



MID-YEAR UPDATE 2022

Improving learning outcomes at scale



Children learn literacy using the TaRL methodology in a classroom in Kenya. Photo Credit| TaRL Africa



TaRL programming is reaching over 4 million children in 2022 through direct government support programs and partnerships...

We worked together with several governments and partners across 14 countries...

...learning together and devising strategies that are improving learning outcomes at scale

While COVID-19 severely hindered learning across the continent, it also created widespread acknowledgment of the learning crisis and acceptance of the need to focus on foundational skills. With the global push for more use of evidence in education policy and programming, TaRL is now widely accepted as an effective approach to help children catch up. This has resulted in a rapidly growing demand for TaRL Africa’s technical support across the continent. TaRL Africa continues to provide deep support to governments in Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, and Zambia, while also supporting a growing number of partners and governments to adopt TaRL through a combination of in-person visits and remote technical support.

Organisational Updates

We are very excited to announce that TaRL Africa is now registered as a not-for-profit company in Kenya! The team has developed all the policies and systems needed to operate as an independent organization. We will now start to register TaRL Africa in Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire as branches of the organization to realize a pan-African organization headquartered in Kenya.

Program Highlights

There has been large-scale TaRL programming as well as in-depth engagement on sustainability and integration of TaRL into government systems across all three direct support countries — Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, and Zambia. These efforts have been supported by renewed commitment to help children catch up in the wake of COVID-19 school closures.



Children in Côte d'Ivoire during Teaching at the Right Level's Programme d'Enseignement Ciblé (PEC). The program is implemented by the government of Côte d'Ivoire, and is supporting children to improve their learning outcomes. PEC classes break free of the "chalk and talk" practices by encouraging the use of engaging, fun, and creative activities. Photo Credit| TaRL Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

While Côte d'Ivoire's academic year ended in June 2022, as did the year's activities for Programme d'Enseignement Ciblé (PEC), Côte d'Ivoire's TaRL program. The Ministry of National Education (MENA) initiated several strategic reports and new approaches to guide education in the country for the next five years. These include the Etats Généraux de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Alphabétisation (EGENA) and the Stratégie Nationale d'Amélioration des Premiers Apprentissages Scolaires (SNAPAS), both of which provide a holistic plan for education aimed at coordinating programs. PEC is clearly indicated as a key approach in both of these strategic documents.

VIDEO: Transforming Foundational Learning with Programme d'Enseignement Ciblé (PEC) .

From September 2021 to June 2022 PEC was implemented in approximately 1,000 schools in five regions, reaching more than 158,000

children. Results after 22 weeks of implementation were encouraging. The proportion of children able to read a simple paragraph increased by 21 percentage points to 37 percent from 16 percent at baseline, and the proportion able to do subtraction increased by 31 percentage points to 53 percent from 22 percent at baseline. In 2023, PEC will expand to at least 1000 additional schools. This is part of a larger expansion strategy that plans to reach at least 4000 schools by 2027.

Nigeria

TaRL direct programming was active in five states in the 2021/22 academic year and will grow to seven states in the 2022/23 academic year. We continued to directly support Kebbi state on its first phase of TaRL programming in 122 schools. The pilot worked with the same cohort of children across two academic years, grade three to five in the 2020/21 academic year and grade four to six in 2021/22. We also worked closely with the Kano state government and the British Council to complete the pilot phase of a TaRL program in August 2021 and support the continuation of TaRL in pilot schools in the 2021/22

academic year. Across Kebbi and Kano states, over 50,000 children were reached across 300 schools. At the same time, TaRL Africa supported UNICEF, which works with the state governments to grow TaRL programming to 926 schools and over 250,000 children across three North Eastern states.

Given the federal governance structure in Nigeria, efforts to grow and institutionalize TaRL largely take place at the state level. In the first half of 2022, state governments across five states in Adwama, Borno, Kano, Kebbi, and Yobe developed plans for TaRL expansion in the 2022/23 academic year. Two new states, Bauchi and Kaduna, inspired by positive learning outcome results in other state TaRL programs, and with a renewed commitment to foundational skills, began preparing to launch TaRL programs in September 2022 in 232 and 169 schools respectively. Overall, it is estimated that TaRL programming will reach over 2000 schools next year — a substantial scale-up from the previous years.

A TaRL Movement in Nigeria

Alongside the growth of TaRL Africa's direct support to the government, several other organizations trained by Pratham, TaRL Africa, or partners have adopted the TaRL approach in their programming, including big international organizations and smaller local organizations. The adoption of TaRL by other groups has accelerated the growth of TaRL programming in the country. However, different versions of materials, assessment tools and classroom processes have created confusion for some state governments and teachers. To harness the power of a bubbling community of actors dedicated to helping children catch up on the foundational skills, TaRL Africa hosted a two-day conference and three-day workshop for state governments and educational NGOs interested in the TaRL approach. We co-hosted the event with the British Council, Foreign Commonwealth Development Office, and Save the Children. The first two days of the event were focused on building visibility, while the final three days were dedicated to focused discussions with a subset of TaRL implementers. These conversations centered around aligning materials and tools, and developing a community of practice that could enable collective problem-solving, coordination, alignment, and advocacy for the approach.



A discussion panel with Ashleigh Morell, TaRL Africa, Agatha Ogefere, Federal Ministry of Education, Johanna Koernig, FCDO, Habeeb Saleh, British Council and Daniel McVitalis, Save the Children at the TaRL Nigeria National conference
Below: A group photo of participants at the TaRL Nigeria National Conference. Photo credit| TaRL Africa.



