



ACCELERATED LEARNING PROGRAMME

SUMMARY REPORT

AUGUST 2018 - APRIL 2022

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CHALLENGE

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 acquisition of foundational literacy and numeracy competences. Globally, 53% of children were experiencing learning poverty pre-COVID. Due to school closures and other disruptions, the World Bank estimates an increase to 70% post-COVID. The already dire situation has now further worsened.

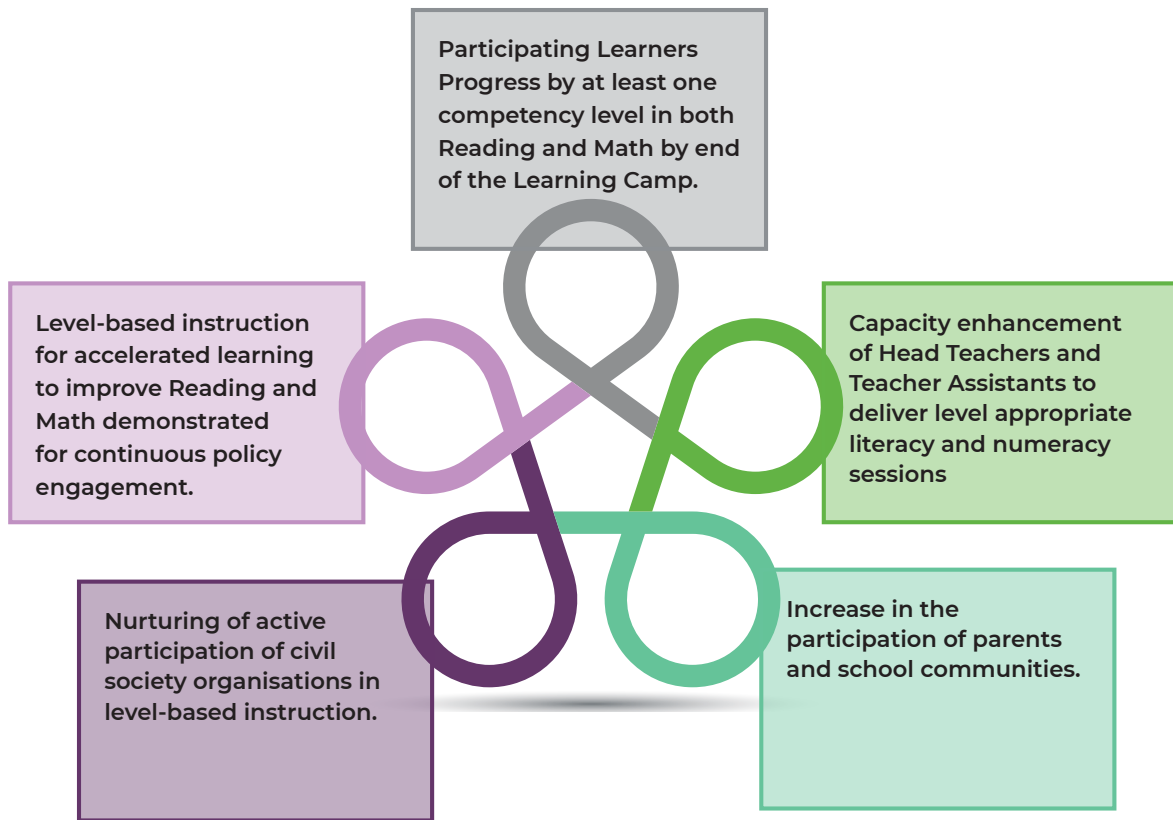
In Kenya, the Uwezo assessments conducted between 2010 and 2021 pointed to a sizable proportion of learners in grade 3 lagging by at least one year. For instance, in the 2015 assessment, only 30% of learners in grade 3 were proficient in reading a grade 2 level text. 8% of those in grade 8 could not read a similar text. Similarly, a national assessment by the Ministry of Education in Kenya in 2020 established that out of the total number of grades 3 learners assessed, only 53% had met the expected reading levels. The Usawa Agenda report of 2021 echoes a similar message, with only 40% of those in grade 4 meeting the reading expectations of grade 3.

