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HUMAN  
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**Empowering  
Education  
in Africa**



# The Foundational Learning Starter Pack

Guide to support newly appointed and current Ministers in charge of foundational learning and the broader African foundational learning/education community.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

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### Overview and Purpose of the Starter Pack



The Foundational Learning (FL) Starter Pack is a comprehensive guide to support newly appointed and current Ministers in charge of foundational learning and the broader African foundational learning/education community. It aims to enhance foundational learning across the continent, ensuring children acquire critical literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills. This sourcebook is a collaborative effort involving African countries, the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), Human Capital Africa (HCA), and development partners. The Starter Pack embodies a shared commitment to improving educational outcomes and addressing the unique challenges faced by the continent. By consolidating best practices, research, and actionable insights, the Starter Pack aims to empower policymakers and educational leaders to devise and implement effective foundational learning reforms in their countries.



## Foundational Learning Landscape in Africa

The landscape of foundational learning in Africa presents a complex interplay of progress and ongoing challenges. Over the past two decades, significant continental achievements have provided a strong foundation for further educational reforms and initiatives. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, [net enrolment in primary schools has increased](#), reaching 79% in 2018, up from 60% in 2000. This increase demonstrates a continent-wide commitment to improving access to education. Additionally, strides toward gender parity in primary education have been noteworthy. According to the [2023 Global Gender Gap Report](#), significant progress has been made in closing the gender gap by more than 5% in many African regions since 2006, reflecting concerted efforts to ensure girls have equitable access to education.

The African Union's [Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 \(CESA 16-25\)](#) marks a crucial step towards unified educational reform and improvement across the continent. This strategy addresses diverse educational needs while setting a clear direction for member states. Moreover, reducing the number of out-of-school children showcases effective targeting and resource allocation. In about half of the African countries, the [out-of-school rate](#) among primary school-age children is now less than 10%. Programs aimed at marginalized communities, including nomadic populations and children in conflict zones, have been instrumental in achieving this decline. That, however, does not reflect the huge disparity at the country level for this indicator.

Despite these achievements, foundational learning outcomes remain an area of significant concern. [The 2022 Spotlight Report](#) from the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM-R) underlines a critical challenge: 89% of school-aged children in Africa enrolled in schools cannot read basic texts by age 10. This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need for improvement in the quality of education and casts a shadow on the prospects of these children and the continent at large.

While considerable achievements have been made in increasing access to education and advancing towards gender parity, the quality of foundational learning remains a pressing issue that requires immediate attention and action. These achievements, while notable, do not mask the significant work still needed to ensure that all children in Africa have access to quality foundational learning.

## II. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

### Key Challenges Faced by Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa



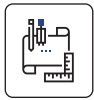
The pursuit of improving foundational learning in Sub-Saharan Africa is fraught with challenges that impede the effectiveness of educational strategies and outcomes. These challenges can be broadly categorized into pedagogical, learning, delivery, and managerial.



### Pedagogical and Learning Challenges

- **Inadequate Teacher Material and Teaching Methodologies:** The region's lack of appropriate teaching materials and methodologies is pervasive. Many educators lack the necessary resources or training to employ modern, evidence-based teaching methods, impacting the quality of education delivered.
- **Inadequate Learning Material:** Students often face significant barriers to learning due to insufficient or outdated educational materials. The need for textbooks, educational tools, and other learning resources hampers their ability to engage with the curriculum effectively.
- **Poor Teacher Recruitment and Deployment Practices and Low Teacher Retention:** Challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers also compromise the effectiveness of educational systems. Issues such as non-competitive salaries, inadequate professional development opportunities, and poor working conditions lead to high turnover rates and a shortage of experienced educators.
- **Low Student Progression Rates:** Compounded by the factors mentioned above, student progression rates remain low. Many students repeat grades or drop out entirely, diminishing the educational system's efficiency and undermining efforts to improve foundational learning.





## Delivery and Managerial Challenges

- **Resourcing:** Financial constraints pose a significant hurdle to educational improvement, with insufficient funding leading to deficient infrastructure and subpar teacher training programs. Many schools lack basic facilities, and teachers often receive inadequate preparation for the classroom.
- **Poor Quality of Teacher Training:** Many of these programs are outdated, lack resources, and are not aligned with modern pedagogical standards or the specific needs of the local context. As a result, teachers are often ill-prepared to manage classrooms, engage students effectively, or implement contemporary teaching strategies. This inadequate training undermines teachers' confidence and ability to deliver quality education, directly affecting student learning outcomes.
- **Coordinating FL Interventions Implemented by Partners:** The landscape of foundational learning interventions is often fragmented, with various stakeholders operating independently. This lack of coordination can lead to duplicated efforts, wasted resources, and disjointed student educational experiences.
- **Ineffective/Misinformed Policy and Planning:** Policies and plans not grounded in local realities or backed by empirical evidence can lead to ineffective educational strategies. Misalignment between policy objectives and actual needs on the ground further exacerbates the challenges faced by educational systems.
- **Large Early Grade Class Sizes:** Overcrowded classrooms can impede effective teaching and learning. Large class sizes can make child-centered learning and individualized instruction difficult. As per [UIS](#), many African countries have primary class sizes as large as 50 students or more. While this is a significant challenge in the context of a short supply of teachers, it is crucial for policymakers and implementers to have an understanding of class size patterns, when driving policy reform or administering a classroom intervention.
- **Availability of Learning Data and Monitoring:** The absence of systematic data collection and monitoring mechanisms makes it challenging to assess the educational landscape accurately, identify students' needs,



and understand the efficacy of existing teaching methodologies and materials. Without robust learning data, educators and policymakers are navigating in the dark, making it difficult to target interventions effectively and improve educational outcomes.