Zambia

In Zambia, Catch Up, the Zambian Ministry of Education's (MoE) TaRL program, continued to grow, reaching a third of all schools in 2022. January 2022 marked the beginning of a new school year and Catch Up classes expanded to 2,298 schools in Southern, Eastern, and Lusaka provinces. In addition, Catch Up expanded to Luapula province with support from UNICEF and the Hempel Foundation reaching additional 260 schools. The program also continued in Northern, Western and Muchinga provinces (in all the schools where it had started in the previous year as a COVID-19 emergency response), bringing the total reach of Catch Up to 3,356 schools across the country.

In addition to expanding the number of children reached in 2022, VVOB and TaRL Africa, in collaboration with the MoE, reviewed and developed additional Catch Up materials, so that there are now literacy materials in five of the seven official Zambian languages.

The midline data collected in July 2022 shows promising progress in both literacy and numeracy. The proportion of children able to read a paragraph increased 9 percentage points from 33 percent to 42 percent and the proportion able to do subtraction improved by 11 percentage points from 30 percent at baseline to 41 percent at the midline. We also see encouraging progress at the lower learning levels. The proportion unable to read 2-digit numbers decreased by 8 percentage points, and the proportion of children unable to read a word decreased by 11 percentage points.

In September 2022 the government reiterated their intention to mainstream Catch Up to ensure it reaches all schools sustainably at a high-level national stakeholders workshop. In addition, the Minister of Education,

honourable Douglas Syakalima, presented the government's commitment to Catch Up as a panelist for the launch of the Education Commission and Rewired [Rewiring Education for People and Planet](#) report which includes a Catch Up case study under solution three: 'Scale adaptive, inclusive, and engaging teaching to reduce inequalities' at the Transforming Education Summit in New York.

"What started as a pilot is now a big program involving various stakeholders, teachers, and community members. It has been exciting to see our children move from being non-readers to readers, and also to see our children beginning to appreciate mathematics,"

-Mr. Joel Kamoko, the Permanent Secretary in charge of Technical Services at the Ministry of Education, Zambia.



Hon. Douglas Munsaka Syakalima, Education Minister Zambia at the launch of the Education Commission and Rewired Rewiring Education for People and Planet report.

Partnerships

During 2021/22, TaRL Africa continued to empower organisations and individuals in over 10 countries to help children learn using the TaRL methodology through start-up training workshops and ongoing support.

Reigniting Learning Journeys across West Africa

In early 2022, government representatives from The Gambia, Guinea, and Nigeria visited the PEC program in Côte d'Ivoire. For officials from The Gambia and Guinea, this was an opportunity to see TaRL in action and think through how this approach could be useful in their context. Subsequently, The Gambia has developed a concept note for its plans to apply the TaRL approach in their context and is seeking funding. Guinea plans to pilot TaRL in 10 schools later this year. For Federal officials from Nigeria, this was an opportunity to see TaRL in a different context and observe the critical role the national government plays in the design and delivery of the approach in Côte d'Ivoire, which is quite different from the state-led structure adopted in Nigeria. The West Africa connections marked an important milestone for the growth of TaRL in Sub-Saharan Africa. A few years ago, government officials would need to travel to India for inspiration, but now officials are visiting neighbouring countries to see the success stories.

Supporting Governments Remotely

After engaging with NGO and government partners remotely due to COVID-19, TaRL Africa has continued to provide remote support to several Ministries of Education including in Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Guinea. Over the next year, we plan to assess whether these kinds of engagements can effectively

achieve our ideal outcomes.

Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation

Following an [independent qualitative study](#) last year (recently presented at the 2022 [RISE conference](#) and accepted for publication), TaRL Africa - in conjunction with VVOB and Zambian government education officials - has obtained the necessary approvals to conduct our first TaRL Africa-commissioned [independent Randomised Control Trial \(RCT\)](#) in Zambia. The three-arm RCT, led by PI Andy de Barros (JPAL-Africa) and co-Investigator Nico Vramant (VVOB), evaluates the impact of Zambia's TaRL program, Catch Up, on its own, compared to the Catch Up program enhanced with additional Continuous Professional Development innovations for teachers, and a control group.

In addition to the Zambia RCT, several rigorous evaluations were also completed or started over the reporting period. A difference-in-difference evaluation of a TaRL program in Nigeria was completed in August 2021 in collaboration with Oxford Policy Management. The results show a significant impact on children's learning in math of between 0.1 and 0.26 standard deviations. However, the results on English literacy, where a new dual-language approach had been adopted, were less consistent. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Soutenir les Enfants à la Maison et à l'École (SEME) RCT, which will investigate the impact of augmented tech support for teachers as well as PEC's affect on child labour began.

Looking Ahead

TaRL Africa has made tremendous progress over the last six months. We have registered as an independent organization, developed and operationalized an organizational structure, developed associated policies and brought together teams to develop strategies and brainstorm solutions to cross-cutting challenges.

TaRL programming scaled up within our core countries and across new ones over this period. We are supporting 14 countries, with four of these countries adopting TaRL in the last year, to design, deliver and grow TaRL programs. In addition to our technical support, TaRL Africa has also played a key role in coordinating partners and creating spaces for learning, sharing, and alignment.

In addition to TaRL delivery taking place across the continent, several learning activities have been undertaken to ensure we consistently push forward to improve and contextualize the approach.

While great strides have been made towards our long term vision of education systems across Africa equip all children with foundational reading and math, we remain deeply concerned with the learning levels of children on the continent and are conscious of the immense amount of work that still needs to be done. Over the upcoming period, we will focus on optimizing a clear opportunity for rapid growth, while at the same time ensuring we do not compromise on improving children's acquisition of foundational skills.