

TARL AFRICA

Our Year in Review



2024/2025



Teaching at the
Right Level Africa

www.tarlafrica.org

CONTENTS



YEAR IN REVIEW	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND INSTITUTION BUILDING	5
DIRECT SUPPORT COUNTRIES	6
DIRECT SUPPORT COUNTRIES - COTE D'IVOIRE	6
DIRECT SUPPORT COUNTRIES - NIGERIA	9
DIRECT SUPPORT COUNTRIES - ZAMBIA	15
PARTNERSHIPS	18
MEASUREMENT, LEARNING & EVALUATION	20
ONGOING REFLECTIONS	23
CONCLUSION	24
APPENDICES	25

YEAR IN REVIEW

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa reached over 7 million children across 16 countries, strengthening government partnerships and expanding into new geographies. With growing political will and new pilots in Angola, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar, TaRL Africa is supporting governments to scale evidence-based approaches to ensure foundational learning for all children. Across programs, the proportion of children who could read a simple paragraph roughly doubled between baseline and endline. In numeracy, children's ability to solve a basic subtraction problem improved by 2-3 times within a single academic year. On average, TaRL programs enabled 2x to 3x growth in foundational reading and math skills, despite short intervention periods at some locations.



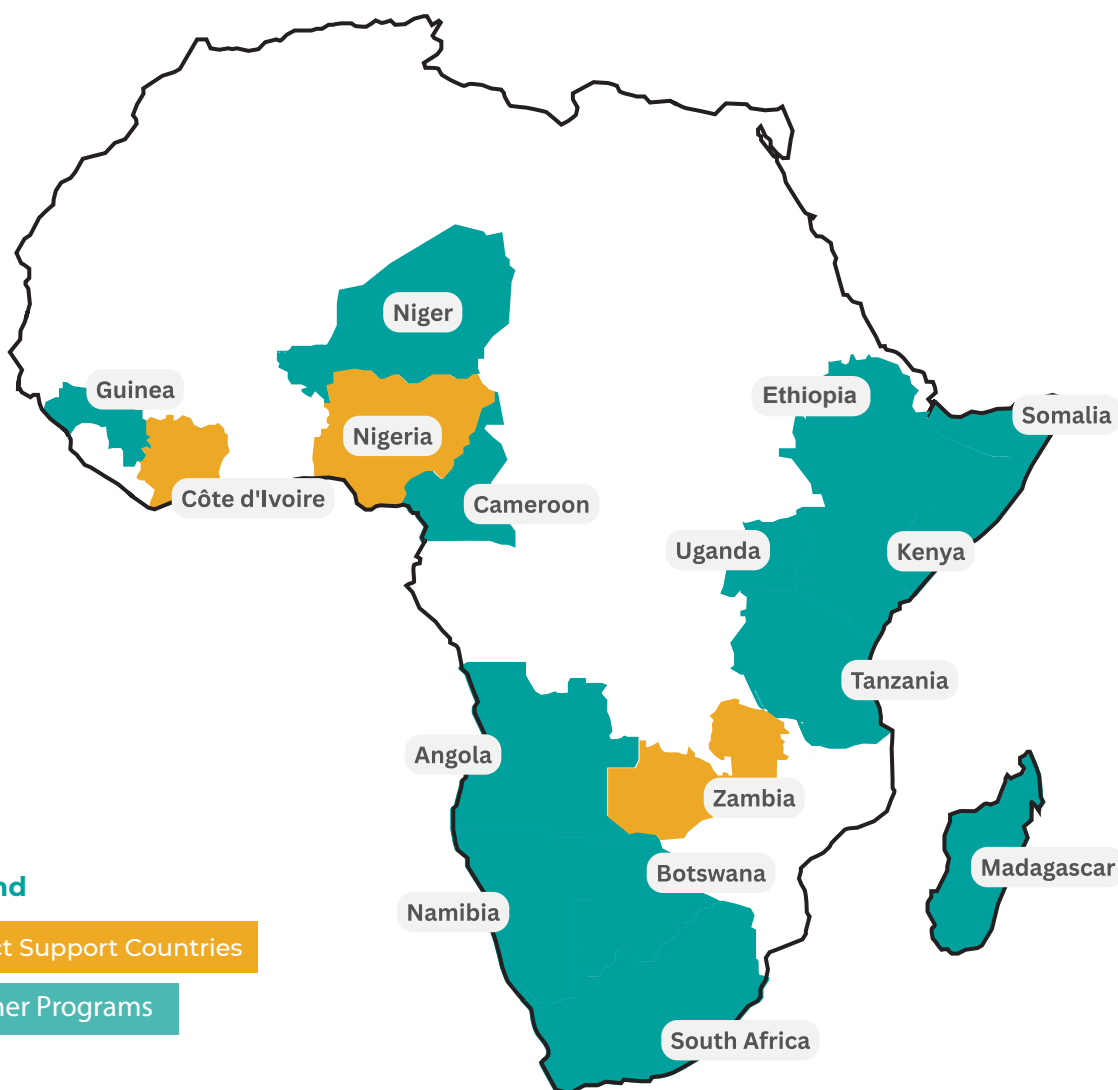
7MILLION

CHILDREN REACHED
SINCE INCEPTION



SUPPORTED GOVERNMENTS
AND PARTNERS IN

16 COUNTRIES



Legend

Direct Support Countries

Partner Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa's activities and progress from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025 with a focus on Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Zambia, where TaRL Africa provides direct in-country support to governments. This report also provides updates on TaRL Africa's organizational restructure, partnerships, measurement, research, learning, and progress toward key milestones and targets.

TaRL Africa and its partners have reached **over 7 million children** since inception and actively supported governments and partners in 16 countries to design and deliver TaRL programming with increasing demand from new partners. This year, we launched new pilots in Angola, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar and have had promising piloting discussions in Chad, Malawi, and Senegal.

Côte d'Ivoire is emerging as a continental pioneer in integrating evidence-based approaches into foundational learning reform. In the past year, Côte d'Ivoire, with technical support from TaRL Africa, **doubled the reach** of its national remediation strategy rooted in the TaRL approach - now active in **3,500 schools** and reaching over **442,000 children** with plans to reach all schools by the end of 2025. The past year saw significant learning gains in both reading and math, with **26 and 32 percentage point improvements** in the proportion of children able to read a simple French paragraph and the proportion of children able to do subtraction, respectively. To support the substantial scale-up and prepare for national reach, we focused on building local capacity, exploring innovative training models, and contextualizing the approach while more deeply embedding TaRL principles in pre-service teacher education and integrating TaRL assessment tools into national education statistics. Results from a two-year randomized trial prompted deep reflection and opportunities to strengthen systems and Ministry of Education (MoE) capacity to improve classroom instruction, support teachers, and build accountability to further boost learning outcomes. We also reflected on what would be needed as the scale of programming catapults to 18,000 schools next year, and revised our internal data monitoring systems and support team structures to enable laser-focused data-informed technical assistance support to the Ministry in the final few years of their strategy roll-out. We are deeply inspired by, and proud of, the progress made toward institutionalization and scale to date, driven by government ownership and strong political will.

In Nigeria, we focused on meeting growing demand by supporting government-led expansion into new states, strengthening program quality, and deepening government partnerships at both state and federal levels to drive system-level change. Over the past year, TaRL Africa supported implementation in nine states, including programming in three new states, in **1,824 schools** and **reached 494,962 children**. We are encouraged by positive learning gains in both reading and math, with **improvements ranging from 12-35 percentage points in the proportion of children able to read a simple paragraph** and **11-38 percentage points in the proportion of children able to do subtraction**. Momentum is growing at the state-level, with two states showing strong government commitments through further budget allocations and a promising opportunity emerging in Lagos in the south of Nigeria. We have deepened relationships with key federal stakeholders to start embedding TaRL in teacher training and policy documents, alongside support for the Accelerated Basic Education Program (ABEP). Innovation was a cornerstone of our past year in Nigeria, with expansion pilots in early grades and junior secondary school in addition to hosting Nigeria's first TaRL Bootcamp. These milestones, bolstered by state and federal buy-in, reflect a maturing ecosystem for scalable, government-led implementation in Nigeria.

Zambia leads the longest standing government-led TaRL program in Africa. TaRL Africa, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE), VVOB and World Vision made significant strides in institutionalizing and sustaining Catch Up, which is now active in **9 of 10 provinces in Zambia** and reaches **6,576 schools and 910,916 children**. The past year marked a shift from focusing on scale to more deeply embedding within government systems. We targeted capacity-building opportunities in areas where the MoE still requires support as we begin reducing our involvement where there are more established systems. We further supported integration by strengthening governance structures and initiating discussions to align with the new national curriculum, which shifts to English instruction. Notable progress included the launch of a National Master Trainer (NMT) model, enhanced provincial coordination through the Catch Up Coordinating Committee (CUCC), and consistent improvements in learning outcomes, despite challenges such as flooding and a cholera outbreak. We continue to see strong learning gains in both reading and math, reaffirming the effectiveness of

the model, with a **24 percentage point increase in the proportion of children able to read a simple paragraph** and a **26 percentage point increase in those able to perform subtraction**. As we move toward full national integration, we will focus on sustainability plans, strengthening government capacity, and securing funding for planned scale-up.