- **Use of Learning Data in Progress Review Routines:** Even where data is available, its use in progress reviews and decision-making processes is often limited. The potential of learning data to inform educational strategies, policy adjustments, and teacher support mechanisms is vastly underutilized. There is a pressing need for systems that can interpret and utilize this data effectively. This involves collecting and analyzing data and ensuring it is integrated into regular review routines. Effective use of learning data can help set realistic educational goals, tailor teaching approaches to meet student needs, and foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within educational institutions.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes investing in teacher training, improving educational infrastructure, fostering better stakeholder coordination, and implementing data-driven policies. While this document prescribes a set of proven strategies and tools to drive foundational learning reform, it is crucial that Ministers and political leadership also coordinate closely with their Ministry staff and national departments to assess past and present reform efforts. This will allow countries to adopt both a hyper-contextualized and evidence-based approach to reform. By tackling the aforementioned challenges, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can create more effective and resilient educational systems that can provide quality foundational learning for all children.



### III. FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING 101

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#### What is Foundational Learning?

Foundational learning pertains to fundamental abilities such as literacy and numeracy and transferable skills such as socio-emotional skills. It is crucial because it provides learners the necessary groundwork to further build knowledge and expertise in various areas. You can read more about [foundational learning](#).

#### Significance of foundational literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional learning in shaping long-term socio-economic outcome?

Foundational literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning significantly impact long-term socio-economic outcomes by providing individuals with essential skills and competencies necessary for success. These skills are vital for individuals to access further education, secure employment, and actively engage in the workforce. These skills are directly linked [to improved economic opportunities, increased income potential](#), and overall [socio-emotional well-being](#).





## Foundational Learning and SDG 4.1.1

SDG 4.1.1 is an essential indicator of basic foundational learning that assesses children's reading and mathematics ability in the early grades. The recent downgrade of this indicator from Tier 1 to Tier 2 raises concerns about the potential reduction in emphasis on mastering these critical skills. However, the importance of fundamental learning cannot be overstated because it serves as the cornerstone for academic success and socio-economic advancement. The data collected through SDG 4.1.1 is crucial for identifying challenges and guiding early interventions to support learners falling behind. Urgent collaborative efforts within the education community are needed to reinforce the [importance of this indicator](#) and support countries in overcoming some of the obstacles that have hindered the reporting on this indicator. Chief among these are costs associated with carrying out country-wide learning assessments and the capacity to collect and analyze the data from these assessments. Many African countries require support to capacitate their assessment bodies to generate quality, comparable, and country-specific data, monitor curriculum implementation and improve the capacity of teachers through teacher capacity building. To read more [On the way forward for SDG indicator 4.1.1a: supporting countries' needs.](#)



## Foundational Learning and CESA 16-25

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25) addresses foundational learning implicitly within the discussion of pre-primary and primary education. It highlights the critical role of pre-primary education as the foundation for future learning and training. It also recognizes challenges such as disparities, poor management, and the lack of clear curriculum and linkages with primary education. In primary education, CESA acknowledges advances in expanding access but emphasizes persistent challenges related to quality and equity, including materials. CESA underscores the importance of basic literacy and numeracy skills as essential components of the education system. Addressing these challenges can strengthen foundational learning and improve outcomes for African children and young people. You can read more about [CESA 16-25](#).

## IV. COMPONENTS OF FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

The following section will focus on components of foundational learning.



### Literacy - Overview and indicators

Literacy refers to the ability to read, write, and comprehend written language. It is crucial for assessing and understanding various subjects across the curriculum.

*Indicators:* the ability to recognize letters, decode words, and comprehend texts.



### Numeracy - Overview and indicators

Numeracy encompasses basic mathematics skills such as counting, arithmetic operations, understanding numerical concepts, and problem-solving abilities.

*Indicators:* numbers recognition and counting, as well as basic arithmetic skills (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division).



### Social and emotional - Overview and indicators

Research in neuroscience tells us that learning is social, emotional, and academic. Schools and classrooms must address children's social and emotional learning (SEL) needs. Social and emotional development includes the social behaviors needed to successfully establish and maintain relationships with teachers and peers (Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe & Foster, 2014) and adaptive behavior to effectively manage emotions and behaviors in a personal manner and cope with challenging situations (Montroy et al., 2014). The [2023 Organization for Economic Co-operation Development \(OECD\) report highlights](#) social and emotional skills that are highly teachable and good predictors of later life outcomes.

