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How is Community Action Effective for Children's Early Learning?

Consolidated Activities, Results and Learnings[1]

2019

Background

Over the past seven years, Firelight supported Tanzanian community-based organizations to enable community action for early learning, to both shift outcomes for children as well as to shift the systems around them. The two phases of funding (2011-2014 and 2014-2018)[2] of this initiative were made possible with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, with intermittent phases of intensity of support.

To set the stage for the challenges this initiative sought to address – while the Tanzanian government embraced "fee-free" primary education that resulted in highly increased enrollments in early primary, there were subsequent challenges – including the reduced willingness of parents to pay fees and schools being stretched thin without the resources and capacity to meet the demand. As a result, households and families began to play an especially important role in improving educational quality and school success.

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[1] **Disclaimer by Firelight:**

Firelight reviewed the report and removed sensitive statements that are confidential and any statements that cannot be validated. Furthermore, the views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the consultants and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views and opinions held by Firelight.

[2] In this report, we focus only on the last four years of funding under the Hewlett Foundation's Innovations in Early Learning portfolio. Only two of the five current CBO grantee-partners (SAWA and ECOLI) were funded under the first phase of this initiative since 2011, with the remaining three organizations (KIWAKKUKI, OCODE, and TAHEA) receiving their first grants beginning in early 2014 – the final year of the previous phase. In order to summarize, evaluate, and compare similar sets of retrospective information from the five grantee-partners, we focus only on the past four years of the initiative.

In communities where many parents did not have advanced schooling and where educational quality did not receive the full political and budgetary support it deserved from the government, Firelight believed that community-based organizations could play a key role. CBOs could work directly with children to help them to become ready for and engage in school; help parents support children to succeed; encourage schools to invest resources in the areas that affect children's learning; and hold school districts and schools accountable for children's learning.

Firelight's initial goal within this initiative was to support community-based organizations (CBOs) that were pursuing innovative solutions that involved children, families, communities, schools, and their districts in improving children's learning outcomes. The overarching goal was to improve levels of reading, writing, and arithmetic of children in the early years of education. Through our CBO grantee-partners Firelight initially aimed to:

- Increase children's literacy and numeracy in Primary 1 and 2

- Increase family and community engagement in children's learning

- Increase teacher motivation

- Increase CBO engagement in social accountability

- Laterally replicate effective models

However, over the years, as Firelight's model of capacity building shifted to place systems thinking and community action at the forefront, so too did Firelight's approach to this initiative. While initially the initiative was focused on building the "innovative" program models themselves, Firelight began to increasingly focus on strengthening community action to produce changes in children's early learning outcomes and the education systems that affected them. Our CBO grantee-partners received many different methods of programmatic capacity building – from training in social accountability, to peer-to-peer networking opportunities, to mentoring in monitoring and evaluation.

Focused primarily on the second phase of the initiative from 2014 to 2018, this report is a consolidation of learnings from different sources – including data collected by an external learning consultant, program models documented by Firelight staff, and internal learning and impact data collected and gathered by Firelight program staff. In this report, we consolidate our CBO grantee-partners' evidence of impact and lessons learned from the initiative, illustrating how partners' models evolved over time and presenting evidence of change for CBOs, children, families, and entire communities.

Firelight's Support

After bringing together the cluster of five CBO grantee-partners located in different geographic areas of Tanzania, Firelight's model of support for the early learning cluster included:

Direct program funding and core organizational funding from Firelight to build innovative program models to improve children's learning outcomes

Firelight provided a total of $ 806,800 as direct funding for programs, operations, discretionary and capacity building funding in the form of grants throughout the period of the initiative.