Our research and learning activities continue to focus on generating actionable insights to improve program quality, scalability, and sustainability. In Côte d'Ivoire, emerging findings from impact evaluations and implementation research led to practical program improvements. Nigeria's learning agenda focused on practical innovations to improve instruction and tackle persistent learning poverty with promising early results from testing adaptations for early and junior secondary school grades. In Zambia, we concluded a two-year randomized control trial (RCT) and behavioral studies to deepen our understanding of teacher motivation and inform cost-effective adaptations for the long-term success of Catch Up. These insights, rooted in rigorous evidence and local realities, continue to shape our strategy and strengthen government-led delivery of effective TaRL programs in diverse contexts.

In November 2024, we celebrated our fifth anniversary with a joyful two-day conference in Nairobi, reflecting on progress, celebrating successes, sharing challenges and deeply connecting with the continent-wide TaRL community united in the mission to advance foundational learning in Africa. Over the past year, TaRL Africa entered a new phase of growth, reflection, and strategic transformation with the launch of our bold **new five-year strategy and organizational restructure**.

Our new strategy focuses on three strategic priorities:

- 1. Embed TaRL as the go-to remedial approach** by working deeply and directly with Ministries of Education in five countries to institutionalize the approach within national education systems.
- 2. Tackle the root problem of low foundational skills** by adapting and applying TaRL principles to earlier grades and other parts of the education system, ensuring children master reading and math.
- 3. Respond to growing demand across Sub-Saharan Africa** by partnering with organizations to support the implementation of TaRL in additional countries.

We want to do this as an organization rooted in African context, culture, and values. To position TaRL Africa to lead this strategy over the next 5 years, we restructured the organization around four core pillars: program implementation, learning, innovation, and external relations. We strategically built and grew teams at both central and country levels to align with this vision. This past year, in addition to filling all leadership positions, we deepened our investment in our senior and mid-level management, to strengthen internal capacity and build leadership depth across the organization. We are energized and equipped to take TaRL to the next level over the next five years, empowered by focused learning, strong partnerships, and deep reflections, and guided by the urgency of addressing Africa's learning inequities. We remain deeply committed to improving children's learning and anchored in what matters most – setting governments and their children up for long-term success.



Government officials and partners at the TaRL Africa Conference 2024 in Nairobi, Kenya



Every Child's Learning Matters

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND INSTITUTION BUILDING

Board Meeting in Côte d'Ivoire

Ahead of the nation-wide TaRL scale-up and efforts to continually improve learning gains, we hosted the board in Côte d'Ivoire in May. Board members got an opportunity to see implementation in the classroom and meet education stakeholders including Côte d'Ivoire's Minister of Education and the World Bank.

This past year saw significant growth, but it was also a time of deep reflection and reinvention for TaRL Africa. By 2030, we will pilot the TaRL approach in over 20 countries across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and accompany five Ministries of Education to strengthen system-wide delivery of foundational reading and math skills so that 20 million children acquire these critical skills before they finish primary school. With the launch of our ambitious 2025-2030 strategic plan, we have spent time reimagining how we operate and how our organizational needs will change over the next five years to enable us to deliver even greater learning outcomes for children. Our team grew from 77 to 98 staff across central and country offices, reflecting increased operational demands and filling critical capacity gaps as we seek greater institutionalization, sector engagement, innovation, and improved quality to reduce learning poverty in Africa. Our central team has realigned around **four core focus areas: program implementation, learning, innovation, and external relations**. The newly created and unified Programs team focuses on streamlining all facets of program implementation - training, program delivery, program measurement, partnerships, impact and sustainability. This ensures that all components of the program are pushing in the same direction ensuring long-term sustain-

able and impactful TaRL programming across the continent. Our learning is consolidated in the creation of a stand-alone Research, Learning, and Evaluation unit focused on assessing new innovations and ensuring knowledge is well managed within and outside of the organization. Our newly established Program Design and Pedagogy team is a key part of our new strategy with a focus on innovation to strengthen classroom practices. Lastly, we have consolidated our fundraising, strategic partnerships, and communications team together to make sure we are communicating clear and unified messages to external audiences.

Board Developments

Our Board of Directors brings together accomplished global leaders in education, with deep expertise in both implementation and research across the Global South. Current members include Rachel Glennerster (President, Center for Global Development), David Sears (Former Director of Finance and Operations, J-PAL), Bala Venkatachalam (COO, Pratham International), Rukmini Banerji (CEO, Pratham Education Foundation), Madhav Chavan (President and Co-Founder, Pratham), Laura Poswell (Programs Director, Binding Constraints Lab), John Floretta (Global Deputy Executive Director, J-PAL), Diariétou Gaye (Former Vice President at World Bank Group) and Prof. Kwame Akyeampong (Honorary Professor of International Education and Development, University of Sussex). We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to John Mugo (Executive Director of Zizi Afrique Foundation), who recently completed his service on the Board. His invaluable insights and steadfast commitment to African education have left a lasting impact on our mission.

TaRL Africa Board Members and Senior Leadership Team meet with Naminata DOUKOURE NURUDINE the Director of pedagogy and Continuous Training (DPFC) in Côte d'Ivoire



DIRECT SUPPORT COUNTRIES

CÔTE D'IVOIRE



ACTIVE IN OVER
3,500
SCHOOLS & REACHING OVER
442,000
SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN



26 PP
32 PP

INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO READ A SIMPLE PARAGRAPH
INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO DO AT LEAST SUBTRACTION

In **Côte d'Ivoire**, TaRL programming reach doubled and we focused on strengthening systems to prepare for national scale while reflecting on evaluation results for program improvement.

Overview

In Côte d'Ivoire, TaRL Africa is the key technical partner of the Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de l'Alphabétisation (MENA) to implement “remediation” (formerly known as PEC), its national remedial education approach, which is based on TaRL. During the reporting period, we strengthened systems and capacity while reflecting on recent randomized evaluation results to enhance program effectiveness in preparation for the largest government-led TaRL scale up to date.

Reach and Learning Outcomes

Over the reporting period, remediation was imple-

mented in 3,500 schools and reached 442,302 children. After 120 hours over 20 weeks of implementation, remediation has achieved significant learning outcomes for children in Côte d'Ivoire. **In reading**, the proportion of children able to read a simple French paragraph **increased 26 percentage points** (from 25 percent at baseline to 51 percent at endline) and those unable to read words dropped from 62 percent to 30 percent (32 percentage points). **In mathematics**, the proportion of children able to do 2x2 subtraction **increased 32 percentage points** (from 35 percent at baseline to 67 percent at endline), while those unable to recognize two-digit numbers decreased from 26 percent to 9 percent (17 percentage points). This is marginally higher than the learning outcome improvements from the previous year, and still above our target of 20 percentage point improvement.

Table 1: Reach and learning outcomes for the 2024 academic year

Côte d'Ivoire			
	BL (Oct 2024)	EL (May 2025)	PP Change
Number of Schools	3,578 ¹		
Number of Children	442,302 (228,846M; 213,456F)		
Time of Implementation	120 hours		
Can read at least a paragraph in French	25%	51%	+26
Can solve at least 2x2 subtraction	35%	67%	+32
Cannot read words in French	62%	30%	-32
Cannot identify 2-digit numbers	26%	9%	-17

M: Male; F: Female; BL: Baseline; EL: Endline; PP Change: Percentage Point Change

¹ The program was implemented in new schools across three regional directorates—Daloa, Issia, and Duékoué—over a two-month period (April–May 2025), reaching 224,762 children in Grades 3–6. As a result, the current data does not yet capture outcomes from these locations to reflect the impact of a full program cycle. In comparison, old schools in the 5 directorates of Divo, Soubré, San-Pédro, Bouaflé, and Boundiali, were covered over a period of 7 to 8 months (October 2024 to May 2025), with a total of 217,540 children reached in the same grades.