Social and emotional development involves understanding and controlling emotions and navigating social interactions. Fostering a positive classroom atmosphere that supports learning and personal development is vital.

Indicators: the ability to establish effective and positive peer relationships, the ability to manage emotions, promote self-control and resilience in the face of challenges; possess skills to initiate and maintain positive interactions with others; and demonstrate empathy and understanding towards peers, fostering positive relationships and a supportive classroom community. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6433388/>

## V. SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES AT SCALE

The primary objective of this section is to assign the development of pieces on interventions and case studies to partners according to their expertise and comprehension of the subject matter.



### Overview of African-led initiatives

#### *Remedial Learning Programmes (TaRL, Catch-up)*

Various African countries have adapted [The Teaching at the Right Level \(TaRL\) approach](#) to their respective contexts. The approach improves foundational literacy and numeracy skills of learners by identifying learners without basic literacy and numeracy skills and targeting instruction at each child's specific learning level. The TaRL programmes across the continent aim to transform educational systems from mere schooling to effective learning, with assessment playing a crucial role in improving each child's learning outcomes. Read up on [the effectiveness of TaRL](#).

Zambia is one of the countries that has made great strides with the TaRL approach. The Catch-Up programme, based on the TaRL approach, is being scaled up in Zambia to address low learning levels among primary school learners in grades 3-5. With the support of partners like VVOB, UNICEF, IPA, J-PAL, USAID, and Pratham, Zambia has successfully piloted the Catch Up and provided evidence of its effectiveness in improving foundational literacy and numeracy learning outcomes. The Zambian Ministry of General Education has partnered with VVOB, TaRL Africa, World Vision, and local communities to implement Catch Up. Read more on Zambia's success story with the [Catch Up programme](#). Aside from Zambia, the approach has been adapted and implemented in [Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Botswana, Madagascar, Niger, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ghana](#).

#### *Structured Pedagogy*

Structured pedagogy is specifically designed, coherent package of investments that works together to improve classroom teaching. While structured pedagogy programs are defined by their variation, the typical structured pedagogy program includes key elements that work together to support quality teaching. Key elements of structured pedagogy programs include the following: 1) student books and materials, typically at a 1:1 ratio; 2) teachers' guides that provide daily lesson plans for teachers at various levels of specificity; 3) teacher training organized to reinforce specific skills in teaching the lessons, and 4) ongoing support to teachers implementing the structured pedagogy program, typically including coaching and or communities of practice ([Science of Teaching, 2024](#)).



You can read more on [structured pedagogy](#) and [what it takes to implement a successful structured pedagogy programme](#). African countries that have successfully implemented this approach are Benin, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and Senegal. [This report](#) provides nine country examples.

## Literacy Boost Program

Literacy Boost is an evidence-based initiative to enhance literary outcomes, particularly for underperforming children, in diverse programme sites worldwide. The initiative addressed gaps in basic literacy learning by empowering schools, parents, and communities to better support children's literacy development. Rigorous research evidence supports its replicability, scalability, and effectiveness in improving literacy acquisition in various contexts. [The approach](#) can be implemented in two main ways: (a) in formal schools and communities and (b) by adapting it to the national curricular and curricular context. Countries like Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Mozambique and South Africa have implemented this approach. You can access the Literacy Boost programme [toolkit](#). More information on countries that implement the [literacy boost approach](#) can be found here

The following section will focus on components of foundational learning.



## Case Studies of successful African led FL initiatives across the continent



### Case Study 1: The Catch-up program in Zambia

- *Implementation of the Catch Up program in Zambia and evidence supporting its positive impact on students' learning in foundational literacy and numeracy.*

The Catch-Up programme in Zambia, particularly in Luapula province, has efficiently addressed foundational learning challenges magnified by teacher shortages and traditional teaching methods. Despite a challenging student-to-teacher ratio of 78:1 at Kabanda Primary School, devoted educators have embraced the programme's learner-centred approach, significantly improving student outcomes. Through after-school sessions focusing on local-language

teaching of basic skills in language and mathematics, the programme has provided unique learning pathways by grouping learners according to understanding levels rather than age groups. This approach, with individualized assessments to track progress, has resulted in significant enhancements in numeracy skills, with learners now able to read 4-digit numbers accurately [The Catch Programme in Zambia.](#)



## Case Study 2: Tusome in Kenya

- *Insights into how Tusome in Kenya has successfully improved foundational learning and measurable improvements that have been observed.*

Tusome, meaning ‘Let’s Read’ in Swahili, has [successfully enhanced early-grade literacy across the country](#) by leveraging technology and focusing on improving teacher quality. The programme targeted grades 1-3 in all 23,000 Kenyan public schools, providing textbooks and learning materials; training all teachers in the new early-grade literacy pedagogical approaches; training Curriculum Support Officers (CSO’s) in new approaches; and training senior leaders to use Tusome data to identify and address educational gaps. Additionally, through [Ed Tech integration](#), Tusome has facilitated more engaging feedback sessions and significantly improved early-grade literacy outcomes, as evidenced by statistically significant increases in literacy levels reported in evaluations. More information on the Tusome programme in Kenya can be found [here](#).



