



teaching at
the right level



Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL): The Story of Catch Up in Zambia

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Introduction to TaRL

Problem: Even after 3 years or more of schooling, children unable to read simple text and perform basic math operations

% Children in Grades 3-5 at different reading levels Zambia Catch Up Baseline Data					
Level	Beginner	Letter	Word	Para	Story
Grades III-V	Cannot recognize letters as yet	Can recognize letters but not read words	Can read words but not sentences	Can read sentences at Grade I level	Can read text at Grade II level or higher
2016	33%	21%	11%	12%	22%
2018	25%	21%	14%	13%	27%
2019	30%	19%	16%	15%	20%

Look at the challenge that teachers in primary grades face.

The overall reading levels are low, and the tail of the distribution is long and varied. Math is often worse.

Who should the teacher teach? What should be taught?

Note: This data is from Catch Up program implementation baselines covering schools in Eastern & Southern province with the number of schools increasing over time, 80 in 2016, 470 in 2018 and 1100 in 2019

Possible Solution: Teaching at the Right Level can help the picture to change quickly in classrooms

Catch Up Program Zambia 2019: % Children at different reading levels 764 schools: 2 provinces					
Level	Beginner	Letter	Word	Para	Story
Grades III-V	Cannot recognize letters as yet	Can recognize letters but not read words	Can read words but not sentences	Can read sentences at Grade I level	Can read text at Grade II level or higher
Baseline	33%	18%	15%	15%	20%
Midline	18%	20%	18%	16%	27%
Endline	9%	17%	19%	20%	36%

Data from close to ~800 schools in Zambia shows big shifts in children able to read, and consequently reductions in those at the lowest levels of reading

~60 hours of implementation

By allocating time to foundational skills, using data and activities with a focus on outcomes, and uniform action – change is possible

Today the Zambian government is developing a plan to go to national scale

TaRL transforms practice in many ways, and helps shift the system from schooling for all towards learning for all

	'Business as usual'	Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)
Goal & Assessment	Goal is to complete the grade level textbook or curriculum. Assessments aligned with curriculum and often complex.	Goal is to ensure basic foundational skills for all, with clearly articulated goals for basic reading and math.
Training & Mentoring	Minimal continuous professional development or targeted coaching for teachers; traditionally non-practitioner trainers.	Practical training of leaders & instructors on the approach with practice periods – develop “leaders of practice”
Grouping	Full class assembled together by grade level. Whole class teaching with little room for adjusting teaching to suit children’s needs.	Children grouped by learning level rather than by grade. Children move quickly from one group to the next as their learning progresses.
Teaching & Activities	Teachers focus mainly on whole-class instruction ('Chalk and Talk' or textbook-driven), focus on curriculum leads to teaching to the 'top of the class'.	Teachers use simple and engaging daily learning activities that can be adapted as children progress. Students engage in activities in large groups, small groups, and individually.
Measurement, Monitoring & Review	Pen and paper assessment done at the beginning and end of a learning unit. Minimal data analysis to understand student learning or adjust teaching before moving to the next learning unit.	Simple assessment to plan, and similar assessment used periodically to track student progress, review data, and make decisions on child progress and program design. Quick decision making to inform program delivery and future course.

TaRL was developed through a process of experimentation and refinement

Proof of concept



2001-2003

“Balsakhi” programme;
Pratham community volunteer
“pull out” remedial programme
in urban schools



2005-2006

Village volunteers conducted
community classes for rural
primary school children

Identifying a scalable model in India



2012-2014

Teacher-led model, on-site mentoring by
govt academic officials; Learning camps in
govt primary schools, led by Pratham
teams and supported by village volunteers



2008 – 2010

In-school one-month govt teacher-led
summer camp with support from village
volunteers; in-school govt teacher-led
learning improvement program & support
from volunteers

Pilots and scale-ups in Africa



2016-

Catch Up piloted in Zambia
in 2016 and it continues to
grow (2000+ schools in
2021)



2018-

PEC piloted in Ivory
Coast in 2018 and
continues to grow
(1,000 schools in 2021)



2018-

Borno State
government piloted
TaRL and it continues
to grow



The Zambia Story

Catch Up program in Zambia



Target group: Grades 3 to 5 / Age 8 to 10++

Language(s): Local languages (e.g. Ibibemba...)