Scale and Institutionalization

Expansion in the North

Through our partnership with the [Fonds d'Innovation pour le Développement](#), we collaborated with MENA to expand remediation in the North, ahead of the 2025-26 academic year when PNAPAS (the government's foundational learning strategy) is rolled out across all schools. This enabled us to get ahead of the larger scale-up, to build capacity and explore necessary contextualization. In addition, we were able to consider key scale questions related to decentralized and centralized training models as well as regional ownership innovations. The lessons from this work are integrated into the upcoming scale-up plan to strengthen delivery and impact. Alongside scaling efforts, TaRL Africa worked closely with MENA to embed TaRL principles more deeply and sustainably within the education system. This included supporting the development of a pre-service training strategy, with Colleges of Education now preparing student teachers to implement the TaRL approach. In addition, the TaRL assessment tool and its results have been integrated into the national education statistics booklet – an important step toward institutionalizing foundational learning measurement. These systemic anchors are designed to ensure that the TaRL approach endures beyond the current scale-up phase, allowing future generations of children to benefit.

Reflections

Learning to Course-Correct (and Course-Correcting to Learn): Strengthening Systems for Sustainable Scale-Up

Preliminary results from SEME (Soutenir l'Enfant à la Maison et à l'École), a two-year independent randomized impact evaluation, revealed positive – though more-modest than expected – gains for children who received remediation combined with an innovative teacher-support chatbot, compared to a control group. The study further found: stronger gains in math than reading; that improvements in learning outcomes were greatest for those starting at the lowest learning levels, reaching a plateau at decoding and basic operations; and that teachers face challenges of motivation, burnout, and gradual loss of TaRL knowledge after training. The results prompted us to unpack why the outcomes weren't as expected and what we could do with MENA to further boost children's learning in subsequent rounds of programming. We explored three areas where we felt impact may be diminished: (1) classroom methodology, (2) teacher support, and

(3) accountability and motivation. Each area had a set of linked hypotheses for why they may be hindering impact.

The results were also affected by a number of contextual factors: the study encompassed schools where MENA was implementing **PNAPAS** and the RCT focused on rural cocoa communities facing challenging circumstances and characterized by low baseline learning outcomes. In these areas, the implementation of PNAPAS and PEC was hindered by **low fidelity**. Schools within the RCT coverage area received less government support compared to other regions of the program, resulting in disparities in implementation. Throughout the SEME RCT, financial constraints created significant obstacles in the roll out of PEC, including the inability to provide transportation for pedagogical advisers. This limitation hindered their ability to visit schools, which were often spread across vast and remote study regions. Furthermore, only a small number of schools within the same Inspection de l'Enseignement Préscolaire et Primaire (IEPP) were implementing PEC. This stood in contrast to areas like other areas of the country, Divo, San Pedro, and Boundiali, where IEPPs had a higher concentration of schools actually implementing PEC. In the SEME RCT areas, IEPP inspectors were not fully dedicated to PEC follow-up and monitoring, further impacting the program's effectiveness.

Overall, the RCT has provided a valuable reflection point, offering rigorous insights into what is working in the program and where we must improve as remediation scales nationally. Internally, we have also taken lessons to refine our own support systems, particularly during periods of rapid scale-up. Historically, we have opted for a lean team to promote government ownership. This has been effective. However, over this period of rapid scale, we need to expand our teams to both boost support and enable additional data collection on implementation quality. We are not looking to police implementation, but to strengthen our support by better understanding where it is most needed. Based on these insights, we are making strategic adjustments: embedding TaRL Africa staff in regional government offices to support capacity-building and problem-solving, and expanding internal monitoring efforts to improve visibility on implementation quality. These shifts are intended to bolster – not replace – government leadership and to ensure we remain responsive partners as Côte d'Ivoire continues its ambitious journey toward nationwide foundational learning improvement.

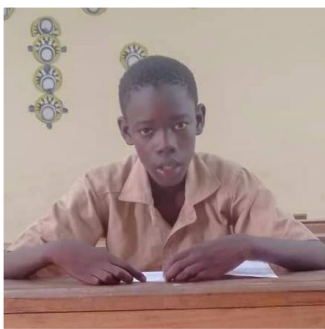
From Insights to Action - A Deep Dive to Improve Learning Outcomes

We held a workshop with MENA Master Trainers to examine the results and develop a program improvement plan with a focus on classroom methodology and teacher support. This was supplemented by workshops alongside a structured pedagogy technical expert who had previously co-designed Côte d'Ivoire's early grade programming, to explore linkages with the national curriculum educational programming and ease the transition for teachers between early grade foundational learning methods and later remedial ones. We identified a number of quick wins that have already been implemented. These included: adding new activities targeting skills where children have shown slower progress; reorganizing the training agenda to include more time and different methods to boost children transitioning to reading with comprehension and doing arithmetic; adding classroom tools to prompt progression between learner-level groups; and identifying ways to simplify teacher guides for easier use.

We also identified areas for further innovation and testing, such as how we measure comprehension on the TaRL assessment tool and ways to improve phonics delivery in the classroom. Alongside these findings, we are gathering more information on the socio-political considerations within Côte d'Ivoire, as we assess how to more actively tackle challenges related to accountability and motivation.

Looking Ahead

As Côte d'Ivoire prepares to roll out remediation to all schools in September 2025, TaRL Africa will support MENA with strengthening the systems and structures essential for effective and sustainable implementation. This support includes improving classroom instruction, strengthening teacher support and supervision, and reinforcing coordination and accountability through the co-developed program improvement plan that will guide us in the coming year. TaRL Africa will also continue building capacity within government at both regional and national levels, as well as internally, to deepen institutionalization of remediation and increase visibility and funding. These priorities position Côte d'Ivoire to deliver impactful, sustainable results as remediation becomes fully embedded in the national education system.



Stories from the Classroom: Meet Cissé from Côte d'Ivoire

Cissé Bazoumana is a 13-year-old child enrolled in the Kolia Educational District for Primary Schools (IEPP), at the Saliou Touré 1 Primary School. As a struggling fifth grade student, Cissé's academic performance in reading and writing had become so concerning that his parents considered withdrawing him from school. Encouraged by the school principal, his parents agreed to give him one last chance.

Before the introduction of TaRL (called remediation in Côte d'Ivoire), Cissé had great difficulty reading simple texts, lacked concentration, and no longer made an effort to progress in reading. He gradually withdrew and focused only on mathematics. With many children in a similar position, the government is rolling out remediation activities with technical support from TaRL Africa. During the baseline assessment, he was classified at the "word" level in literacy and at the "division" level in math. He tells how this situation deeply affected him: Initially he was attracted by the playful atmosphere of the TaRL sessions, with the songs, dances, and games. Gradually, he started to learn how to connect the words and eventually to read, particularly thanks to activities such as reading the phonetic-syllabic chart, phonics games, dictation, and small reading competitions. He proudly explains that outside of class hours, he enjoyed practicing on his own using a school textbook: he would identify a word, break it up into syllables, write down what he had learned, and then present it to his teacher for correction.

“When I saw my classmates reading correctly, I would get angry and upset because I couldn’t read like them.” His resilience and consistent attendance in TaRL sessions paid off at the midline assessment when he moved up from the word level to the “paragraph” level in literacy, proof of his significant progress. Cissé now shines in class. He reads aloud with ease, volunteers to read in front of his classmates, and has regained his confidence. His interest in reading has also been accompanied by a renewed focus on math. His parents say they are happy and proud to see his transformation, and his teacher confirms tangible progress with his grades, given the notable increase on his last class exam. This young boy, once in serious difficulty in literacy, now encourages his peers to actively participate in TaRL activities. Cissé is now considered an example by his classmates:

“When I walk around with my friends in the neighborhood and someone asks who among us can read, my friends say: it’s Bazoumana.”

NIGERIA



ACTIVE IN OVER
1,824
SCHOOLS & REACHING OVER
494,962
SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN



12-35^{PP} INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO READ A SIMPLE PARAGRAPH
11-38^{PP} INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO DO AT LEAST SUBTRACTION

In **Nigeria**, our work focuses on meeting increasing demand for TaRL, establishing a foothold in the South, innovating to improve program quality, and driving system-level change through deepening relationships with the federal government.

Overview

In the past year, TaRL Africa supported nine state governments, including three new states, to implement TaRL, while strengthening program quality and deepening government ownership to drive system-level change. TaRL Africa’s operating and funding models vary across states where TaRL programming took place over the reporting period. We have small teams in Kano, Kaduna, and Kebbi working closely with government counterparts. In Kebbi and Kaduna, implementation is now fully funded by the government, supplemented by TaRL Africa’s technical assistance, while Kano still has donor support for implementation. We also had a small team in Bauchi; however, this team was disbanded after we did not see sufficient government commitment to scale. In UNICEF-supported Borno, Jigawa, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara, TaRL Africa supports our government partners through a lighter-touch approach with our staff based outside the state. In Adamawa, we recently established a team to support innovations in the state. Our team resourcing

has been developed to take into account security considerations – for example, we are unable to have teams in Zamfara, Borno, and Yobe, due to high levels of insecurity – as well as cost effectiveness, with team members supporting neighbouring states where appropriate. Internally, we had a leadership shift in our Nigeria country team with the departure of our long-serving country director. Following a competitive external recruitment process, we are proud to have promoted a strong internal candidate, Hafsat Hamza, to lead the team.