The Sustainable Development Goals urge countries to not only reach out to those left behind but emphasise 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 specific Kenyan counties. Marginalised regions – especially arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) and rural areas — bear the greatest brunt of this disadvantage. It is with the aim to support those furthest behind that Zizi Afrique embarked upon the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) in 2018.

ALP DESIGN

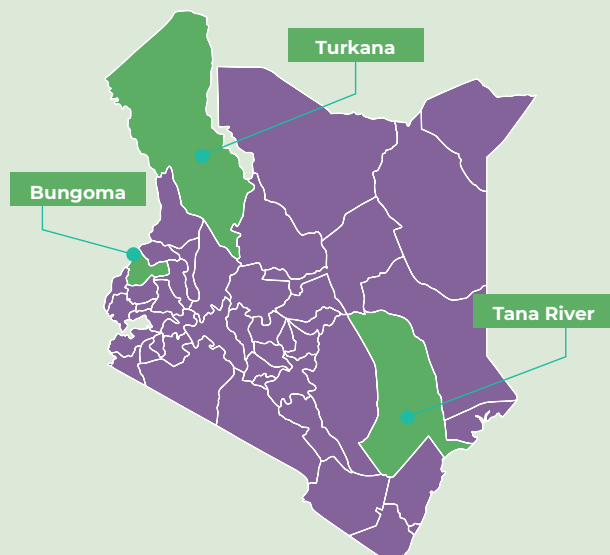
The ALP is one of many initiatives, inspired by Pratham's Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, which applies principles of targeted instruction to help learners lagging behind to quickly catch up in literacy and numeracy. The ALP aims to support learners to read with

comprehension and be able to reason with numbers through an intensive time-bound, evidence-based programme over 30-50 days. The five outcome areas pursued during the period include:



ALP IMPLEMENTATION

From the 2015 Uwezo study, 7 out of 10 bottom counties were either arid, semi-arid, or rural poor counties. Three of these counties were selected for implementation of the ALP: Bungoma, Tana River, Turkana. 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.



PROGRAMME STRATEGIES

Zizi Afrique adapted the TaRL approach for implementation in Kenya, targeting learners lagging in foundational literacy and numeracy competencies in grades 3 to 5. The five main strategies through which implementation took place are described below:

1. Retooling of Teachers and Head Teachers on Targeted Literacy and Numeracy Instruction.

Once identified and contracted, teachers were taken through 6 days of intensive training, aimed at immersing them in the ALP approach. Capacity building efforts empowered teachers to assess learners for camp placement, group them for instruction, use appropriate strategies and activities to aid learners acquire the needed foundational skills, and lastly plan for the delivery of the literacy and numeracy sessions.

2. Sensitisation and Engagement of Parents.

Teacher assistants (TAs), 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 were shared. During these sessions, 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 school. Additionally, 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 learning progress made by the individual learner, challenges deterring regular attendance, and a support plan to ensure regular attendance agreed upon with the parent.

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. 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). Regrouping was done at the beginning of every camp, based on assessment results from the preceding camp.