Grantee-partners' name	Type	Amount Awarded
Elimu Community Light (ECOLI)	Program, Operations and Capacity Building	$119,100
Women Against AIDS in Kilimanjaro (KIWAKKUKI)	Program, Operations and Capacity Building	$97,000
Organization for Community Development (OCODE)	Program, Operations and Capacity Building	$90,000
Safina Women's Association (SAWA)	Program, Operations and Capacity Building	$118,900
Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA)	Community Grantmaking, Discretionary and Capacity Building	$381,800
Total Grants		**$806,800**

Capacity building in monitoring and evaluation – provided by both external consultant Nuru Lugumira and Firelight's Learning and Evaluation Officer Ronald Kimambo

Firelight trained our CBO grantee-partners in monitoring, evaluation, and learning strategies to integrate learning within their work, to use data and information to reflect on and improve programming, and to measure impact that can then be shared with stakeholders and government. In order to measure these changes, community-based organizations are best equipped to create bespoke monitoring and evaluation systems to collect and analyze data on child-level and school-level learning outcomes that are directly relevant to their programming.

While OCODE received additional tailored trainings in monitoring and evaluation during the first year of implementation, all partners' capacity in monitoring and evaluation was assessed and built in the most recent phase of Hewlett funding. Our Learning & Evaluation staff worked closely with a Tanzanian consultant team, led by Tanzania-based senior monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) consultant Nuru Lugumira who brought experience and expertise in building the MEL capacity of local organizations.

The MEL consultant team conducted scoping visits with each partner during which they assessed and discussed with each partner their current MEL capacity. The exercise revealed gaps in a wide range of MEL areas – from the development of MEL plans to data collection and management, to data analysis and interpretation, to documenting and sharing learnings and success stories.

Based on these findings, the consultant team and Firelight's Learning & Evaluation Officer conducted a training workshop for all early learning partners in Mwanza in Spring 2018. Partners self-reported benefiting from MEL capacity building in a number of ways – from strengthening their project conceptualization and MEL frameworks, to collecting and managing their data, to disseminating results, to ensuring the sustainability of their initiative. This training also allowed partners to measure the outcomes that were important to them at the community-level as well as consider international indicators and standards.

For example, SAWA reported that the skills and competences acquired through the process played a major role in accessing funding from Child Fund Korea (worth USD 300,000) because one of the prerequisites to secure that funding was to demonstrate capacity in MEL (including having a well-prepared Project MEL Plan) and how they would be able to track and report on results. Similarly, OCODE was able to secure a grant of USD 100,000 that was contingent on a strong MEL system.

After the last phase of mentorship and coaching, as part of the follow-up-support, the consultant conducted an endline assessment on partners' MEL capacity. Specific findings indicated that while some grantee-partners were still struggling, the MEL training facilitated by Firelight led to a general level of improvement, whereby all CBO grantee-partners scored above 50% on a MEL assessment as compared to baseline assessment, at which all CBOs scored below this level. MEL planning, for example, improved to 57% in the endline assessment, up from its score of 20% at baseline.