Reach and Learning Outcomes

During the reporting period, TaRL programming was active in 1,824 schools and reached 494,962 children. The academic year in Nigeria begins in September and ends in July, so data is provided for 2023-24 baseline and endline, and 2024-25 baseline and midline.

2023-24 Endline Results

After 100–120 hours of implementation, children showed varying levels of improvements in learning outcomes across all states. There was a **range of 13 to 29 percentage point increase** in the proportion of children able to **read a paragraph in Hausa**; a **10 to 37 percentage point increase** in the proportion of learners who can **read a sentence in English**; and an **11 to 43 percentage point increase** in pro-

portion of learners who can solve a **2x2 subtraction problem**. Additionally, there was a substantial **decrease ranging from 21 to 62 percentage points** in the proportion of children unable to read words in Hausa; a **22 to 56 percentage point decrease** in proportion of learners who were **unable to read a sentence in English**; and an **18 to 50 percentage point decrease** in proportion of learners who **cannot identify two-digit numbers**. These results underscore the effectiveness of TaRL in accelerating learning for children who had previously fallen behind. Borno, Bauchi, Kaduna, and Kano all achieved strong learning outcome improvements above the 20 percentage point improvement goal. These states maintained their scale from the pre-

vious year while improving or sustaining learning gains. However, it is important to note that the Borno results only represent a subset of schools reached due to challenges with data collection. Kebbi, which was fully government-funded during the 2023-24 academic year, came close to achieving the 20 percentage point improvement target in both Hausa reading and mathematics. While Kebbi did not fully meet its target, this still reflects a notable improvement from last year. Yobe recorded the lowest learning gains; it was the only state that expanded to new areas during this period and was also transitioning to reduced funding support, which may partly explain the results.

Table 2: Reach and learning outcomes for the 2023-24 academic year

Nigeria 2023-2024 (Baseline and Endline)																		
	Bauchi			Borno			Kaduna			Kano			Kebbi			Yobe		
Number of Schools	173			58*			302			582			112			407		
Number of Children	14,892 M: 7,446 F: 7,446			24,453 M: 11,004 F: 13,449			31,326 M: 15,976 F: 15,350			113,641 M: 56,821 F: 56,820			19,825 M: 10,706 F: 9,119			180,343 M: 91,975 F: 88,368		
Duration	100-120 hours			100-120 hours			100-120 hours			100-120 hours			100-120 hours			100-120 hours		
	BL	EL	PP Chg	BL	EL	PP Chg	BL	EL	PP Chg	BL	EL	PP Chg	BL	EL	PP Chg	BL	EL	PP Chg
Can read a paragraph in Hausa	6%	35%	+29	9%	36%	+27	9%	35%	+26	5%	32%	+27	15%	34%	+19	22%	35%	+13
Can read sentences in English	4%	35%	+31	8%	45%	+37	12%	33%	+21	3%	25%	+22+	3%	25%	+22	19%	29%	+10
Can solve 2x2 subtraction	5%	38%	+33	8%	51%	+43	9%	35%	+26	4%	30%	+26	10%	27%	+17	23%	34%	+11
Cannot read words in Hausa	84%	22%	-62	77%	20%	-57	82%	36%	-46	84%	24%	-60	70%	45%	-25	52%	31%	-21
Cannot read words in English	85%	32%	-53	76%	20%	-56	78%	28%	-50	87%	42%	-45	75%	46%	-29	55%	33%	-22
Cannot identify 2-digit numbers	74%	24%	-50	50%	13%	-37	52%	17%	-35	77%	27%	-50	57%	39%	-18	42%	22%	-20

M: Male; F: Female; BL: Baseline; EL: Endline; PP Chg: Percentage Point Change

***Note:** The figures for Borno reflect data limitations, as data entry for schools from endline 2024 onward has not yet taken place.

2024-25 Midline Results

The 2024–25 midline results showed improvements in foundational learning in the four states with completed midline assessments and Adamawa State with endline assessments; data collection is ongoing in the remaining 5 states at the time of reporting. Learning gains **range from 3 to 24 percentage point increases** in the proportion of learners who **can read a paragraph in Hausa**. There were also gains ranging from **2 to 27 percentage points** in the proportion of learners who **can read a sentence in English**, and a range of **2 to 35 percentage point increases** in the proportion of learners who can **solve 2x2 subtraction** by midline. Additionally, there were substantial reductions ranging from a **7 to 34 percentage point decrease** in the proportion of children **unable to read words in Hausa**; an **8 to 33 percentage point decrease** in the proportion of learners who were **unable to read a sentence in English**; and a **4 to 31 percentage point decrease** in proportion of learners who **cannot identify two-digit numbers**.

Borno recorded the highest improvements in learning outcomes, closely followed by Kebbi. While these results are promising and indicate strong potential

for meeting the 20 percentage point improvement target by year-end, they are based on partial data. Data entry from schools post-endline 2024 has not yet concluded for the current year due to delays in school-level reporting and system updates. Continuous engagement is ongoing with the government to ensure that government officials complete the data entry. Despite these limitations, the available data suggest encouraging trends and we hope to have a complete dataset soon to better understand and validate the scale of these gains.

Yobe showed slightly lower learning outcomes and experienced a modest increase in the number of participating schools. Kaduna achieved the lowest learning improvement, while undergoing a significant scale-up during this academic year – expanding from 300 schools to over 1,000. Our goal remains: strong learning improvements at scale, sustained through government ownership. While the dip in learning outcomes in Kaduna was anticipated given the rapid scale-up, we are committed to intensifying our efforts to boost impact in the coming year and support the state in achieving its foundational learning ambitions.

Table 3: Reach and learning outcomes at midline for the 2024-25 academic year

Nigeria 2024-2025 (Baseline and Midline)																
	Borno			Kaduna			Kebbi			Yobe			Adamawa			
No of schools	67			1,157			112			468			20			
No of children	39,372			120,602			19,446			209,626			4469			
	M: 17,717 F: 21,655			M:60,743 F: 59,859			M:10,572 F: 8,894			M:105,758 F: 103,868			M:2324 F: 2145			
Duration	60-80 hours			60-80 hours			60-80 hours			60-80 hours			60-80 hours			
	BL	ML	PP Chg	BL	ML	PP Chg	BL	ML	PP Chg	BL	ML	PP Chg	BL	ML	PP Chg	
Can read a paragraph in Hausa	12%	22%	+10	21%	24%	+3	19%	27%	+8	8%	15%	+7	19%	43%	+24	
Can read sentences in English	11%	22%	+11	21%	23%	+2	16%	24%	+8	8%	13%	+5	18%	45%	+27	
Can solve 2x2 subtraction	11%	26%	+15	26%	28%	+2	17%	24%	+7	10%	15%	+5	13%	48%	+35	
Cannot read words in Hausa	73%	52%	-21	54%	47%	-7	61%	49%	-12	75%	52%	-23	71%	37%	-34	
Cannot read words in English	72%	40%	-32	53%	45%	-8	63%	50%	-13	76%	55%	-21	68%	33%	-35	
Cannot identify 2-digit numbers	42%	28%	-14	33%	29%	-4	52%	41%	-11	77%	46%	-31	29%	10%	-19	

M: Male; F: Female; BL: Baseline; ML: Midline; PP Chg: Percentage Point Change

***Note:** table excludes the three new states (Sokoto with a reach of 57,829 children, Zamfara reaching 9,005 children, and Jigawa reaching 34,613 children) due to limited assessment data as baseline was just completed across the new programs.

Scale and Institutionalization

During the reporting period, we advanced both the scale and institutionalization of programming in Nigeria through state-level integration in the North, expansion efforts in the South, and federal government engagement.

We continue to see signals of government ownership and financial sustainability, with several state governments allocating state funding or directing funding towards TaRL growth. Kaduna scaled TaRL to six new local government areas (LGAs), adding 773 schools and reaching 82,000 more children with government directed World Bank funding and launched a foundational learning strategy (KALINA) with a commitment to achieving state-wide scale by 2027. Kebbi allocated state funds to expand to four additional LGAs and plans to expand TaRL to all 21 LGAs. Adamawa secured Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding to expand TaRL programming. In Lagos, the state has allocated funding with co-design work underway to develop a contextualized model in preparation for rollout, after attending a learning journey to see TaRL in action in Kaduna. Lagos' adoption of TaRL is an important step toward establishing a foothold in the South.

In collaboration with state governments and UNICEF, we co-developed strategic scale and institutionalization roadmaps in Borno and Yobe, key milestones that outline actionable steps to embed TaRL within state systems.

