



Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity



President Uhuru Kenyatta listens to pupils read aloud from Tusome textbooks.

Funding Level:
\$53.8 million

Duration:
August 2014 – July 2019

Activity Goals:

- Improve the reading skills of the approximately 5.4 million individual Kenyan children beginning primary school during the 2015 - 2019 school years
- Improve the English and Kiswahili skills of primary school children in the approximately 23,500 formal and alternative basic education institutions across the country
- Build the capacity of 70,000 primary school teachers, over 1,100 Curriculum Support Officers, 67 coaches for non-formal schools, and 300 senior education personnel.

Activity Impact by early 2016:

- More than 7 million new textbooks were printed and distributed to schools
- 1,110 Curriculum Support Officers were trained on the new curriculum in 47 counties
- 23,500 head teachers and 70,000 teachers were trained on the new curriculum
- Learning materials for students with special needs were developed

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The *Tusome* (“Let’s Read” in Kiswahili) Early Grade Reading activity is a flagship partnership launched in 2015 between USAID and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST). *Tusome*, now being implemented through Ministry systems in every primary school in the country, will improve the reading skills of 5.4 million pupils. The *Tusome* technical approach employs research-driven learning materials, proven teaching methodologies and a cutting edge tablet-based feedback and monitoring system implanted by MOEST officials. The program is also being introduced in 1,000 Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training (APBET) institutions in Kenya.

The *Tusome* design is built from a rigorous multi-stakeholder pilot with investments from the Ministry, USAID, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID). Twice the percentage of pupils in pilot schools were able to read at national literacy benchmarks from 2011-2014. The pilot program introduced state-of-the-art teaching methods, technology, learning materials and teachers’ guides for improved literacy in English and Kiswahili. Based on the statistical evidence, the Ministry and USAID have forged an historic partnership to jointly scale up and roll out the program nationwide.

ACTIVITY AREAS

Tusome increases the availability and use of appropriate textbooks and learning materials to support literacy development and foster a culture of reading in the schools and the country at large. Each student receives his or her own textbook and over 16 million books will be developed and distributed over the next five years. Consequently, Kenya is one of the only countries in sub-Saharan Africa with a 1:1 pupil textbook ratio. Additional learning materials for special needs learners are also in development.

Tusome trains MOEST Curriculum Support officers (CSOs), head teachers, teachers, and instructional coaches in proven learning techniques. The trainings are designed to give participants practical experience through classroom-based experiential learning. Head teachers are trained to provide instructional leadership for their schools while managing the development and utilization of the new learning materials.

CSOs provide teaching support to teachers within a cluster or zone as do instructional coaches in APBET institutions (low cost private schools). Both CSOs and coaches build pedagogical skills

Key Partners:

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST), United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development, Kenya National Examinations Council, Kenya Institute of Special Education

Implementing Partner:

RTI International

Activity Locations:

Nationwide

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in critical technical areas such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, lesson planning, and curriculum coverage.

Training for CSOs and instructional coaches focuses on delivering literacy lessons using the direct instruction methodology, a teaching approach that uses straightforward, explicit teaching techniques to improve literacy skills.

The activity also trains senior county and national education leaders in the new reading techniques, and addresses gaps in relevant laws, policies, strategies, and regulations and their impact on early-grade reading. To create reading champions and foster accountability throughout the system, real time learner performance data is now uploaded and made available to local and national education stakeholders.

Tusome includes two special funds to support reading outcomes: the Youth Fund and the Partnership Fund. The Youth Fund empowers local youth groups to work with younger children to improve reading skills. The Partnership Fund links public and private-sector partners to lead local reading programs and instill a reading culture in their respective communities.

ACTIVITY IMPACT

Emily Okoth is a Class One teacher at Ngata Primary School in Nakuru County. Before the Tusome training, she used traditional teaching methods, such as lecturing, repetition, copying from the board or having the class respond as a chorus. Many of her pupils struggled with reading – few achieved fluency.

Tusome technical training and the array of textbooks and learning materials have transformed the way she teaches and the overall learning environment. Her pupils now enjoy her lessons and are better able to understand the materials. Three of her pupils reached national literacy benchmarks after only several months of instruction – the others are closing in on the fluency goal. Inspired, Ms. Okoth adapted the new teaching methods to work with older students who never learned to read in primary school.

Ms. Okoth's success and personal drive is attributed to the inspiration of seeing her young students quickly grasp the fundamentals of reading and thrive in her classroom.