## Case Study 3: Early Digital Learning Program (ELDP), Mauritius

- *Insights into the successful implementation of educational technology in FL, the Early Digital Learning Programme (ELDP) in Mauritius*

The Early Digital Learning Programme (EDLP) in Mauritius is a collaborative endeavor between the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), and EDCIL, India. The program’s main goal is to incorporate digital technology into primary education, fostering an early culture of IT use and practice suitable for pupils’ developmental levels. It integrates ICT into teaching and learning using adapted tablets in the primary education subsector. These tablets contain digital pedagogical content such as videos and e-books, interactive animations, hands-on activities, drawing, and creativity tools. The strategy requires all primary and secondary schools to have desktop computers in computer labs. The EDLP will promote an early culture of IT usage and practice and improve learning outcomes while adapting to learners’ developmental levels and learning needs. [In 2018](#), the Ministry commissioned and distributed 26,800 tablets and headsets across all primary schools, 250 wireless projectors and screens, and 1,340 rack chargers, a reasonable distribution for a small state. Moreover, all primary and secondary schools have desktop computers in computer labs. The Ministry reported in its [major achievements](#) for 2020 that the Early Digital Learning Programme “has been successfully implemented in Grades 1 to 3.



## Case Study 4: Educational Services Improvement Project (PAPSE in French), Côte d'Ivoire

- *Improving learning outcomes with the PAPSE*

To improve learning outcomes in Côte d'Ivoire, the nation-wide Education Services Improvement Project has focused on, amid other interventions, training primary school teachers to use new teaching methods and material. PAPSE targeted six regions with the country's lowest learning results and highest poverty rates. The project provided pedagogical materials such as “decodable” reading handbooks and “decipherable” maths handbooks for students, teaching guides, assessments for Grades 1 through 3, and observation checklists for school inspectors. Additionally, teachers were trained to use the new teaching materials in the classroom. The initial evaluations exhibit [significant improvement in learning outcomes](#). In treatment schools, Grade 3 students have an average reading score of 29 out of 100 instead of 18 out of 100 in the control schools. Similarly, in math, the performance of Grade 3 students is 12 points higher on average in treatment schools (56 out of 100 as opposed to 44 out of 100). The promising results have led the government to expand the initiative throughout the country.





## V. ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS

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### **Best Practices for Sustainable Funding of FL and Resource Allocation**

Progress in foundational learning will be limited without commensurate funding and resource allocation. The Oslo Summit on Education and the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa affirmed that a significant increase in finance is required to achieve SDG-4 and CESA 16-25.

Evidence shows that underinvestment remains a serious challenge for foundational learning. Only 40% of countries have met the benchmark of allocating 15% of total public expenditure to education. Yet analysis demonstrates that a one percentage point increase in public education allocation to the poorest 20% contributed to between 2.6 – 4.7 percentage point reduction in learning poverty rates. This means pulling 35 million primary school-aged children out of learning poverty.

Funding is driven by political commitment, without which little can be done. It must be matched with commensurate accountability, equity, capacity building, and measurement levels. The Oslo Summit recognizes that efforts must start with ramping domestic funding while leveraging international public finance sources to complement domestic funding. Here are some potential approaches that will help improve foundational learning finance:

- **Optimize domestic budgeting, international aid, and public finance for education:**

The Addis Ababa Declaration encouraged countries to set nationally appropriate benchmarks for funding education. Some recognized metrics endorsed by the Incheon Declaration include 4-6% of GDP allocated to education and 15 – 20% of public expenditure allocated to education. For FL to thrive, countries may consider allocating between 20 – 30% of the education budget to FL. The following practices are also critical in this regard.

- Prioritize those in most need, including disadvantaged communities, those in conflict, unrest, disturbances, etc.
- Increase efficiency and accountability and showcase products of the improved funding.
- Improve donor coordination to reduce duplication, target funding, and integrate available funding into national foundational learning programs.
- Target private funding by creating a special tax on FL infrastructure, which will benefit contributing organizations. Special taxation levied against private FL providers may also ensure the redistribution of resources.
- Seek out and capture CSR efforts and integrate them into national FL programs.
- Invest in policy, advocacy, and support and leverage results and successes to push for more funding.

If leveraged appropriately, a combination of domestic financing, donor coordination and support, international public finance, and local taxation can boost available funds for investment in foundational learning.



### **Leveraging EdTech and scaling successful EdTech interventions**

At the end of the 2022 ADEA Triennale, stakeholders and decision-makers agreed that building resilience in African education was important. This follows the learning losses caused by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The communique issued at the 2023 ADEA High-Level Policy Dialogue Forum encourages the use of technology to improve the delivery of foundational learning. Hence, it is important to seek out, learn about, and contextualize education technologies to improve the delivery of foundational learning.