Type of schools: Government schools

Duration: 2 terms every academic year, Jan-July



Timing and Modality : during school day, outside class hours

1 hour of instruction daily, language or math



Instructors: school teachers

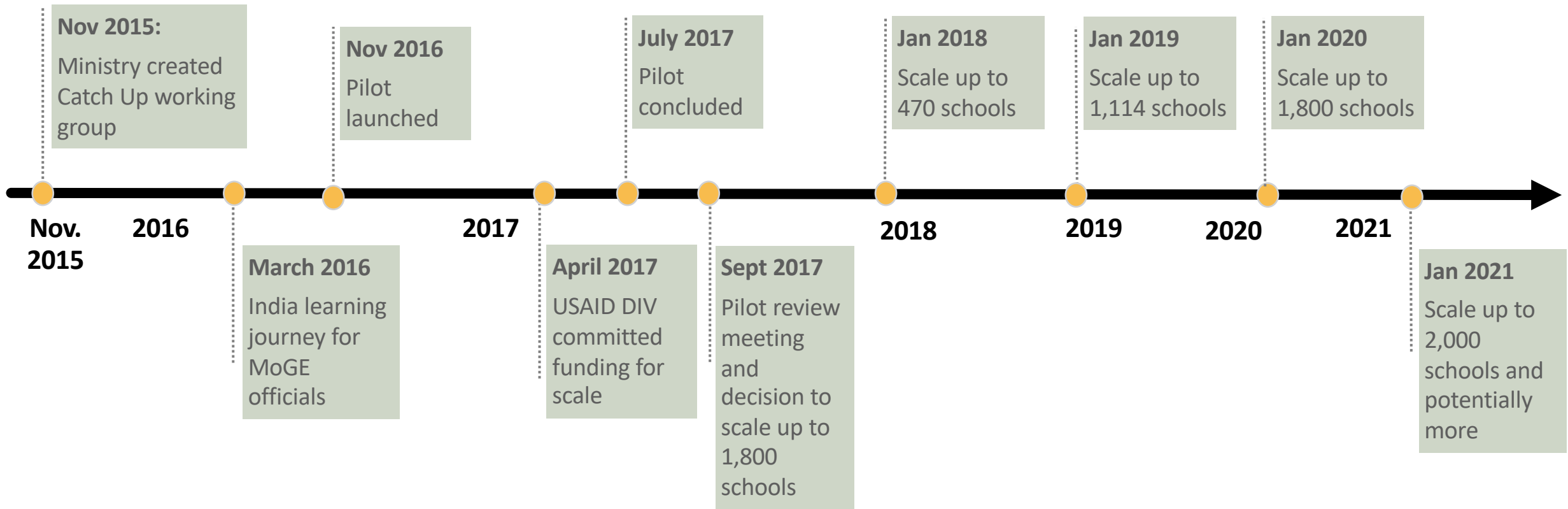


Mentors: District Coordinators, Zonal Coordinators, School mentors

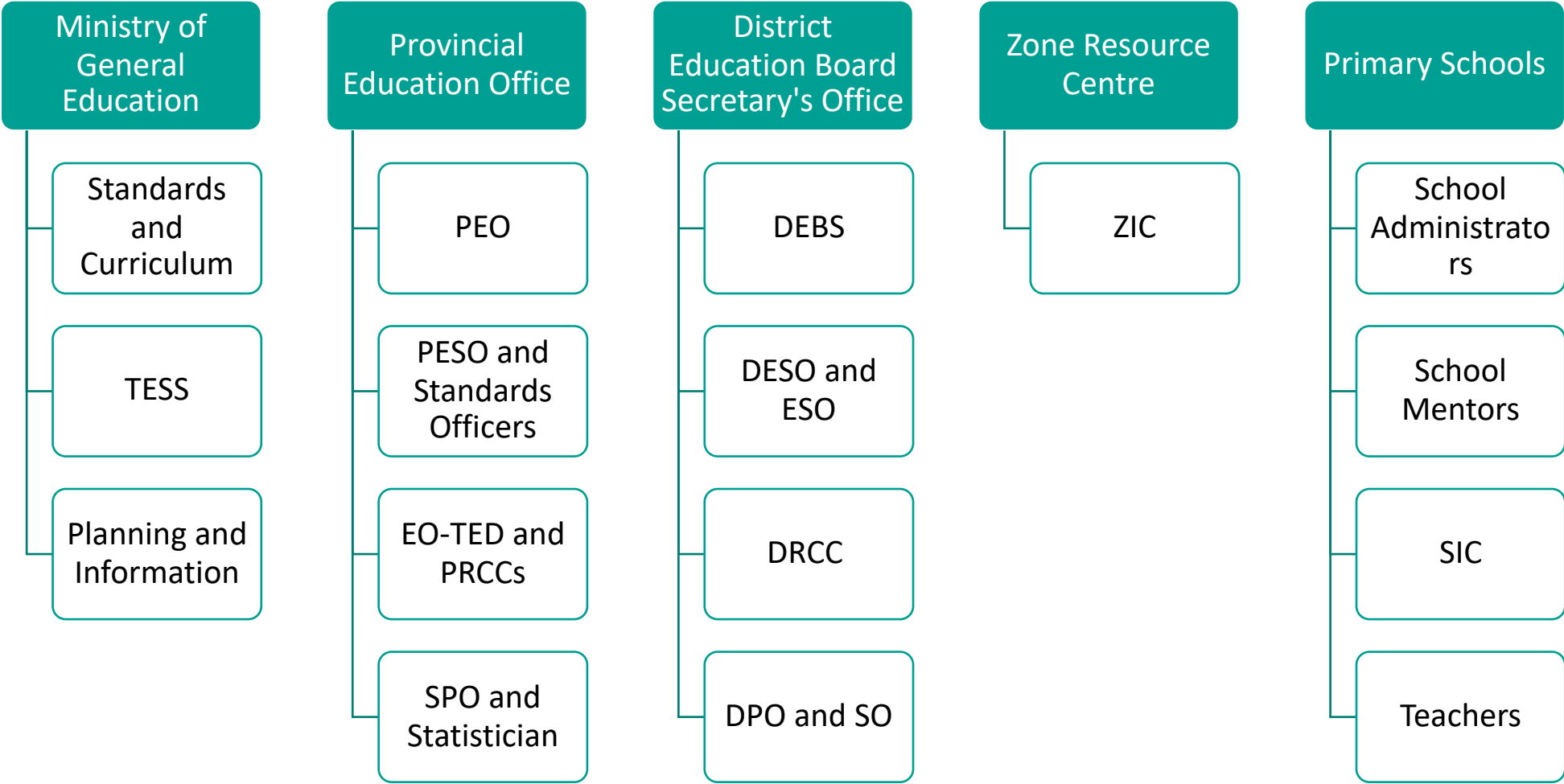


Role of Government: Owner of the program; provides Strategic orientation / defines Policy; implementation (coordination- trainings- evaluation- supervision)

History of Catch Up in Zambia



Catch Up Government Structure



Support

VVOB Lusaka Team (Country Programme Manager, Education Manager, Education Advisors), + TaRL Africa support

VVOB District Coordinators

In the classroom, TaRL unfolds through a simple process involving key elements

A big tree stood in a garden.
It was alone and lonely. One
day a bird came and sat on it.
The bird held a seed in its
beak. It dropped the seed
near the tree. A small plant
grew there. Soon there was
another tree. The big tree
was happy.

Rani likes her school.
Her class is in a big room.
Rani has a bag and a book.
She also has a pen.

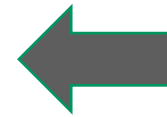
e	d	w
s	c	
g	h	z
i	q	

hand	star
bus	
cat	book
day	few
	old
sing	bold

1. Simple one-on-one assessment done to group Grade 3,4 & 5 children by level instead of by grade. Instructors facilitate easy-to-do whole class and small group activities to guide children's work.



4. Similar assessments are used for tracking children's progress. Thereafter, groups are reorganized based on children's progressed levels, and activities are conducted accordingly.