Summary of Endline Assessment Findings across Domains for all five Grantee-Partners
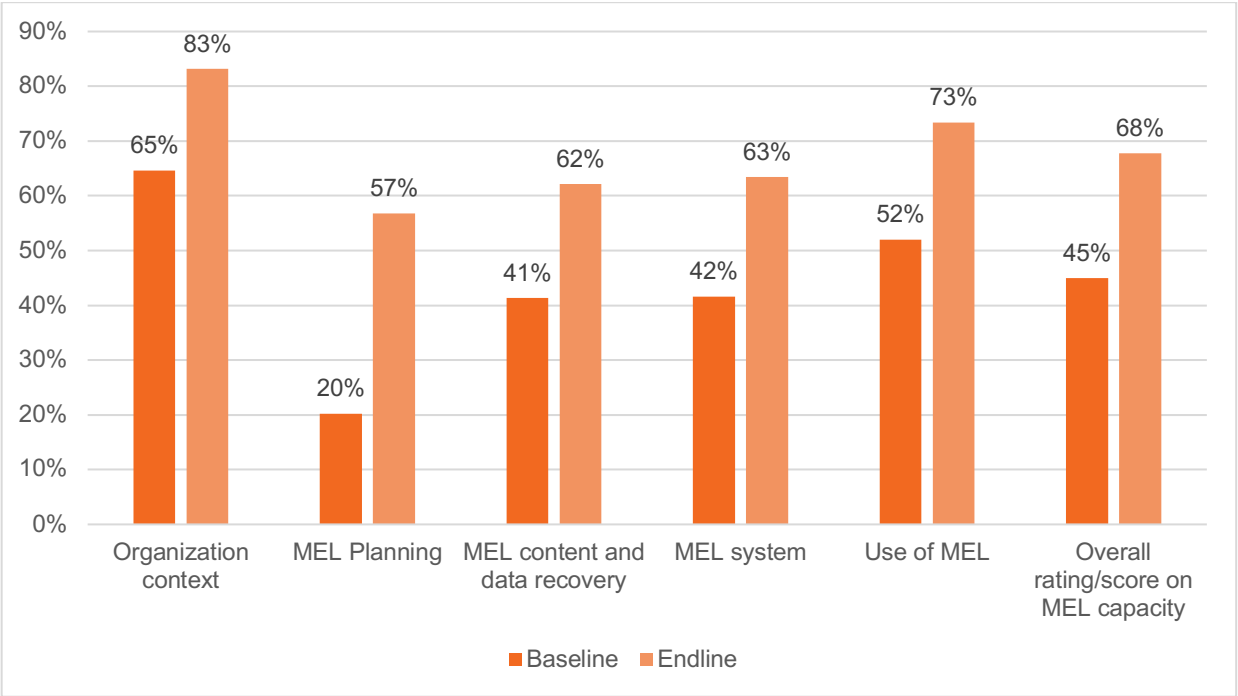
With skills in monitoring, evaluation, and learning, our CBO grantee-partners will continue to be able to measure the outcomes that are important to both them and their communities, and use

this information to advocate for increased buy-in from their communities and increased resources and funding from external donors.

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Capacity building in social accountability – provided by external technical expert Haki Elimu

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While CBO grantee-partners worked tirelessly to improve learning outcomes for target vulnerable children, we collectively recognized that progress would continue to be limited unless there were substantial improvements to government-provided education services for all children. For this reason, Firelight's support for grantee-partners in social accountability capacity building involved two elements – improving their own capacity to engage governments and improving their capacity to engage the community in doing the same.

After a mutual scoping process, Haki Elimu – a national education advocacy institution in Tanzania – was brought onboard in 2016 to engage with CBO partners, to understand their contexts, challenges, and priorities, and then to provide collective and individualized capacity building support to the CBOs over an 18-month period. Haki Elimu facilitated group trainings, one-to-one onsite mentoring, and peer-to-peer learning processes.

Through these methods, CBO grantee-partners gained tailored knowledge, skills, and experiential learnings on different components of social accountability and monitoring, such as planning and resources allocation, expenditure management, and public integrity and oversight. Partners were specifically supported to conduct activities within the space of early education, such as public expenditure tracking surveys and score cards, monitoring government promises and programs, fostering community empowerment and participation, and promoting and enhancing governance.

During and after the capacity building phase, we facilitated **a guided inquiry process** with our CBO grantee-partners to understand more about their learnings, perspectives, experiences, and progress in implementing social accountability and monitoring to improve education outcomes in their communities.

During the capacity building phase, CBO grantee-partners spoke about their increased understanding of a rights-based approach to service delivery. Most partners noted that the initial training had resulted in major changes in their perspectives on the role of community-based organizations in holding government "duty bearers" responsible for delivering social services.

> *"Our attitude was that the government is helping out, not that they are responsible, that children have a right to their education. It's a new way to look at the situation. We thought the government was doing "good" and trying to help people, but we know the government is responsible for providing children with their quality education…it's a human right. After the training, we realize that the government should be active in social accountability, so they can be accountable for public resources. CBOs can help with the social accountability system." – CBO staff member, Tanzania*

CBO grantee-partners came to believe that within the social accountability ecosystem, CBOs can and should play an essential role in demand creation, informing community members ("rights bearers") about their rights, engaging them in advocacy efforts, and making sure community voices are heard. Partners believed that supporting community members to demand quality social services was a sustainable way to ensure continued social accountability of the government, especially in case of termination of program funding. They noted that community ownership and engagement was essential in social accountability, and CBOs needed to help community members speak for themselves, instead of having CBOs speak for them.