- **Case Study 1 - Accelerated Learning Program in Kenya.**



In Kenya, the Zizi Afrique Foundation collaborated with civil society partners to implement the Accelerated Learning (AL) initiative, a contextualized version of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL). AL was implemented in three counties in Kenya, reaching 150 public primary schools, 25,271 learners, and 11,389 indirectly through 25 civil society partners in 119 schools. The AL approach applied targeted instruction to support lagging learners is quickly catching up on critical FL skill sets.

During the pandemic, the initiative deployed 1,600 solar-powered radios and SMS-based literacy and numeracy content to the neediest households in this program to ensure learning continuity. At its endline evaluation in 2022, the project had reached 36,660 learners in Kenya directly and indirectly.

- **Case Study 2 - The PraDigi Open Learning Camps in Uttar Pradesh, India**



Following the pandemic in 2020, the state of Uttar Pradesh launched a large-scale EdTech solution called PraDigi Open Learning Camps to bridge the learning gap worsened by the school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative leveraged low-cost technology, including preloaded tablets with TaRL contents distributed to learners across 59,000 villages in the state. Community volunteers hosted learning camps for children aged 3 – 14 who gathered in small groups to learn with the support of facilitators who guided while the simple technology enabled self-paced mastery learning. Also, AI-powered chatbots provide real-time feedback to learners.

The solution reached 3 million learners across 59,000 villages in four months. An endline evaluation showed significantly high foundational learning gains compared to control groups. Over 50% of children mastered at least one foundational learning skill during the camp. This demonstrates how EdTech can improve FL competency in learners. African education stakeholders have committed to integrating digital solutions, including foundational learning, into education delivery. The [African Union Digital Education Strategy](#) articulates a roadmap/framework to integrate digital technology in education, learning, and research. To understand the inherent benefits, it is pertinent for countries to leverage, contextualize, and integrate this approach to help them reach more learners and address learning quality in their domains.

Building teacher capacity to use education technology for learning and addressing infrastructure gaps rank among the biggest challenges to EdTech adoption in most environments. The question of sustainability will focus largely on the affordability of content and hardware that facilitates learning.

## VI. IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The implementation roadmap provides a guide centered around best practices and key learnings distilled from successful foundational learning (FL) interventions, primarily within the African landscape. It is tailored to offer insights and reflective learnings from typical FL interventions' typical stages – from diagnostic assessment to sustainability. The section contains best practices for each stage of

the journey and presents them alongside examples, majorly from within the diverse and complex environments of African education systems. The aim is to highlight proven approaches and solutions that have demonstrated success, thereby offering a valuable resource for policymakers and practitioners looking to implement or enhance FL interventions within similar settings.



### Stage 1: Diagnostic Assessment

The Diagnostic Assessment stage is pivotal for understanding the educational landscape and identifying key areas for intervention. It thoroughly analyzes existing FL capabilities and gaps, encompassing literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills. This stage sets the groundwork for targeted, informed FL program development by highlighting specific needs and challenges within different communities or regions.

In addition to the information provided below, visit this [link](#) and a corresponding YouTube video for more information.

Best Practice	Relevant Example(s)
<p><b>Engage a broad spectrum of FL stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community leaders, CSOs, and NGOs, to ensure all voices are heard and represented.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Botswana</a>, the process of developing the ECD Policy Framework has been highly consultative, with ECD stakeholders ranging from Ministers to parents/caregivers and other key stakeholders in civil society (private sector, academia, non-governmental, and faith-based organizations). It even included interaction with young children, which helped tailor the interventions to specific local needs.</p>



<p><b>Collect diagnostic data and information through diverse sources like community surveys, school performance records, and regional educational reports to comprehensively understand the FL landscape.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Nepal</a>, the government conducted a comprehensive Education Sector Analysis, collecting data from various sources, including household surveys, school performance records, teacher assessments, and regional educational reports. The approach allowed for a multifaceted understanding of the foundational learning (FL) landscape across different regions, identifying disparities in access, quality, and learning outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Analyze and compare FL outcomes across different regions to identify disparities and target interventions effectively</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Tanzania</a>, results from regional assessments highlighted variations in educational needs, guiding targeted intervention strategies.</p>



**Stage 2: Program Design and Development for a structured pedagogy programme.**

Building on the insights from the diagnostic phase, this stage aims to develop a well-rounded, comprehensive approach to foundational learning interventions. This can encompass a variety of strategies, including, but not limited to, structured FL programs, targeted teacher training, community education initiatives, and resource development. The design should be informed by the diagnostic assessments and tailored to meet the specific needs identified within different communities or regions.

For additional reading on program design, please click [here](#) and watch the YouTube video.