It is critical for us to engage at both state and federal levels to ensure the sustainability of TaRL. At the federal level, TaRL Africa advanced our engagement with education stakeholders, including strengthening partnerships with UBEC, the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria, and the Federal Ministry of Education to embed TaRL into teacher training systems and policy frameworks. Our technical support for the Accelerated Basic Education Programme (ABEP) reflects a growing commitment to inclusive foundational learning, as we worked with the National Education Research Development Commission (NERDC) to strengthen this critical intervention for out-of-school children and foundational learning nationwide. We also contributed to national TaRL policy development and supported UBEC in creating professional development materials to integrate TaRL into pre-service and in-service teacher training systems.

We are encouraged by the increased demand, government ownership at both the state and federal levels, depth of partnerships, and investments in foundational learning, which signal a maturing ecosystem for continued growth of TaRL in Nigeria.

Reflections

State leadership is the linchpin of scale and sustainability

This year reaffirmed that strong state-level leadership is critical for achieving sustainable scale. Both Bauchi and Kaduna began their TaRL journeys through a UNICEF-funded pilot in the 2022-23 academic year. While both states demonstrated strong learning gains during the pilot, their subsequent paths have differed.

Kaduna has invested significantly in expanding and institutionalizing the TaRL approach – embedding it within government budgets, foundational learning strategies, and governance systems. The state has also played a leadership role in the ecosystem, hosting delegations from other states and inspiring broader adoption of TaRL. Several champions within Kaduna state government, bolstered with support from our state team, have been the driving force behind the inspirational and rapid growth of TaRL.

In contrast, while Bauchi saw promising results during the pilot phase, there was limited appetite to scale or sustain the model at this time due to a lack of funding. Bauchi is heavily reliant on donor funding and has shown no 'interest' in seeking or creating other funding mechanisms for the program.

We remain committed to supporting governments that are eager to adopt and integrate TaRL in ways that align with their priorities and systems. We do not believe in pushing adoption where there is limited ownership, as we have learned that long-term impact depends on genuine government commitment. As such, we made the decision to exit Bauchi and focus our efforts where there is strong political will and momentum to improve foundational learning.

Creative solution-seeking to challenging realities in education can generate a drive for innovation

This year highlighted the many ways in which TaRL principles can be creatively applied to strengthen

other parts of the education system. We developed a TaRL model for Junior Secondary School (JSS), in recognition of the unfortunate reality that many children in JSS still lack foundational reading and mathematics skills. In addition, we are designing and testing a model that links TaRL with early grade structured pedagogy programming, to ensure a more seamless transition for both teachers and children along the foundational learning journey. We have also begun to explore what it would take to further deepen learning gains so that the majority of children exit school with basic skills. Given the very low starting points, we recognize that we may need to do more in Nigeria to fully achieve our mission. This year, we launched efforts to conduct deep dives in selected schools and test new approaches to strengthen impact. These trials will continue into the coming year, as we push our-

selves to think more boldly and intentionally about how we can better serve the children and teachers at the heart of our work.

Looking Ahead

In the next year, TaRL Africa will continue to support newly-launched TaRL implementation in Jigawa, Sokoto, and Zamfara states, while piloting in Lagos, and expanding coverage in Kaduna and Kebbi by increasing local-level technical capacity. The team will continue supporting the federal government in reviewing the ABEP to include the TaRL approach, strengthen teacher professional development pipelines through TRCN and NTI, and advance pilots in early grades and junior secondary schools. We also plan to incorporate adaptation of TaRL for out of school children to align with federal priorities and strengthen relationships with the government.



Children at Nassarawo Primary School-Adamawa, Nigeria, learning place values using the number circle activity.



Transforming Learning with a Collaborative Approach in Kaduna, Nigeria

Kaduna State sits at the crossroads of Nigeria's diverse cultural and religious landscape. It is one of the most historically significant states in Northern Nigeria, a region deeply rooted in Islamic traditions, scholarship, and Quranic learning in Quranic schools—locally known as Tsangaya schools. Many children in Tsangaya schools struggle with foundational reading and math skills, limiting their ability to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Group-based learning in Kaduna

This challenge is particularly evident among “almajirai”: young boys who are sent to study under Islamic scholars, often far from home. Outside their Quranic classes, many of the almajirai beg for food and struggle with basic reading and math skills, widening the gap between them and their peers in formal schools.

Ahmad's Story: A Familiar Struggle

Ahmad, sent from his home in Katsina to Kaduna to study the Quran, spent his morning reciting and memorizing verses – a skill highly revered in his community. Yet beyond his Quranic lessons, Ahmad faced a silent struggle: he could not recognize letters in English or Hausa, his native language. Numbers were a mystery to him. Like many almajirai, he lacked critical reading and math skills needed to navigate the world around him.

Recognizing this educational imbalance for many children like Ahmad in Kaduna, the Nigerian government established Integrated Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) schools in Northern states like Kaduna. The IQTE schools combine religious and formal education, aiming to equip almajirai with basic reading and math skills while allowing them to continue their religious education. However, ensuring effective learning within these schools required a structured approach tailored to the children's unique needs, which is where TaRL comes in. With support from the Aminu Musa Abdulsalam (AMA) Foundation, TaRL methodology was implemented in these schools. TaRL Africa, in collaboration with the Kaduna State Government and the AMA Foundation, co-created a program that adapted TaRL techniques to suit IQTE schools, providing structured, engaging, and interactive literacy and math lessons that align with the learning pace of each child. 164 teachers have been trained in the approach, and 19 schools are implementing the program, reaching approximately 2,600 children. To ensure sustained impact, five Master Trainers from the Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board provide ongoing mentoring and support to teachers, reinforcing contextualized best practice and solving problems as they arise.

Community Perspectives

For teachers like Mallam Sani, the approach has been transformative. “The engagement levels in my classroom have increased tremendously. My students are more confident, especially in speaking publicly.” Despite limited resources, teachers have shown remarkable creativity in implementing TaRL techniques. Salome Joseph, a Master Trainer, was particularly inspired by their dedication. “The way teachers improvise materials to make the sessions engaging is incredible. They find ways to ensure every child is involved, no matter the constraints.” For Aisha Mamman, the Executive Director of the AMA Foundation, supporting TaRL was an easy decision. “The method's use of local languages before transitioning to English is critical for the almajirai. Many of these children struggle because they are not taught in a language they understand. TaRL meets them where they are and builds from there.”

Children engaged in a multiplication activity

Children are also feeling the shift. Hansatu, one of the children benefiting from the approach, shared, “Before, I was too shy to speak in front of the class. Now, I can read simple words, and my favorite part of the lessons is the number wheel in numeracy sessions.”

ZAMBIA



ACTIVE IN OVER
6,576
SCHOOLS & REACHING OVER
910,916
SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN



24PP INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO READ A SIMPLE PARAGRAPH
26PP INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN ABLE TO DO SUBTRACTION.

In **Zambia**, our work focuses on embedding Catch Up within government systems and deepening government ownership for long-term sustainable impact.

Overview

In Zambia, TaRL Africa continues to work closely with the MoE and partners VVOB and World Vision to deepen the institutionalization and long-term sustainability of Catch Up, Zambia's TaRL program.

Over the past year, our joint efforts focused on targeting areas for capacity strengthening in preparation for reduced support; embedding Catch Up into pre- and in-service teacher training systems; aligning the model with Zambia's new Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which changes the language of instruction to English; and strengthening governance and coordination mechanisms. The emphasis has shifted from expansion to deepening ownership and embedding Catch Up in national and provincial education systems.

Reach and Learning Outcomes

Catch Up is the longest standing government-led

TaRL program in Africa. During the reporting period Catch Up was active in 9 out of 10 provinces across 6,576 schools, reaching 910,916 children – up from 5,531 schools and 847,367 children. Zambia's academic year begins in January, so the data below includes the endline for 2024 (completed in October 2024) and baseline and midline for 2025 (completed in May 2025).

2024 Endline Results

After an average of 80 hours of programming, we observed significant learning gains in both reading and math. In reading, the proportion of children able to **read a simple paragraph increased 24 percentage points** (from 37 to 61 percent) and those **unable to read words dropped from 63 to 39 percent** (24 percentage points). In math, the proportion of children **able to do 2x2 subtraction increased 26 percentage points** (from 32 percent to 58 percent) while those **unable to identify two-digit numbers decreased slightly from 50 to 46 percent** (4 percentage points). These results meet the 20 percentage point target and are stronger than the previous year.