After the end of the capacity building process, CBO grantee-partners generally described positive strides they had made in bringing about meaningful social accountability changes. As seen in the impact achieved especially by both SAWA and KIWAKKUKI (outlined in their program models above), CBOs were able to engage communities in making tangible changes.

However, our CBO grantee-partners also faced challenges in implementing and achieving success in their social accountability processes. The general lack of funds to support social accountability, monitoring, and advocacy was described as a key limitation by our partners. In addition, CBOs noted the delicate balance they and community members struggled to strike between establishing and maintaining relationships of trust and alliance with Tanzanian government officials, while also being able to hold them accountable to their responsibilities.

Facilitation of peer-to-peer learning through quarterly learning meeting and site visits in order to encourage lateral replication of program elements

Firelight's grantee-partners were supported to engage in both one-on-one exchanges and quarterly exchange meetings to share their programs with each other and with other stakeholders. Partners reported that even though organizational operating conditions were different, the opportunity to meet and share experiences informed and inspired them to add new elements to their programs. In order to further investigate the impact of this peer-to-peer learning, Firelight facilitated a **guided inquiry process** with each of our CBO grantee-partners about any programs that they had adapted from elsewhere as well as their programs that had been adapted by other organizations:

- Since 2016, KIWAKKUKI adopted parts of TAHEA's Vutamdogo model, training out of school youth to become peer educators who conducted learning clubs after school and conducted sensitization meetings to parents/caregivers of these children.

- Learning from SAWA's experiences, KIWAKKUKI adopted parts of the Uwezo assessment tool to establish the baseline level of literacy and numeracy of children before they joined the learning clubs.

- OCODE adopted certain elements from TAHEA, KIWAKKUKI, and ECOLI into their own program. Instead of using out of school youth as peer educators like TAHEA and KIWAKKUKI, OCODE enabled professional volunteers from teachers' colleges and

universities to help improve primary school children's literary and numeracy at their learning centers. Learning from ECOLI, OCODE also used mass text messaging (Telerivet) to engage parents in their children's learning, good parenting, nutrition, and child rights.

We asked about factors that can and did contribute to a program being replicated. Partners reported that replication and adaptation were more likely when:

- the adopting organization is struggling with the same problem that the other organization has addressed (successfully) with a different, or more developed strategy – i.e., the program to be adopted;

- the program to be adopted is feasible in the adopting organization's context and geographic location;

- the program to be adopted is financially feasible for the adopting organization's budget; and

- the program to be adopted is supported by evidence of effectiveness.

Organizational capacity building provided by Firelight staff

While Firelight staff supported all organizations with training in financial management, governance, and strategic planning, we also supported the organizations with grants for specific capacity building initiatives. For instance, we supported SAWA and ECOLI with capacity building in board development and strategic planning, KIWAKKUKI in peer learning approaches, and OCODE with tailored monitoring and evaluation training.

Due to the tailored organizational development capacity building we provided to all organizations, we saw quantifiable increases in organizational development, as measured by the Firelight Organizational Development Tool (ODT). At the start of this initiative in 2013, we assessed baseline organizational capacity at each organization, conducted a second assessment in 2015, and conducted a third assessment in 2018. These assessments informed capacity building plans during the initiative, as well as provided a pulse of organizational capacity over time.

Below is a graph with findings from 2013, 2015, and 2018 (data missing from TAHEA in 2015). All 2013 assessments were conducted with version 2.0 of the ODT, while 2015 and 2018 assessments were conducted with version 2.1.[3] From these data, it is evident that partners

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[3] It is important to note that the assessments were carried out with slightly different methodologies, by different Firelight staff, and often with different organizational staff at each grantee-partner. Additionally, Firelight emphasizes different areas of capacity building for different organizations, so improvement may be seen more in a particular organization than across the cohort. Also, there are many other factors influencing

made great overall strides in improvements in their organizational capacity. In terms of average scores on each of the ODT's domains, grantee-partners showed significant improvement in 2018 as compared to both 2015 and 2013. Remarkable increases occurred in the structure and function, strategy and programming, relationships, and governance, leadership, and management domains.