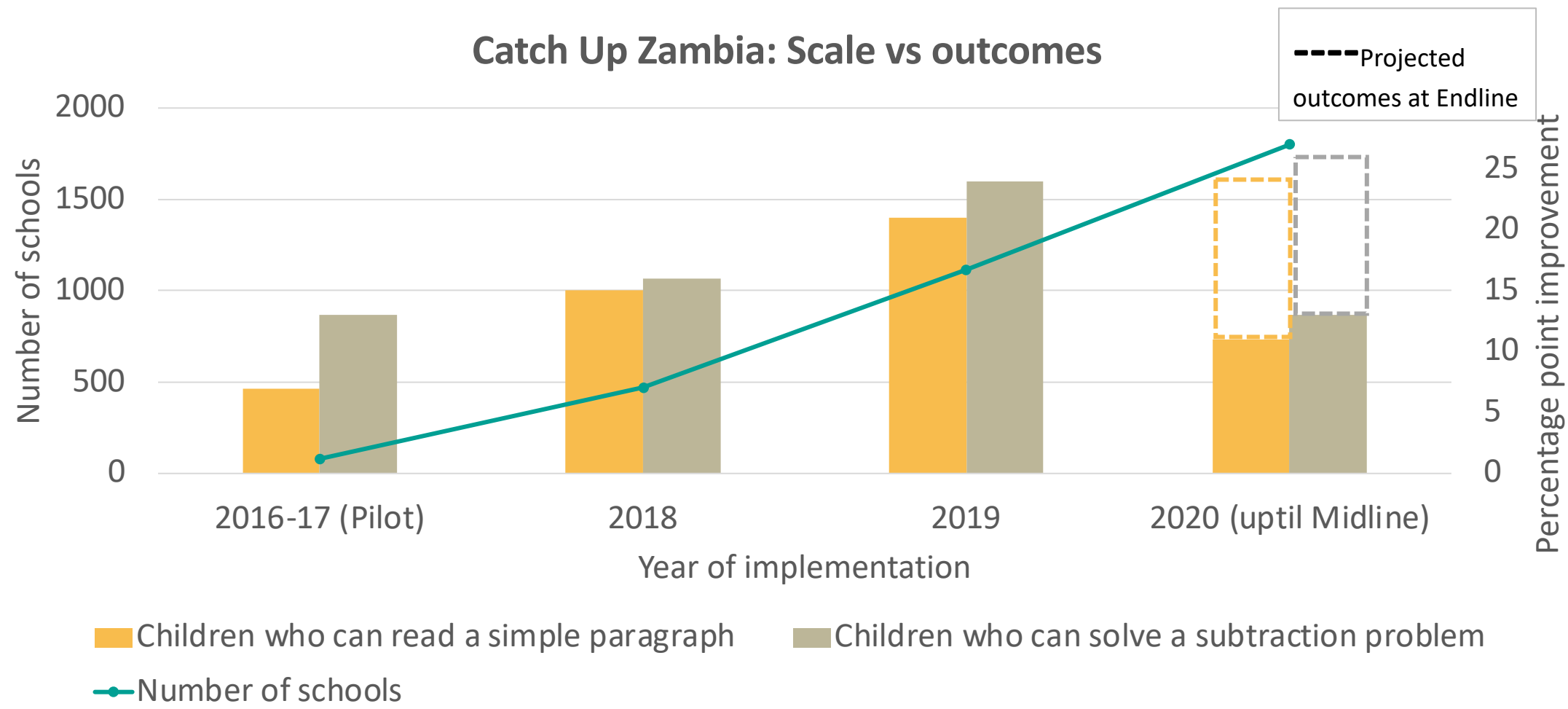
3. Children learn in groups and also individually.



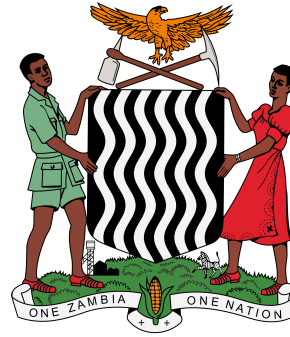
2. There are a set of activities and materials in reading and arithmetic that are appropriate for the level of each group.



Catch Up Results by Year



A coalition of actors



The **LEGO** Foundation[♥]

Core principles for building a systems-led TaRL initiative

Focus on the problem at hand, and clarity of goal – foundational skills for all

Contextualized locally-grounded design and approach to leverage existing systems and structures

Build coalitions within and outside government, from national to local levels

Capacity building across the system to build ownership and leadership at all levels

What's Next?

Programming continuing and scaling

- Catch Up to be continued in Eastern, Southern and Lusaka with Ministry leadership, and deepening integration in existing structures and budgets over time
- Catch Up included in GPE COVID-19 response project as strategy for remedial and accelerated support
- Expansion planned to additional provinces through global funding support

Alignment & integration with MoGE priorities

- Catch Up programme part of System level and Long-Term priorities as presented by Directorate - Planning in Dec 2020
 - Ideas on integration into existing job descriptions, built into ministry systems, budgets
 - Including in CPD workplans and teacher training curriculum
- Process initiated to develop scale up plan in line with MoGE intention to take Catch Up to National Scale, including support for mobilization of resources for scaling

Continued Learning

- Research activities to improve and establishing effectiveness of Catch Up being planned in 2021 and beyond
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Thank You!