Best Practice	Relevant Example(s)
<p><b>Ensure that the FL intervention design process includes input from the entire spectrum of community and educational stakeholders, including but not limited to teachers, parents, students, community leaders, local educational authorities, NGOs, and other relevant parties. This inclusive approach ensures that the interventions are culturally relevant, address the community’s actual needs, and have broader acceptance and support.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Kenya</a>, the PRIMR Initiative (Primary Math and Reading Initiative) engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, teachers, parents, and community leaders, in the development phase of its educational program. This helped tailor interventions to the specific needs and languages of various Kenyan regions. The inclusive design process ensured that the curriculum and teaching materials were well adapted to the local context, contributing to the program’s success.</p>
<p><b>Engage with local educators, curriculum developers, and community stakeholders to create or enhance learning materials that are culturally relevant, age-appropriate, and aligned with local educational standards.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In the Philippines</a>, the Department of Education worked with teachers and local communities to develop the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) curriculum, enhancing student comprehension and participation using the learners’ first language. This approach has been shown to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills significantly.</p>
<p><b>Design and implement comprehensive training modules for teachers that focus on innovative teaching methodologies, classroom management, and specific strategies for improving FL outcomes</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Ghana</a>, the Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL) initiative revolutionized teacher education through competency-based training modules, significantly enhancing teachers’ ability to improve students’ foundational skills.</p>





<p><b>Develop and implement interventions that involve parents, local leaders, and other community members in children’s foundational learning.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Brazil</a>, the Escola da Terra project trains rural educators and involves community members in educational activities, strengthening the school-community link and enhancing students’ foundational learning experiences.</p>
<p><b>Where possible, technology can enhance learning outcomes through digital literacy programs, educational apps, or online learning platforms that complement traditional teaching methods.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In India</a>, the Pratham Education Foundation’s digital initiatives use tablets and mobile apps to support foundational language and math skills, demonstrating significant improvements in learning outcomes.</p>



### Stage 3: Implementation

This stage involves applying designed foundational learning interventions, ideally first within a pilot context to allow for iterative improvements before broader scaling. Effective implementation requires not just logistical planning and resource distribution but also a continued emphasis on stakeholder engagement and adaptability to feedback.

Best Practice	Relevant Example(s)
<p><b>Execute the foundational learning interventions with active involvement from local educators, community members, and stakeholders. Utilize ongoing feedback mechanisms to make real-time adjustments.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Ethiopia</a>, the General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP) implemented FL interventions with continuous input from school communities and local education groups, allowing for adjustments based on direct classroom experiences and outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Scale interventions gradually, ensuring each new phase is supported with adequate training, resources, and monitoring based on lessons learned from earlier phases.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Tanzania</a>, the BRAC Play Lab project expanded its pre-primary education model by integrating feedback from initial implementations into each subsequent scaling phase, ensuring sustainability and context relevance.</p>
<p><b>Maintain transparent and multi-channel communication with all stakeholders throughout the implementation and scaling phases to ensure continuous buy-in and support.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Tanzania</a>, GPE's Literacy and Numeracy Education Support (LANES) program demonstrated that effective communication strategies and strong alignment with all stakeholders (parents, CSOs, the community) across scaling phases is crucial to any reform's success.</p>



## Stage 4: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Continuous assessment is crucial to understanding the effectiveness of foundational learning interventions and informing necessary program adjustments. This stage involves systematic data collection and analysis to assess the interventions' impact and efficiency. A useful how-to-guide can be found here and more information on data systems and accountability [here](#).

Best Practice	Relevant Example(s)
<p><b>Develop and maintain robust monitoring systems that track progress against established benchmarks, incorporating feedback from educators, students, and communities.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Ghana</a>, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is employed to systematically collect, analyze, and report educational data. This system tracks various indicators, from enrollment figures to teacher qualifications, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the educational landscape. EMIS's feedback mechanisms enable educators and administrators at all levels to access and utilize data for informed decision-making and identifying areas needing attention and improvement.</p>
<p><b>Where possible, engage independent evaluators and community stakeholders in assessing the interventions, ensuring that evaluations are transparent, unbiased, and actionable.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda</a>, the Twaweza initiative, through its Uwezo annual learning assessment, involves community members and independent evaluators in assessing children's literacy and numeracy skills across the country. This large-scale assessment, carried out by local volunteers, is designed to provide a transparent and comprehensive overview of foundational learning outcomes in various regions.</p>



<p><b>Use evaluation outcomes to refine and improve FL interventions, adopting a cycle of continuous improvement that responds to the identified needs and challenges.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Zambia</a>, the Read to Succeed program regularly adjusted its teaching methods and materials based on ongoing assessments and teacher feedback, leading to sustained improvements in student learning.</p>
<p><b>Establish regular FL review routines at the national and subnational level chaired by the competent authority (eg: Minister of Education/ Permanent Secretary at National level and District Education Manager at District level) to ensure accountability and corrective action</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Rwanda</a>, the Ministry of Education implements a structured review process through its Joint Reviews of the Education Sector (JRES), which occur biannually, with sessions focusing on backward and forward-looking analysis. The backward-looking review evaluates past performance against the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) targets and budget execution, while the forward-looking session sets future targets and policy directions. Additionally, at the district level, Rwanda ensures regular monitoring of the District Development Plan (DDP) through Joint Action Forums, which foster collaboration between District Education Officers, school inspectors, and central education bodies, enhancing local accountability and responsiveness in learning interventions.</p>



### Stage 5: Sustainability and Scale-up

The final stage aims to ensure the long-term viability of foundational learning interventions and their integration into broader educational frameworks. This includes securing sustained support, embedding successful practices into national policies, and planning to expand to new regions or populations.