Average ODT Domain Scores in 2013, 2015, and 2018*
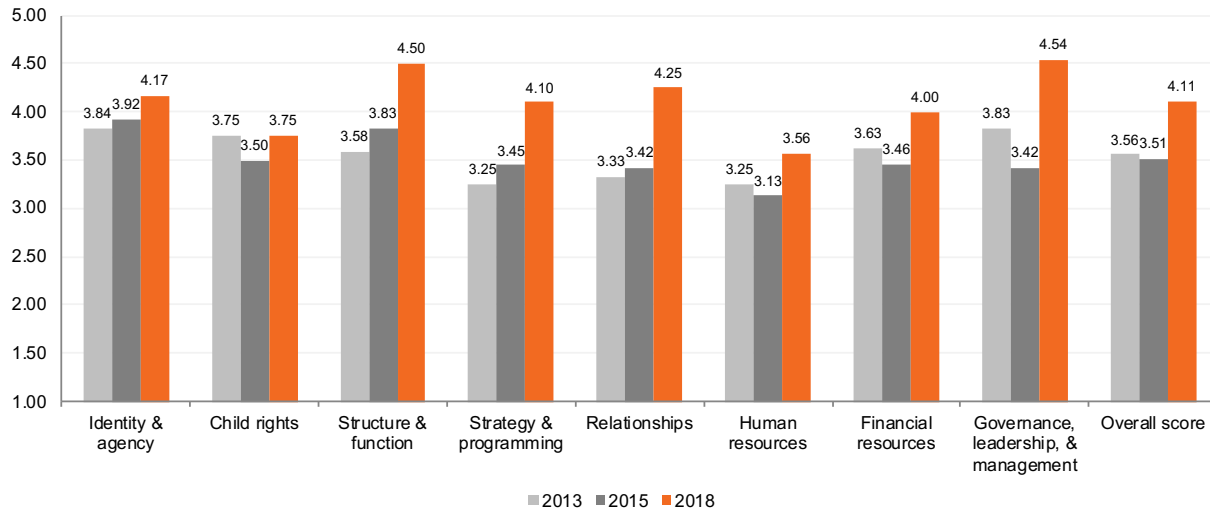
*Data missing from Lead Partner TAHEA in 2015

However, relative weakness was still seen in the child rights domain, indicating a need for CBO grantee-partners to be further supported on child rights/protection, how to involve government and other key stakeholders in being more responsible and accountable for child rights, and how to empower children to understand and claim their rights. Human resources domain scored lowly due to the profound effects of staff turnover, volunteer management, staff development, and human resource policies.

Yet, though these results are helpful in giving a general understanding of organizational capacity increases, Firelight uses the ODT more as a process tool than an evaluation tool. The tool's greatest function has been the foundation it provides for capacity building – our CBO grantee-partners have often described the process as an opportunity to reflect and gain insight on their current status as an organization and their path forward.

Therefore, each time ODT data were gathered, Firelight staff worked to address capacity-building priorities with each organization and with the cohort as a whole. With our early learning grantee-partners now part of the early childhood development initiative, we will continue to

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the organizations' capacity (e.g. other sources of funding, staff turnover, etc.), so it is difficult to discern a clear change across the cohort that one could say was undoubtedly due to Firelight's intervention.

measure these CBOs' capacity with the aim of consolidating their strengths and addressing areas where they have gaps.

Periodic data collection on child-level outcomes using the ZamCAT and Uwezo tools

From 2013 to 2014, Firelight worked with two CBO grantee-partners – those whose primary focus was on early childhood development (ECD) – to gather data on ECD outcomes using the Zambia Child Assessment Test (ZamCAT), to examine correlates of child development and school readiness, and to compare outcomes of children attending partners' ECD programs with outcomes of comparison children in the same communities.