Table 4: Reach and learning outcomes for the 2024 academic year

Zambia 2024 (Baseline and Endline)			
Number of Schools	5,531 schools		
Number of Children	847,367 (M: 408,066; F: 439,301)		
Hours of Implementation	80 hours		
	BL	EL	PP Change
Can read at least a paragraph	37%	61%	+24
Can solve at least 2x2 subtraction	32%	58%	+26
Cannot read words in English	63%	39%	-24
Cannot identify 2-digit numbers	50%	46%	-4

M: Male; F: Female; BL: Baseline; EL: Endline; PP Change: Percentage Point Change

2025 Midline Results

Early results show moderate improvements in both reading and math. The proportion of children who could **read at least a paragraph increased by 8 percentage points** (from 44 to 52 percent). In math, the share of children who could **solve at least a 2x2 subtraction problem rose by 11 percentage points** (from 39 percent to 50 percent). Additionally, the percentage of children **unable to read words dropped from 56 percent to 48 percent**, an 8 percentage point decrease,

while those **unable to identify 2-digit numbers declined by 11 percentage points**, from 40 percent to 29 percent. In 2025, Catch Up grew to over an additional 1,000 schools. While positive, the midline results are slightly lower than previous years. We will double down in our efforts to support provincial structures to accelerate learning in the second half of the year.

Table 5: Reach and learning outcomes at midline for 2025 academic year

Zambia 2025 (Baseline and Midline)			
Number of Schools	6,576 schools		
Number of Children	910,916 (M: 438,192; F 472,567)		
Hours of Implementation	75 hours		
	BL	ML	PP Change
Can read at least a paragraph	44%	52%	+8
Can solve at least 2x2 subtraction	39%	50%	+11
Cannot read words	56%	48%	-8
Cannot identify 2-digit numbers	40%	29%	-11

M: Male; F: Female; BL: Baseline; ML: Midline; PP Change: Percentage Point Change

Scale and Institutionalization Strengthening Government Leadership

Supporting the Catch Up Coordinating Committee (CUCC) to lead the institutionalization process is a priority for TaRL Africa. CUCC became more active this year, holding planning and quarterly meetings, setting a 2025 workplan, and running subcommittee-specific capacity-building workshops. CUCC members also participated in a national midline assessment verification exercise across eight provinces, bridging the gap between policy design and frontline implementation.

In October 2024, the CUCC developed an investment case and facilitated a donor engagement event to chart the path toward full integration of Catch Up in MoE systems and the national education budget while planning to secure external funding where needed to reach national scale by 2026. While this work generated interest from external partners and led to detailed budget discussions within the MoE, a massively reduced global funding pool in the past year led the MoE to deprioritize expansion to the final province, Copperbelt, and instead focus on curriculum development. We

are partnering with the MoE to explore alternative funding sources to reach Copperbelt by 2026.

In February 2025, TaRL Africa and VVOB supported the MoE to host a national Catch Up review meeting with all nine implementing provinces. The meeting was a key turning point as provinces developed their own initial sustainability plans and the MoE began outlining a vision for continued implementation with minimal or no external support.

National Master Trainer Model

Another institutionalization milestone was the launch of the National Master Trainer (NMT) model. These trainers, drawn from existing education personnel (in-service teacher training coordinators, resource center staff, and mentors), will be responsible for overseeing the technical content of the approach in Zambia; for example, creating or adjusting classroom activities. Previously, Master Trainers existed exclusively at a provincial level. The NMTs will provide advice to the CUCC on changes that may be needed to improve the approach or to align it with new national policies. In the past year, 36 NMTs – from all implementing provinces – were trained to mentor colleagues and cascade

technical knowledge across the system. NMT's are also central to supporting implementation fidelity and data-driven decisionmaking within provinces. In addition to the NMT model, the MoE continues to integrate Catch Up into pre-service teacher development with modules for reading and math created and validated in the past year with roll out planned for late 2025.

System Alignment & Capacity Development

At the systems level, efforts to align Catch Up with Zambia's CBC gained traction. TaRL Africa and VVOB are working with the MoE to ensure that TaRL pedagogy, assessments, and materials complement CBC principles – particularly in formative assessment, language transition, and active learning strategies. In addition, harmonization and coordination of foundational literacy and numeracy activities in the sector are a stated priority for the MoE. To further reinforce government-led sustainability plans with sufficient internal capacity, TaRL Africa and VVOB developed a tool to assess provincial team performance and support needs. Based on results, we developed action plans for each province, reducing support where teams are managing effectively and focusing capacity-building where needed; to enable a smooth transition to full MoE ownership.

Reflections

From Scale-up to System Ownership

The past year marked a clear shift from scale-up to system integration. Key institutions at national and provincial levels are increasingly taking the lead in driving implementation, coordination, and problem-solving. We are focusing on building capacity in key parts of the system while reducing our support where we think it is no longer necessary. The establishment of the NMT group and the focus on

the CUCC and its subcommittees are examples of this, as is the targeted support being given to provinces. One step forward for our support this year was the provincial capacity assessment. Provincial officials are becoming more and more able to run the program independently. The tool helps us to think systematically about where and how we can reduce our support. There are already lessons from this process that we will use across our other country programs. For example, we found that creating the tool was useful in building an explicit understanding across the VVOB and TaRL Africa teams of what government officials are expected to do. We also learned that it is important to find a balance between a comprehensive tool with well-evidenced answers and a practical tool that is not overly time-consuming. Finally, we found that our teams needed assistance with linking the results of the tool to potential actions, and in future reviews we will provide more structured support and guided discussion on this.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, TaRL Africa will focus our efforts on finalizing and implementing provincial sustainability plans and continuing to build institutional capacity within the MoE to manage Catch Up independently. TaRL Africa and VVOB will continue supporting curriculum alignment, training of NMTs, and contextual adaptation of the Language Learning from Familiar to Formal (L2F2) approach. Discussions are already underway to pilot an English model in Zambia, as part of strengthening English literacy acquisition in the early grades, leveraging work we have done on dual language programming in other countries. These efforts, paired with ongoing learning studies and iterative feedback loops, will help ensure that the Catch Up program remains relevant, cost-effective, and firmly rooted within Zambia's evolving education system.



Children using flashcards to create words in Zambia

PARTNERSHIPS

Celebrating 5 Years of TaRL Africa and a Growing Community

In November 2024, TaRL Africa celebrated five years of collaborative progress with a festive two-day conference in Nairobi joined by government and organization partners who have spread the movement across 16 African countries and enabled 7 million children to learn. This milestone highlights the crucial role of partnerships to drive growth and sustainable impact, further emphasized in a government panel featuring representatives from Madagascar, Nigeria, Zambia and Côte d'Ivoire, who have all taken steps to institutionalize TaRL in their systems.

At the heart of the celebration were the learning gains we have seen in all contexts. We also had time to reflect on persistent challenges, including limited time on task, the need to strengthen outcomes in reading fluency and division, and issues with teacher capacity and absenteeism. These themes were explored in an [all-star panel on implementation](#) moderated by Laura Poswell, with insights from Rukmini Banjeri, Ben Piper, Hafsat Hamza, and Noam Angrist. The panel unpacked the limitations of RCTs and the need for more information on learning about what works for implementation at scale.

Building a Movement with Openness, Partnership, and Local Ownership

Our five-year conference also offered an opportunity to reflect on our way of working, enabled by innovative and flexible-funding partners and grounded in openness and trust-based partnership. Too often, organizations position themselves as the sole supplier of an intervention, branding it as “ABC’s XYZ approach.” Even when effective, such models are constrained by the original implementer’s capacity and presence. Moreover, an insular approach often sidelines other actors within the education ecosystem, slowing momentum, limiting learning, and undermining the broad-based buy-in essential for lasting change.

Pratham took a different path. Their generosity and vision allowed us to use and adapt the TaRL approach, not as proprietary content, but as a public good. TaRL Africa was fortunate to have access to flexible funding from Co-Impact that enabled us to extend this same spirit of openness – supporting

not only governments but also a wide range of organizations to adopt, adapt, and grow TaRL in their own contexts.

Since 2019, TaRL Africa has provided technical assistance to over 75 organizations and ministries of education. We aimed to serve as a collaborative partner—**helping others think through what TaRL could look like in their systems**, not just replicating what had worked elsewhere. Where early adopters like the Zambian MoE helped spark regional interest, we filled a gap to help organizations translate that into action.

Of course, we didn’t always get it right. In some cases, especially early on, we leaned too heavily toward controlling certain pedagogical aspects, when what was **really needed was trust**. But we learned. And **as we stepped back, we saw what could happen when others stepped forward. Organizations innovated in ways we never could have scripted – creating locally-grounded versions of TaRL that were slightly different but no less effective.**

This growing community of TaRL implementers is now pushing the approach into new frontiers. YAR-ID, in northern Uganda, uses TaRL to help refugee children re-enter mainstream education. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supported its integration into national school management systems in Madagascar and Niger. Teach for Nigeria equips thousands of volunteers to use TaRL in classrooms across the country. Building Tomorrow has embedded TaRL into its holistic school support model in Uganda. And Youth Impact, in Botswana, moved from direct delivery to supporting teacher implementation at scale, reaching the brink of national coverage.

