions. In some groups, instead of the expected five learners, 26 learners attended.
- One year later, 99 percent of the devices were still functional and accessible to the learners whenever they needed them as established. This shows that the trust on which these devices were issued has worked. Plus, the social accountability mechanism, where local leaders and fellow parents were entrusted to monitor device use worked well.
- Even though only 16 percent recorded high order comprehension skills (application), the initiative had helped in developing sustained reading competencies for 91 percent of the learners. This proportion could still read a basic text in English in 2022, two and a half years after graduating from the ALP intervention. This shows that reading gains acquired through the learning camps have been sustained over time.
- Other unintended positive outcomes include enhanced digital literacy amongst learners, appreciation of the need for protection of the environment (based on content learners accessed in the tablets), increased confidence and improved communication skills as well as heightened parental engagement and unity within the community.

Despite the constraints such as mistrust among households, limited contact time due to a tight school calendar, and over-enrolment hindering optimal utilisation of the device by the targeted learners, the findings from this piece of work attest to the potential of deploying technology at the community level. Peer learning can work as a strategy for ensuring learning continuity beyond school if parents are entrusted as custodians of learning, are well oriented on their specific roles, digital devices are provided, appropriate content is availed, and proper community sensitisation is conducted.



5.0 Constraints and Opportunities

This section presents some of the challenges encountered during implementation as well as the measures taken to ensure the programme was delivered with utmost fidelity:

5.1 High rate of teacher attrition in the programme. The Teacher Service Commission (TSC) issued a directive requiring all out-of-service teachers to get upskilled, in tandem with the Teacher Education reforms. This was done to ensure that they would be more CBC compliant and better equipped to deliver the new curriculum. Within the same period, there were several rounds of absorption into the teaching service. These two aspects saw many teacher assistants move out of the programme to upgrade their skills, while others assumed employment opportunities with the county government.

There was also constant movement by some teachers in search of greener pastures. This was however addressed through training of new teacher assistants to fill the gaps and ensuring that during any given training, two extra teachers were trained for replacement in the event of such departures. Beyond this, counties such as Turkana had very few trained teachers in the villages of implementation, leading to the closure of the programme in 26 schools, due to a lack of suitable TAs. The constant training attracted significant training costs, a component that warrants attention in similar programmes in future.

5.2 Slow progress in learning camps after COVID-19. The programme team commissioned a study to find out the reasons behind slow progress during camps in 2021. Absenteeism was identified as the leading cause, closely followed by attitudes of parents and some learners. The period was marked by severe drought, which saw pastoral communities migrate and learners skipping schools. The lack of school feeding programmes at the time further complicated the situation. It is worth considering a nutrition component in future interventions.

5.3 When the schools reopened after the COVID-19 pandemic closure, the school calendar was packed to catch up with the syllabus and the terms were slightly shorter. This affected the implementation of the remedial sessions since it was only possible to have at most 2 (out of 3) learning camps in a term. The programme restructured the learning camps cycle from the initial 10 days to 15 days of learning camps with a five-day break in between. However, within one term, it was evident that increasing the length of the camp duration did not yield any significant gains, prompting the team to revert to 10 days per camp cycle. Consequently, the programme could only achieve 20 days of intervention in any given term.

5.4 Desired reach versus programme capacity. The head teachers, inspired by the ALP approach and its impact, sought support for learners lagging behind in FLN in other grades, besides the target grades. However, there were limits due to the programme design and capacity. In some schools, regular teachers were trained to expand this to other classrooms.

5.5 Partner turnover rate was high in one of the counties. In Bungoma and Tana River, Zizi had the same partners supporting the implementation since 2019. However, in Turkana, there were challenges such as of lack of accountability, leading to the termination of contracts with two partners. A third partner, the Diocese of Lodwar, joined us in 2021 and steered the implementation with utmost accountability and commitment which has helped regain the confidence of the county leadership and school leaders.

5.6 Lack of a dedicated M&E system. Data management was cumbersome as it was coordinated through Microsoft Excel. Initially, paper formats were submitted to the partners for data entry. This process delayed analysis and decision making due to the bulkiness of documents and distances between partner offices and schools. In 2020, the team resorted to data entry by teacher assistants through online platforms. Limited teacher capacities in digital literacy impeded an effective process. However, with refresher training and cluster-level support through selected data champions, this was streamlined by 2022. In future, the programme recommends a proper system that limits double entry and one that has an inbuilt dashboard for quick analytics to ease data storage and synthesis.



6.0 Key Lessons Learnt

6.1 Bridge literacy gaps between L1 and L2. Learners struggling with low foundational competencies are however equipped with oral skills in their home language. Learners at the lower levels (beginner, letter, word) have challenges expressing themselves or understanding instructions given in any other language, other than their home language. Two decisions were made to counter this challenge: i) engaging teacher assistants who could speak the language of the catchment area, spoken by these learners; and ii) packaging materials in Indigenous languages and using these to transition learners from L1 to L2. As such, it is critical for foundational literacy programmes to take into consideration the language competencies of the learner and factor in a transition pathway into the language of instruction.

6.2 In numeracy, focus on proficiency in place value concepts. Assessments conducted across the three regions showed that learners had full knowledge of number concepts but faced challenges tackling operations that involved regrouping. Further review of assessment results and challenges noted during the one-on-one assessment pointed to a limited understanding of place value as a foundational concept. While designing numeracy programmes, heightened focus on place value is critical to advance the mastery of the four basic operations.

6.3 Targeted instruction works in hastening the acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy competencies. Well-designed, targeted foundational programmes, implemented with fidelity hasten the acquisition of these vital competencies. Sixty per cent of those who participated in the ALP intervention acquired the desired competency within 30–50 days. It took an intensive process of retooling teachers on assessment, interpreting assessment results and planning and adaptation of level-based resources to facilitate learning. Such innovations, if embedded within the regular school and further, into teacher training, can yield significant learning gains for learners who are lagging behind.