Similarly, in mid-2015, Firelight supported the collection of early learning outcome data from a sample of children supported by three of our CBO grantee-partners' programs using the Uwezo assessment tool, administered through mobile data collection technology. According to the Uwezo Standards Manual (2012), the Uwezo tests are based on expected competencies for students having completed two years of primary education (Primary 2). The full report of results is found here: https://firelightfoundation.box.com/s/bljp40jm4v65rkyned7hl24pkdub9qt9

CBO Models and Impact

Tanzania Home Economics Association (TAHEA) – Mwanza, Tanzania

Founded in 1980, TAHEA funded and built the organizational capacity of five grassroots youth-led community organizations to improve literacy and numeracy among Primary 1 and 2 children in five fishing communities in the Mwanza area (Ilemela District) – through their groundbreaking Vutamdogo program. Recognizing unemployed youth as an untapped resource in the community, TAHEA – as part of their role as a Firelight Community Grantmaker – provided subgrants to the youth groups as well as built their capacity in organizational management and programming to improve children's learning outcomes.

As part of the Vutamdogo program, TAHEA trained Primary 1 and 2 teachers to mentor youth on the 3Rs and to refer children with learning difficulties to the Vutamdogo program. Youth were trained – both by teachers and tutors from local teachers' colleges – and were supported to conduct afterschool activities with children around letter knowledge, phonological awareness, motivation to read, development of vocabulary, and receptive and expressive language development; as well as mental mathematics, pattern recognition, and problem solving – often through the use of games and fun activities. These afterschool sessions were taught by both youth and school teachers, creating a collaborative relationship between the two groups.

These youth groups also mobilized and enabled parents and communities to support numeracy and literacy development among children in early primary schools by assigning homework that children then completed at home with their families. They provided families with learning materials to be used at home and engaged the community through storytelling, libraries, reading

competitions, and drama. At the same time, these youth groups – with support in vocational training (such as carpentry and tailoring), leadership skills, savings/loans groups, financial management, and businesses practices – were enabled with the marketable skills to then seek employment after participating as mentors in the Vutamdogo program – many of these youth went on to receive formal employment after the program. Recently, all five of these youth groups were formally recognized and registered in Mwanza, and one group received funding (Tshs. 2 million[4]) from the government.

Additionally, TAHEA worked with and trained different stakeholders to strengthen the Vutamdogo program – including school heads, teachers, teacher resource centers, parents, community members, parents, community leaders, ward coordinators and ward development committee members. In tandem with training and sub-granting, TAHEA also worked closely with schools to provide adequate learning materials, with parents to manage their children's homework, with community leaders to adopt and scale the program, with community members to ensure local buy-in to the program, and with government Education Officers to supervise the program, to assure quality, and to give direction on education policy, regulation, and monitoring. In addition, TAHEA trained all head teachers and Ward Education Officers in the importance of the 3Rs to ensure that the program was supported by leadership.

Monitoring and evaluation teams – supported with a vehicle to visit afterschool programs and schools – were trained to measure impact of the program. Because the communities are located far from one another, monitoring and evaluation of the program is costly and time-intensive. In order to more accurately and effectively measure impact of the program, TAHEA noted that they require increased investment in their M&E capacity and data collection/analysis tools (i.e. to determine how to identify children who are still struggling and how many have progressed).

In the table below, TAHEA provided data about the number of targeted students in the Vutamdogo program and number of students who improved their literacy and numeracy skills, according to a yearly assessment. It is evident that the program was highly successful, with well beyond the majority of the students in the program showing improvement each year.

Year	Target number of Primary 1 and 2 students for the program	Actual number of students who improved their literacy and numeracy skills (% of target)
2014	2,057	710 (34.5%)
2015	2,467	1,426 (57.8%)
2016	3,000	2,091 (69.7%)
2017	3,992	3,150 (78.9%)
2018	1,169	949 (81.2%)

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[4] Equivalent to USD 862.07 according to exchange rate as of August 24th, 2020.