None of these are carbon copies – and that’s the point. They are evolving, context-driven models, shaped by those who know their communities best. Our willingness to share what we know, rather than guard it, has helped build a bridge between global research and local classrooms. It has kept demand alive – not just because learning outcomes improve, but because organizations and individuals themselves become champions.

New Government Partnerships

After five years of working closely with ministries of education in our direct support countries, demand for TaRL continues to grow. In the past year, TaRL Africa provided technical support to several new government partners to launch TaRL programming, laying the groundwork for a potential pipeline of deeper integration and scale opportunities. In Angola, the Ministry of Education launched a full TaRL pilot in 71 schools with support from UNICEF and TaRL Africa. The pilot showed promising learning gains of 19 pp change for the children who can read paragraphs and 31 pp change for the children who can at least solve 2x2 subtraction problems and the government has expressed their desire to scale the approach to many more schools.

In Zanzibar, the MoE, in partnership with UNICEF, TaRL Africa, and the Aga Khan Foundation, launched a pilot in 25 schools, with learning outcomes increasing from 13 pp change for the children who can read paragraphs in local language and 37 pp change for the children who can at least solve 2x2 subtraction problem by the midline. In

Ethiopia, TaRL Africa partnered with Imagine One Day to support the MoE to launch a five school pilot. A scale-up phase is planned with support from UNICEF.

In addition to government-led pilots in Angola, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar, we have received strong interest from Ministries of Education in Malawi and Chad. In Malawi, the Ministry of Education expressed intent to adopt TaRL as their national remediation approach after observing Zambia's Catch Up program. We facilitated a co-design workshop and supported the Ministry's engagement with FCDO and GPE to explore funding options for implementation. Although recent aid cuts have delayed the pilot, interest in TaRL remains high.

In Chad, the Ministry of Education has been eager to adopt TaRL after seeing government-led initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire and Madagascar (supported by JICA). They have opted to direct World Bank funding toward piloting and scaling-up TaRL. The pilot will start in September 2025.



Children in Angola using the letter jump activity in a literacy class

MEASUREMENT, LEARNING & EVALUATION

Research and Learning Activities in our Direct Support Countries

Over the past year, TaRL Africa focused on learning agenda questions across our core countries to evaluate and inform enhancements to the TaRL program in a wide variety of contexts. We are honing in on solutions that boost impact in *classroom-level teaching-learning and pedagogy, teacher support and training*, and systems-level *motivation and accountability*. As multiple impact evaluations conclude this year, we are using emerging evidence to guide program adaptations and sustain impact in diverse contexts at scale.

In Côte d'Ivoire, our learning focused on responding to evidence from multiple studies to sustain and enhance the impact of the remediation program as the government rapidly expands its scale.

A defining moment of the past year was the release of preliminary results from the 2024 SEME two-year randomized evaluation, which assessed Côte d'Ivoire's remediation program alongside a teacher support chatbot (DIA)² in two districts with limited TaRL Africa and government support. Conducted in the post-COVID context (2021-2023), the study compared treatment schools implementing TaRL and using the DIA chatbot to a control group, using ASER and EGRA/EGMA assessments.³

ASER results showed statistically significant improvements—0.16 standard deviations (SD) in literacy and 0.28 SD in numeracy. EGRA/EGMA results were also positive, though not statistically significant (0.10 SD literacy, 0.08 SD numeracy). Importantly, the study showed significant gains at lower learning levels, but smaller improvements for higher levels.

Alongside the impact evaluation findings, we conducted implementation research to test new teaching models and regional ownership to boost impact and cost-effectiveness. An A/B test of a small-scale 'progressive' classroom innovation – focused on strengthening all TaRL children's beginner-level FLN skills before moving to targeted learning groups – showed no significant learning gains at scale compared to the standard TaRL approach,

but revealed promising features of the innovation—and the need for more teacher training time. In particular, the results suggest that insufficient refresher training on the core TaRL approach affected teacher performance.

Additionally, with support from Fonds d'Innovation pour le Développement, we explored learning opportunities in Côte d'Ivoire; specifically, research on a regional cascade training model that showed it to be a cost-effective alternative with regional trainers achieving comparable or better outcomes despite less experience; and a learning pilot exploring the use of local language to support teaching in French was associated with a promising increase of children's learning levels in math.

Looking ahead, we continue to prioritize research to improve core TaRL program learning outcomes as it is implemented at scale, particularly in reading, while promoting cost-effective, sustainable program ownership for the long term. This includes an ongoing study of an innovation for hybrid pedagogical advisor mentoring and a pilot learning lab to test JICA's successful community-based learning approach for children through Côte d'Ivoire's School-based Management Committees.

In Nigeria, our learning focused on exploring innovations to tackle the underlying causes of learning poverty in challenging environments and improving the government's implementation of TaRL to enhance learning outcomes.

This year, we studied implementation patterns within and across Nigerian states and tested innovative solutions through a learning partnership with the What Works Hub for Global Education. Findings showed strong use of grouping and level-aligned instruction, with teachers needing additional support in session planning, activity sequencing, and instructional approaches for higher-level skills. A case study on TaRL's scaling journey across different states is currently underway.

In partnership with Youth Impact and funded by Jacobs Foundation's SALEX initiative, we concluded a study on a pilot innovation guiding teachers

² DIA was an innovative online electronic support system designed for the RCT that provided a platform for teachers to ask questions and receive answers about the program over two academic years.

³ ASER is a simple, oral, one-on-one assessment focused on foundational skills in a child-friendly format, commonly used in TaRL programs and developed by Pratham. EGRA/EGMA tools are more widely used detailed diagnostic assessments that measure specific literacy and numeracy sub-skills, developed by USAID/RTI.

on structured bi-weekly ‘checks for understanding (CFU)’ with [promising results shared](#) at the 2024 Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference. The CFU study found that children can make meaningful progress to new TaRL levels *between* teacher assessments – and those at CFU schools progressed more quickly with the program. The adaptive learning model also led to practical real-time adjustments including simplification of the CFU process to save time and changing the weekly CFU day (Friday) to another with lower absenteeism (Monday) for improved results. Kaduna state government has now incorporated CFU into teacher training for over 900 schools, enabling continued learning at scale next year.

In Nigeria, TaRL Africa is pushing the boundaries of where and how TaRL principles can be applied to impact more children. With support from the Gates Foundation, we partnered with FHI 360 and the Kebbi state government and launched a multi-phase learning agenda focused on two fronts: strengthening teacher foundational skills and integrating TaRL with structured pedagogy in the early grades. A persistent challenge in Nigeria is how to

continuously support teachers with TaRL implementation. We have launched a multi-phase learning study in Kebbi, exploring ways to boost teachers’ own FLN skills through tutoring and pre-service training. In parallel, we are working with FHI 360 to explore how TaRL can complement structured pedagogy in grades 2 and 3. This work aims to blend the flexibility and responsiveness of TaRL with the structure of the formal curriculum, and an A/B test is planned for next year.

At the other end of the learning spectrum, with UNICEF support, we began adapting TaRL for junior secondary school. This past year, we piloted a learning lab to address the persistent need for remediation in higher grades. In the coming year, we will conclude the pilot and conduct design-based implementation research to test cost-effective adaptations that strengthen teacher support and improve learning outcomes.

While implementation conditions in Nigeria remain complex, these efforts reflect our ambition to apply TaRL principles across a wider range of contexts and grade levels—laying the groundwork for deeper, system-level impact.



TaRL teacher supporting a child to learn reading at Central Primary School, Demsa, Nigeria

In Zambia, our learning focused on measuring impact and understanding key drivers of teacher motivation and support for long-term sustainability of Catch Up as it approaches national scale.

We concluded a two-year independent RCT of Catch Up in December 2024. Funded by Co-Impact and the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX), the RCT’s results are expected to be publicly released within the year, with insights on impact, implementation, cost-effectiveness and innovations in continuous professional development of teachers.

We also completed a multi-stage behavioral science study, funded by the Gates Foundation in partnership with Busara Center and VVOB, to first identify key enablers and barriers to teachers’ effective delivery of Catch Up. Then, using a novel ‘lab-in-field’ approach, we tested cost-effective program adaptations to improve teacher support that yielded fresh insights and a successful application of a

new research approach. Descriptive research found a positive association of higher teacher self-efficacy and learning outcomes, and that the majority of teachers reported an external ‘locus of control’. From this, we co-designed and tested solutions to boost teacher level of effort and self-efficacy through decision-making and recognition experiments. What we found is that teachers reflect on and adapt their teaching practices when they receive on-demand feedback about task performance, strengthening our understanding of effective teacher support at scale. Lastly, we are thrilled that earlier mixed-method research on what motivates Zambian teachers to adopt new teaching methods, co-authored by a former TaRL Africa research staff member and funded by GPE KIX, has been published in the [Comparative Education Review](#). The study identified key factors associated with teacher takeup of new pedagogy: on-site continuous professional development opportunities that incorporate team-based problem-solving, verbal discussions, and skills acquisition.