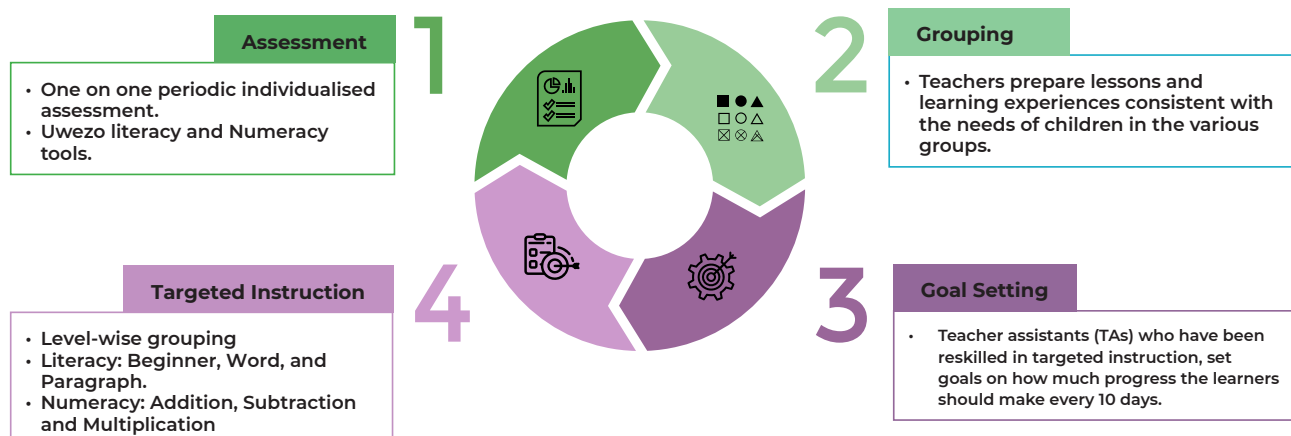
4. Use of Data and Evidence. Evidence from assessments was used to validate the feasibility of the ALP approach at policy levels.

It also continuously informed classroom decision-making by TAs on how to group learners, what to teach and how to teach. Insights from monitoring efforts guided decisions on areas of capacity strengthening for partners, programme design as well as areas of further research.

5. Implementation and Scale Up Through Partnerships.

Implementation at the county level was through local organisations who were already deeply embedded in their communities: Community Research in Environment and Development Initiatives (CREADIS - Bungoma), Maridhiano (Tana River) and the Diocese of Lodwar (Turkana). These organisations received ongoing support through field visits, targeted trainings on planning, and budget management and reporting.

IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE



ALP Adaptation During Covid-19 Related School Closures

When Covid-19 restrictions inhibited face to face interactions at school, the ALP adapted and rolled out a community-based component that was safely delivered through technology (radio, SMS, and tablets).

- 9,699 learners were assessed at the community during the COVID 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.
- 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.

IMPACT

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 9 counties.
- Resulted in an improvement of at least one literacy level for 84% of learners in pre-Covid interventions, 74% of learners in post-COVID interventions. 75% of learners improved at least one numeracy level. Overall, 12,538 learners attained proficiency in reading and basic operations.
- Successfully retooled 265 teacher assistants over the period and inducted 182 head teachers leading to successful partnerships with 269 schools.
- 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; and 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 KICD team on ALP, and the experiential immersion of tutors and principals from teacher training colleges held in Egoji in late February 2022.

These gains were made possible through the collaborations established, constant communication that ensured all partners and stakeholders were well acquainted with the programme objectives, and 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.



Schools

269

36,660
Total Learners Reached



Teacher Assistants

265

11,389
Learners Reached Indirectly



Head Teachers

182

25,271
Learners Reached Directly

12,538
Learners attained proficiency

76%
Progressed by at least one competency level in literacy every ten days

100,394
Reading & learning resources distributed

75%
Progressed by at least one competency level in numeracy every ten days

KEY LESSONS LEARNT

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 organization 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. **The role of effective instructional leadership in enhancing FLN.**

In schools where instructional leadership was effective, progress was more pronounced. The head teachers need to closely monitor the implementation of the programme and walk the journey with the implementers by providing the necessary support.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. **Pay close attention to the issues related to the language of instruction.** It was evident that learners who were lagging behind were struggling with the language of instruction. Leveraging the language competencies from their homes supported transitions across levels.
2. **Animate 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, especially those vested at the community level.
3. **Bridge Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) capacities of teachers on foundational literacy and numeracy instruction.** Even though teachers have an admirable understanding of the course content,

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. Adapting these approaches in pre-service training could yield long-term impact.

4. **Further explore strategies for effective instruction of place value.** Evidence from implementation shows much slower progress in mastering this concept as well as applying it while working out operations that involve regrouping.
5. **Engage government and established structures to sustain foundational literacy and numeracy gains.** The ALP achieved constant engagement with county and national government through the national and county advisory groups. Leveraging systemic structures will yield greater impact and sustainability.



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



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