TOTAL	**12,685**	**8,326 (65.6%)**

Since the beginning of the program in 2014, TAHEA was also able to expand the program's scope – increasing the number of communities involved from 7 to 10, and number of schools from 5 to 7. The model was also applied to students who missed school or were not enrolled in schools – as a result, five children who participated in this program were mainstreamed into schools and were able to join their age mates and adjusted well to the school system. Further evidence of the success of the program was the ability of all children in the program to successfully move on to the Primary 3 over the last four years. Notably, because of the impact of the Vutamdogo program, schools and parents want to enroll many children in the program, which requires a need for more and more resources, capacity building, and youth facilitators. In addition, TAHEA attempted to use the same Vutamdogo model to improve adult literacy – as part of the program, 23 adults were able to read and write within months.

In 2017, in order to improve program quality, TAHEA made significant efforts to recruit and train 17 new youth facilitators (now consisting of 122 youth facilitators) and 6 new teachers for Primary 1 and 2. The new teachers, in addition to supporting Primary 1 and 2 students, also had a role in strengthening the capacity of youth facilitators to follow up on children's literacy and numeracy progress. However, with frequent turnover of youth facilitators as new youth joined and experienced youth left, this required frequent re-training, which required resources and time, both on the part of TAHEA and school teachers. TAHEA is currently investigating a potential "trainer of trainers" model to train these youth in a cost-effective way.

In 2017, TAHEA also formed a Vutamdogo supervision team, consisting of ten head teachers, 18 community leaders, three Ward Education Officers, and two District Education Officers, who together monitored the program. TAHEA also made investments in their data collection and assessment teams, their monitoring and evaluation team, and local Community Education Champions, as well as dissemination meetings to discuss the Vutamdogo program with community stakeholders.

TAHEA reported that their Vutamdogo program, in addition to recording improvements in child learning, also resulted in changes in community attitude towards youth and youth capacity to use their skills for future employment. Whereas youth were previously considered lazy and useless, community members reported to TAHEA that they felt that the youth were becoming "responsible people." This – in turn – increased self-esteem and confidence among youth in the program, who served as peer role models to the children they mentored. "The youths have offices in the community, they have vision, they have identity, they have their leadership, and they work as a team in their localities but working toward shared goals." Because of their experiences in the program, some of these youth even hoped to become formal teachers in the future. Community and local government appreciated the work done by the youth groups, and TAHEA received significant buy-in from local government authorities.

Elimu Community Light (ECOLI) – Arusha, Tanzania

Founded in 1996 by a teacher, Elimu Community Light (ECOLI) addresses the need for improving the development and school readiness of young children by closing the gap between the school, parents, and child (a triangular model called "Utatu Bora") in providing better care and support for children. The initial founders of ECOLI were troubled by the combination of heightened crime and an education system that was a low priority in the more vulnerable slum communities of the Arusha Municipality. Guiding their work has been the belief that education has the potential to expand opportunities for vulnerable children, allowing them to hold formal employment and lead more productive lives.

From 2013 to 2014, Firelight worked with ECOLI to gather data on early childhood development outcomes using the Zambia Child Assessment Test (ZamCAT), to examine correlates of child development and school readiness, and compare outcomes of children attending partners' ECD programs with outcomes of comparison children in the same communities. To see a full report of ZamCAT results from ECOLI, click here:
https://firelightfoundation.box.com/s/p16l44vlc1hadhwn6kgooth42atwn9oj

From 2014 to 2015, ECOLI strengthened the quality of community-based early child development (ECD) services with trainings, weekly tips, and monthly site visits for ECD teachers at ECD centers and community counsellors, enabling them to develop effective lesson plans to improve their pedagogical skills. ECOLI also educated 512 parents through monthly parenting sessions, parenting guidelines, and weekly text/SMS messages with tips on nutrition/education/parenting or to ask directly for feedback. As part of this program, ECOLI also trained 32 ECD center head teachers as ECD trainers to ensure continuity of ECD center programming quality, and mobilized teacher, child, parent, and community engagement in strengthening ECD centers whereby 2347 children impacted.