In addition to the information provided below, you can reference this [how-to-guide](#) and this [YouTube video](#).



Best Practice	Relevant Example(s)
<p><b>Work with government bodies and policy-makers to incorporate successful foundational learning practices into the national education curriculum and policies.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Kenya</a>, the Tusome literacy programme’s successful strategies were integrated into the national curriculum, supported by government policy and funding.</p>
<p><b>Develop partnerships with the government, international donors, and the private sector to ensure diverse and sustainable funding for scaling and maintaining FL interventions.</b></p>	<p><b>In Malawi</b>, the Malawi Education Reform Programme (MERP), in collaboration with the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), enabled the Government to expand the School Improvement Grant (SIG) per school. It also facilitates the construction of 10,900 cost-effective classrooms and 1,000 sanitation blocks in 3,553 public primary schools in the country.</p>
<p><b>Forge strategic partnerships with NGOs, community organizations, and private entities to expand the reach and depth of foundational learning interventions.</b></p>	<p><a href="#">In Senegal</a>, the Lecture Pour Tous program partnered with various international and local organizations to enhance teacher training and resources and improve literacy rates among primary school students.</p>

In addition to the above stages of change, it is important to note that to support the above process, governments should implement “small wins” that can be implemented in the short and medium term and that are cost-efficient. These will help build confidence in the change process. Governments need to persistently align policy infrastructure. This includes initial teacher education, finance and budgeting, textbook and other learning resource policies, systemic evaluation, in-service professional development, middle-tier support (e.g., provincial, district, and county-level education officials) and curriculum policy reform, among others.

## VII. CALL TO ACTION

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### Next Steps for Heads of States, Ministers, Supporting Partners



Ministers of Education in Africa are committed to improving foundational learning. At various fora, they have committed to advancing foundational learning in their countries. Some of these forums include the Transforming Education Summit in New York in September 2023, the [Ministerial Declaration](#) at ADEA Triennale in Mauritius in November 2022, the [Ministerial Communiqué](#) at the High-Level Dialogue Forum in Lusaka, Zambia, in 2023, and more recently, the [Call to Action](#) during the pre-AU Summit roundtable meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2024. Commitment to these declarations helps galvanize efforts on foundational learning at country and continental levels by ensuring the governments, partners, and all stakeholders in education mobilize the requisite inputs to ensure that these commitments are actualized. Accountability amongst countries on the continent is also enhanced, and peer learning is enhanced. Through the [Africa Foundational Learning Ministerial Coalition](#), Ministers of Education leverage peer learning to track their progress, and challenges, share knowledge, and agree on the way forward for foundational learning in their respective countries and on the continent.





## VIII. APPENDIX

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Recommended Materials and Resources (including Guides/manuals, Podcasts, Webinars, Research articles)

1. [New education “Smart Buys” report outlines how cost-effectively supporting teachers and parents can lead to significant learning improvements \(worldbank.org\)](#)
2. [Making education in Africa fit for the 21st century | Blog | Global Partnership for Education](#)
3. [Teaching methodology to support foundational learning in Africa - UNESCO Digital Library](#)
4. [Improving foundational learning in Tanzania through Teacher rewards | VoxDev](#)
5. [GEEAP-Report-Smart-Buys-2023-final.pdf \(worldbank.org\)](#)
6. [Literacy Boost: Common approaches | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)
7. Tusome Programme in Kenya: [PowerPoint Presentation \(edu-links.org\)](#)
8. [Piper, Ben\\_CIES 2018\\_Understanding whether & how Tusome program worked.pdf \(ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)
9. <https://poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/presentation/Reading-Outcomes-for-the-Blind-and-the-Deaf-Tusome-Special-Needs-Education-Baseline-Dunston-Kwayumba.pdf>
10. [Scaling up successfully: Lessons from Kenya's Tusome national literacy program | Journal of Educational Change \(springer.com\)](#)
11. [Is It Possible to Improve Learning at Scale? Reflections on the Process of Identifying Large-Scale Successful Education Interventions | Center For Global Development \(cgdev.org\)](#)
12. [Pre-service training: https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Pre-service-Teacher-Education-HTG.pdf](#)



13. [In-service training: https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SP\\_5\\_Teacher-Professional-Dev.-Teacher-Training-1\\_ed-1.pdf](https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SP_5_Teacher-Professional-Dev.-Teacher-Training-1_ed-1.pdf)
14. [Ongoing support: https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SP\\_6\\_Teacher-Professional-Dev-Ongoing-Teacher-Support.pdf](https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/SP_6_Teacher-Professional-Dev-Ongoing-Teacher-Support.pdf)
15. [https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Remediation-How-To-Guide\\_15AUG23.pdf](https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Remediation-How-To-Guide_15AUG23.pdf)
16. [https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PROJ\\_12\\_SoT-Practical-Guide-for-Numeracy\\_15AUG23-1.pdf](https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PROJ_12_SoT-Practical-Guide-for-Numeracy_15AUG23-1.pdf)
17. <https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en/2022-spotlight-africa>
18. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383289>
19. <https://ampl.uis.unesco.org/>
20. [Measure what matters: Making progress on a common framework to measure learning | Blog | Global Partnership for Education](#)
21. <https://www.adeanet.org/en/publications/equipping-teachers-improve-foundational-learning-across-africa>
22. [Spotlight on basic education completion and foundational learning in Africa | ADEA \(adeanet.org\)](#)
23. [Quality: Addressing the learning crisis | International Institute for Educational Planning \(unesco.org\)](#)
24. [Guidebook on evidence-based SEL interventions and different modalities: https://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/sel\\_guidebook\\_2023\\_rti-international.pdf](#)
25. [OECD's report on the most highly teachable Social and emotional skills and which skills have the highest predictor of later life outcomes: ba34f086-en.pdf \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)