ONGOING REFLECTIONS

How we Improve and Learn

This past year was a watershed moment in terms of learning. As we celebrated five years, it was a natural moment to pause, reflect, and take stock of the progress we have made in partnership with governments to improve children's reading and math skills. Early findings from an RCT in Côte d'Ivoire along with implementation research and innovation pilots have sharpened our understanding of what is working and what still needs refining. It has been a moment to turn the mirror on ourselves and thoughtfully ask how we can do better so that no child is left behind.

TaRL Africa was founded on a strong evidence base. Before our formation, six RCTs in India demonstrated that effective implementation of TaRL led to significant improvements in learning outcomes. Evidence continues to guide us, but how we use it is evolving. While the global appetite for impact evaluations has persisted and is often more heavily weighted than other forms of research, we continue to interpret RCTs as part of the puzzle, alongside other government learning outcome data, qualitative insights, and contextual knowledge. In deploying various assessments to inform our ongoing work, we recognize that in order for assessment data to be useful, it also needs to be measuring the right thing and for the right use case.

We have been asking ourselves, are we collecting the right data, with the right tools, and enough of it? This has prompted us to develop a new internal monitoring data system, already piloted in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, that will enable us to get more frequent information on how the approach is being delivered so we target our technical assistance most effectively. We plan to roll this system out to additional government partners next year, while scaling-up the use of this system across Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria. Our learning focus in the past year has also sparked reflection on the assessments that form the backbone of our work and drive action across education systems by making children's learning levels visible in a clear and simple way. Their super power is in their simplicity. At the same time, recent studies have raised important questions about how effectively these assessments measure comprehension. We are eager to explore how we can retain their simplicity while enhancing their ability to measure comprehension moving forward.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to learning with humility, acting with intention, and walking the journey alongside our partners and the education community so every child has the chance to learn.

Authentic Demand, Deepen Long-term Impact

This year's unexpected disruption in foreign aid has forced the world to rethink how development work is done. **At TaRL Africa, it has reaffirmed our commitment to what makes our model both effective and enduring: centering our work around governments for sustainable impact.**

We choose to work with governments that show a clear commitment to change and actively demand the TaRL approach. Rather than delivering parallel programs, we work alongside public systems, co-developing cost-effective, embedded solutions that can be sustained through local capacity and budgets. We position ourselves as trusted **partners, not owners**, supporting governments while nurturing local demand so that momentum is sustained over time. If a promising innovation doesn't have clear government buy-in, we don't move forward, no matter how exciting it appears.

We take a long-term view. Change doesn't happen overnight, nor is it linear. Building education systems requires time, trust, and continuous engagement. We stay the course when challenges arise, supporting governments to institutionalize effective practices. As education systems across Africa continue to receive short-term investment with limited impact on learning, the opportunity - and responsibility - to support real transformation is urgent.

Too often in international development, programs are pushed onto governments with donor backing but limited local ownership. In a time when development funding is incredibly uncertain, our approach, which is grounded in government ownership and sustained by long-term, visionary, and flexible-funding partners, allows us to respond to demand, scale impact responsibly, and contribute to real transformation for millions of children across Africa.

CONCLUSION

The past year was a powerful year of growth, reflection, and renewed purpose for TaRL Africa. As we celebrated our fifth anniversary, we looked back on an incredible and impactful journey that has now reached over 7 million children across the continent and are looking ahead with clarity, conviction, and urgency. In Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Zambia, we saw the seeds of long-term change take root through deeper government ownership, expanded reach, and strong evidence of impact. New pilots and increased demand continue to show that momentum continues to grow. At every level, we are witnessing a powerful transformation in action - TaRL is not an external program, but a shared commitment embedded in government systems and led by local actors.

With the launch of our new strategy and restructured teams, we are energized for what lies ahead. This next chapter is not just about increasing numbers, it is about scaling trust, capacity, collective ambition, and real impact for Africa's children. Our work is grounded in continuous learning and guided by the belief that every child can learn, and every government can lead lasting change. As we step into the future, we carry the lessons of the past five years, the strength of our partnerships, and an unshakable commitment to addressing learning poverty with urgency, creativity, and hope.



Bundles and sticks: A hands-on math activity

APPENDICES

TaRL Africa Blogs

- 1 A Celebration of Progress: Reflections from TaRL Africa's 5-Year Anniversary Conference <[watch recap](#)>
- 2 Advanced TaRL Bootcamp 2.0: Deepening Knowledge, Expanding Impact! <[read article](#)>
- 3 Transforming Religious Learning: Adapting TaRL in Nigeria's Tsangaya Schools <[read article](#)>
- 4 TaRL Africa Fellowship Program: Cultivating Leaders in Foundational Learning <[read article](#)>
- 5 How Play-Based Learning is Changing Classrooms <[read article](#)>
- 6 Designing for Responsiveness: What we Learned from Piloting Targeted Instruction Tools in Nigeria and Botswana <[read article](#)>

Media Mentions

- 1 **thenationonlineng.net** (Aug 2024) FLN Seminar Nigeria: Prioritizing foundational learning through government-led models <[link](#)>
- 2 **thenationonlineng.net** (Mar 2025) Oando Foundation to enhance literacy, numeracy in Nigeria <[link](#)>
- 3 **newafricanmagazine.com** (Feb 2025) Tackling Africa's foundational learning crisis <[link](#)>
- 4 **africanbusiness** (Feb 2025) Tackling Africa's foundational learning crisis - <[link](#)>
- 5 **iAfrica** (Feb 2025) Africa's Fresh Strategy to Improve Foundational Learning - <[link](#)>
- 6 **MacArthur Foundation (Press Release)** (April 2025) Pratham USA-led Consortium Named Finalist in \$100M Global Challenge - <[link](#)>
- 7 **Blog:** (Jan 2025) Six insights on implementation challenges at scale – and how to fix them - <[link](#)>

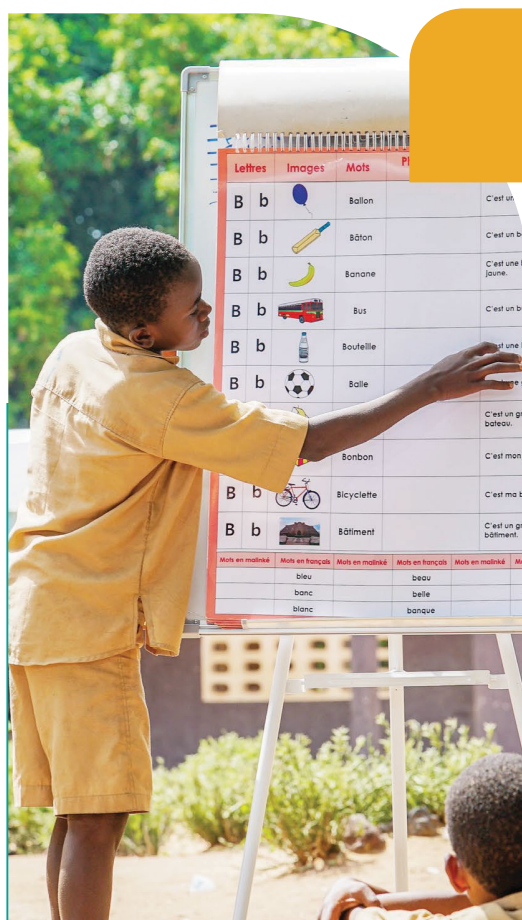
Research on TaRL supported by TaRL Africa

- 1 mixed-method research on what motivates Zambian teachers to adopt new teaching methods
[Comparative Education Review](#)



TaRL L2F2 teacher supporting a child to learn reading at Central Primary School, Demsa, Nigeria

**Government-Led.
Evidence-Driven.
Child-Focused.**



Teaching at the
Right Level Africa

CONTACT US

Riverina Court, Watermark Business Park, Nairobi- Kenya.
P.O 2925-00502, Karen, Tel: +254 111 048 702
E: info@teachingattherightlevel.org

Social Networks

X: [@TaRL_Africa](https://twitter.com/TaRL_Africa) | LinkedIn: [Teaching at the Right Level Africa](https://www.linkedin.com/company/teaching-at-the-right-level-africa/)
Youtube: [@TeachingattheRightLevel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)