

Teaching at the Right Level

Support J-PAL in bringing a proved Indian model to Ivory Coast

Summary

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) is an evidence-backed educational approach that helps children develop basic reading and mathematics skills, opening doors to a brighter future. The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) has evaluated this approach in multiple settings and has decided (together with Pratham) to oversee its expansion to Africa. UBS Optimus Foundation and Jacobs Foundation would like to leverage the existing strong relationship with the Ministry of Education in Ivory Coast to expand the TaRL nationwide.

The problem

Due to the tremendous efforts of governments, local communities, non-profit organizations, and the international community, school enrollment rates in Africa are converging on universal primary enrollment. Yet learning levels remained low: in 2017, over 80% of Grade 2 students in Ghana, and Malawi could not read a simple word, and over 60% of Grade 2 students in Ghana and Uganda could not perform two-digit subtraction.

The partner

J-PAL is a global research center, working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. J-PAL draws on results from randomized impact evaluations / randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty, and builds relationships with governments, NGOs and donors to share this knowledge, and design / scale-up effective programs. In recognition of its groundbreaking approach, Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee, the co-founders of J-PAL have been recognized with the 2019 Nobel prize in economics.

J-PAL's experience and research reveal that structural inefficiencies in education systems are at the root of the problem. School systems are not well designed to address the needs of students who may be the first in their families to attend school or who enter the school system without having gained early-learning skills during early childhood. Often, children who miss key concepts in the early grades never have a chance to catch up, no matter how many years they spend in school.

The philanthropic solution

TaRL targets the root of the learning crisis by transforming the structures that lead to it. The approach works by dividing children (generally in Grades 3 to 5) into groups based on learning needs rather than age or grade; dedicating time to basic skills rather than focusing solely on the curriculum; and regularly assessing student performance, rather than relying only on end-of-year examinations.

Since 2001, J-PAL-affiliated researchers have rigorously tested the theory of change underlying Pratham's TaRL approach. Through six randomized evaluations in India, as well as a growing body of research in Africa, they find that when TaRL is successfully implemented, learning outcomes improve.

The evidence

Through this series of evaluations, researchers discovered that targeted instruction could be successful when delivered by tutors, volunteers, and government teachers, both in-school and out-of-school. Through this process, key programme components have been identified and strengthened. Recent research identifies two particularly strong models which work well at scale:

- Tutor- or volunteer-led learning TaRL camps held for periodic bursts of time were effective in Uttar Pradesh, India, in a location with relatively weak government support structures. This model includes local instructors leading TaRL activities for forty days with supplementary support in summer camps.
- Government teacher-led TaRL instruction throughout the school year was effective in Haryana, India, a state with relatively strong government systems. This intervention included a dedicated time for TaRL during the school day and support for teachers through strong mentoring and monitoring.

The impact

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Education of Ivory Coast and will be national in scale. The ambition is that every child in Ivory Coast will benefit from the evidence-backed approach leading to improved basic reading and mathematics skills and a better future.



Source: J-PAL

Location	Ivory Coast
Target group	Primary-aged children
Partner(s)	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
Co-sponsors	Jacobs Foundation, Co-Impact

UBS Optimus Foundation
Augustinerhof 1
Postfach
8098 Zurich
Switzerland

Tel. +41-44-237 27 87
Sh-ubs-optimus-foundation@ubs.com

This document was created by UBS Optimus Foundation. It has no regard to the specific objectives, financial situation or particular needs of any specific recipient and is provided solely for information purposes. It does not constitute an offer to sell or a solicitation of an offer to buy any product or other specific service. UBS Optimus Foundation does not provide investment, legal or tax advice and this document does not constitute such advice. UBS Optimus Foundation strongly recommends to all persons considering the information herein to obtain appropriate independent legal, tax and other professional advice. Certain products and services are subject to legal restrictions and cannot be offered worldwide on an unrestricted basis. Although all information and opinions herein were obtained from sources believed to be reliable and in good faith, neither representation nor warranty, express or implied, is made as to their accuracy, completeness or reliability, and they are subject to change at any time without notice. UBS Optimus Foundation expressly prohibits the redistribution or reproduction of this document in whole or in part without its prior written permission and accepts no liability whatsoever for the actions of third parties in this respect. Neither UBS Optimus Foundation nor any of its directors, representatives or agents accepts any liability for any loss or damage arising out of the use of all or any part of this document.

©UBS 2019. The key symbol and UBS are among the registered and unregistered trademarks of UBS. All rights reserved.