6.4 Continuous professional development programmes can work in bridging the Pedagogical Content Knowledge gap essential for improved FLN instruction. The process of retooling teachers in assessment and targeted instruction, competency-based session planning and evidence-based classroom decision making worked in facilitating learning for learners reached through the programme.

6.5 The programme was more efficient due to partnerships. Zizi succeeded in leveraging the strengths, expertise, and experiences presented by each partner. As a result, the organisation achieved more and reached more learners. Leveraging CSOs for design, implementation, and scale, Zizi has instituted a thriving community of practice of CSOs in Kenya working on FLN. In 2022, this will be scaled up to the regional level.

6.6 The role of effective instructional leadership in enhancing FLN. In schools where instructional leadership was effective, progress was more pronounced and we have witnessed better sustainability approaches, such as the whole school read aloud sessions at Mwibale primary in Bungoma. The head teachers need to closely monitor the implementation of the programme and walk the journey with the implementers by providing the necessary support.

6.7 Combining school and community-based initiatives to leave no child behind. This programme report has highlighted the gains made through the in-school programme. However, to reach ALL children furthest behind, there is a great window in expanding similar interventions to the community level. This not only eliminates the grade requirement but will open access to out-of-school children.



7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Prioritise FLN. Low learning outcomes manifest early, as evidenced by the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy assessments such as Uwezo. The disparities between the haves and have-nots manifest themselves again in national examination scores, such as the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). If the crisis of low foundational outcomes is addressed early by adopting innovative catch-up and remedial practices as part of mainstream education, Zizi, alongside other actors in education may begin to positively alter the needle of learning outcomes. This is in line with the observation that, to improve learning outcomes, there is need to focus on those at the bottom. Amidst other reforms, there is need to pause and fix the low foundational competencies during the early years, assuming a systemic approach that adapts teacher training practices, prioritises FLN as part of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), allocates time in the regular school schedule and embraces bold decisions that allow teachers to pace the curriculum based on the extent to which learners acquire the desired learning outcomes. Emphasis on monitoring syllabus coverage at the expense of learning may further derail the efforts to curtail the challenge of low FLN outcomes.

7.2 Bridge the pedagogical content knowledge gap among teachers. Embed innovation approaches to learning into teacher training and invest in equipping teacher trainees with capacities for assessment and targeted instruction. The experience at Egoji during the training with college tutors exposed the limited understanding of how foundational literacy concepts manifest during the early years. In the classroom practice sessions, tutors recommended ongoing engagement with primary schools so that the trainees could visualise and experience FLN instruction first hand. This is an effective method for them to acquire and sharpen their PCK.

To determine the systemic factors that yielded the impact observed, it is recommended that the programme data is further analysed by school and qualitative study conducted to determine the quality of school leadership, community support and the nexus among these factors in the resultant impact.

7.3 Animate a community of actors to support effective FLN instruction. The notion of learning needs to change from learning only at school to learning everywhere. This places responsibility on parents, the community, and stakeholders at school to ensure learning continuity beyond the classroom walls. This was evident during the COVID-19 period, as school closures amplified the need for the active participation of parents for continuity of learning at home. Foundational literacy and numeracy will only be achieved through the combined efforts of schools, parents/communities, and civil society actors.

The contextualisation of TaRL to the Kenyan context and beyond has proved effective for 60 percent of learners reached. However, the programme notes the 40 percent who, besides the intervention, remained stagnant at lower levels. It is worth looking into the circumstances that are hindering progress among the 40 percent. However, the success of this innovation, the first of its kind in Kenya, affirms the possibility of correcting the learning crisis when learners are taught at their level.



8.0 References

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 MEL Plan

Outcome area	Indicator	Target	Cumulative reach (2018 - 2022)	Comments
Proficiency levels in literacy and numeracy improved	Total learners reached (headcount)	22,000	25,271	
	Total enrolled in literacy camps	22,100	18,938	
	Total learners improving by atleast one competency level	18,785	14,347	
	Total proficient in story reading post intervention	18785	8,311	
	Percentage progressing by at least 1 competency level in literacy	85	79	
	Total enrolled in numeracy camps	22100	13,175	
	Total proficient in numeracy	18785	7,046	
	Total schools reached	120	269	(150 directly; the rest through partners)
	Total headteachers engaged	120	182	
	Total teacher assistants engaged	180	265	
	Total reading materials supplied (readers, workbooks)	100394	100,394	
	Community engagement	Total parents engaged		14737
Number of community libraries built and equipped		6	6	
Total classrooms built/renovated		18	18	
Civil Society engagement	Total collaborations with like-minded civil society partners		25	
	Total reach (children) through like-minded partners		11,389	
Policy and advocacy	Number of forums involving policy makers where ALP evidence is shared		31	
	Products generated for policy engagement (nature)		Evidence briefs Blogs Media pieces & interviews Confrence presentations	
Leveraging digital learning	Number of tablets in use for learning and program support		270	
	Number of learners reached through technology		1143	





Photos from left to right:
Photo 1 & 2 Learners participating in read aloud sessions during the Day of African Child on 16th June 2021 in Tana River County
Photo 3 Regular teachers training in Arap Moi Primary School in Tana River County



Regular teachers training in Arap Moi Primary School in Tana River County posing to a photo after the training workshop.



Learners participating in the read aloud session in Mwibale Primary School in Bungoma County



Parents taking a tour in the Golbanti Primary library



A parent mobilizing learners to attend the community based learning session



National Advisory group immersion visit in Bungoma County

Accelerated Learning

August 2018 - April 2022



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