## Online Learning Platforms

Target Audience	Resource	Description	Country/ Region
<b>Students</b>	<b>Eneza Education</b>	Mobile education platform with local content available via SMS, web, and smartphones.	Kenya
	<b>Rethink Education</b>	Mobile platform for short, interactive lessons in math and science.	South Africa
	<b>Prepclass</b>	Provides content relevant to local exams with practice and test strategies.	Nigeria
	<b>Chalkboard Education</b>	Offers online courses accessible on mobile phones, both online and offline.	Ghana
	<b>Ubongo</b>	Delivers localized learning to African families at low cost and massive scale.	Tanzania
	<b>Ecampus</b>	Provides on-demand exam preparation with a user-friendly interface.	Ghana
	<b>eLimu</b>	Digital educational content provider, also offering children's apps.	Kenya
	<b>Scholar X</b>	The platform for finding scholarships also includes educational content.	Nigeria
	<b>Student Hub</b>	Offers online courses with local content.	South Africa
	<b>Tuteria</b>	Connects students with tutors nearby.	Nigeria



<b>Teachers</b>	<b>TESSA</b>	Wide range of teaching resources across various subjects and methodologies.	Pan-Africa
	<b>UNESCO Classroom and UNESCO Campus</b>	Platforms offering resources and training for teacher institutions.	Global
	<b>KOPANO Platform</b>	Community of practice offering teaching and learning materials and forums.	Namibia
Ministry of Education/ National and Sub-National Level Management Teams	<b>IICBA</b>	Provides resources and research materials to improve teacher education and support policy development.	Africa
	<b>THINK Digital College</b>	Virtual school offers an alternative education system that is flexible and cost-effective.	South Africa

## IX. GLOSSARY OF TERMS



Term	Definition
<b>Capacity building</b>	Efforts to improve educational effectiveness through professional development, resource allocation, and organizational management improvements.
<b>Curriculum</b>	A set course of study that defines what students should learn, how they will learn it, and possibly how that learning will be assessed.
<b>Equity in education</b>	A re-assessment and re-distribution of resources (human, institutional, and financial) in education, targeted at reducing or eliminating systemic inequality in outcomes. In education, this means that regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background, or family income, every learner can access the resources and education they need (USAID, 2022).
<b>Foundational Learning (FL)</b>	Development of fundamental abilities such as literacy and numeracy, along with transferable skills like socio-emotional skills, essential for further learning and development.
<b>Inclusive education</b>	An educational approach that includes all children in the learning process, regardless of their conditions. It is particularly significant for children with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds.



<b>Literacy</b>	The ability to read, write, and understand written content, essential for accessing further educational opportunities and personal and socio-economic development.
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation (M&amp;E)</b>	The process of systematically collecting data on specified indicators to assess the progress and effectiveness of educational interventions.
<b>Numeracy</b>	The ability to use and understand numbers, encompassing basic arithmetic operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.
<b>Pedagogy</b>	The art or practice of teaching, involving instructional techniques and strategies used to impart knowledge or skills to students.
<b>Socio-emotional skills</b>	Skills enabling individuals to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and effectively navigate social environments.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Individuals or groups with an interest in the decisions or activities of an educational system, including teachers, parents, students, community leaders, and authorities.
<b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)</b>	A set of 17 global goals set by the United Nations for the year 2030, with SDG 4 focused on education.



## X. LIST OF ACRONYMS

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<b>ADEA</b>	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
<b>AL</b>	Accelerated Learning
<b>CESA</b>	
<b>16-25</b>	Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisations
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EDLP</b>	Early Digital Learning Programme
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>FL</b>	Foundational Learning
<b>GEQIP</b>	General Education Quality Improvement Programme
<b>GEM-R</b>	Global Education Monitoring Report
<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education
<b>HCA</b>	Human Capital Africa
<b>IICBA</b>	International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa
<b>IPA</b>	Innovations for Poverty Action
<b>J-PAL</b>	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
<b>MTB-MLE</b>	Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PAPSE</b>	Programme d'Amélioration des Performances du Système Éducatif (Educational Services Improvement Project in French)
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIG</b>	School Improvement Grant
<b>SOT</b>	Science of Teaching
<b>TaRL</b>	Teaching at the Right Level
<b>T-TEL</b>	Transforming Teacher Education and Learning
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development



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HUMAN  
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