In 2015, when the government closed ECOLI's community-based ECD centers in an effort to standardize the quality of government-supported centers, ECOLI had to adapt their programmatic strategy towards early learning. Acknowledging that students (ages 6 to 7) were entering primary school without adequate pre-primary schooling, from 2016 to 2017, ECOLI trained teachers of pre-primary schools (20 teachers, 5 head teachers at five schools) to create basic teaching and learning materials and to mobilize parents to send their children to pre-primary school.

Over 85% of the 956 pre-primary children ECOLI targeted mastered literacy skills according to the standardized pre-primary curriculum, measured by yearly district exams. ECOLI also recognized the value added by remedial classes – illustrated by the case of one child who was identified as slow in learning, but after participating in remedial classes was ranked first in the final examinations.

After a brief planning phase, in mid-2018, ECOLI shifted their programmatic strategy once again. In Arusha, only 20% teachers for Primary 1 and 2 were trained on the new Tanzanian curriculum, which emphasized learner-centered teaching and learning methodologies for early learning pupils. In addition, without parent engagement in students' learning, 65% of students crossed Primary 2 without mastering the requisite literacy and numeracy skills. Also, for many of these children who joined Primary 1 without any pre-primary or ECD education, the transition

from home to school was very difficult without teachers who were adequately prepared to respond to this challenge.

In response, starting in late 2018, ECOLI trained teachers of Primary 1 and 2 students at five government primary schools in participatory pedagogy, especially focused on slow learning children. ECOLI trained five teachers per school (2 Primary 1 teachers, 2 Primary 2 teachers, and 1 head teacher per school), for a total of 25 teachers trained. However, ECOLI also noted that with over 100 children per classroom and per teacher, with about 800 children per grade – this presented a difficult structural environment for learning, and required (and still requires) resources to increase the numbers of classrooms and teachers in schools.

ECOLI trained these teachers to identify struggling students and group them by ability, to appropriately teach remedial classes to struggling learners, to give sufficient time for student-teacher interaction, to increase their use of engaging locally-made learning materials, to employ friendly pedagogical methods, and to involve parents in their children's literacy and numeracy – with the goal of each Primary 2 pupil mastering the required numeracy and literacy skills to transition to Primary 3. ECOLI believed that mastery of early learning literacy and numeracy skills would build up the confidence of children in future learning, and help to reduce pupils' absenteeism and dropout.

As part of this phase of their program, ECOLI indirectly impacted 1,924 children (20% higher than the initial target of 1,600) who benefited from the teachers' training, and within this group, 1,218 students were identified as slow learners. These students received afterschool remedial classes from the trained teachers. The trained teachers also formed pedagogical clubs within each school in order to share learnings with those who had not participated in the training – cascading knowledge to many more teachers. Together, these teachers worked to develop and create locally made teaching and learning materials, often in collaboration with parents. In this phase, ECOLI engaged 1,027 parents (75% of the targeted parents) to participate in the provision of learning and teaching aids at the pre-primary schools and to attend parents' meetings and workshops to increase engagement in their children's learning.

Teachers reported that after training, the creation of teaching materials became part of their practice, improving the interaction between teachers and students and allowing teachers to better manage their classrooms. Teachers became reinvigorated to handle the remedial classes, especially due to the acquired pedagogy skills and financial support. They noted that the remedial classes even made their regular classes easier to teach – they had more patience during their classes and the struggling students were doing better.

These trained teachers also transmitted this enthusiasm to other teachers in the schools. For example, teachers who were not trained by ECOLI helped to run the remedial classes with the ECOLI-trained teachers to learn from them. Likewise, ECOLI-trained teachers helped other teachers (of the same class and higher classes) develop teaching and learning materials for their classrooms. In addition, school leaders were able to make informed decisions based on teachers' requests. For instance, at two primary schools, the head teachers became proactive in purchasing the resources needed by teachers to prepare teaching and learning materials for their classrooms.

Using sensitization meetings managed by ECOLI, teachers and school administrators also involved parents and school management committees in their annual workplans. Parents were involved in numerous ways in their children's education – providing school lunches for the schools, supporting children in finishing their homework, helping teachers to create homemade teaching and learning materials, and working with teachers to evaluate their children's progress in literacy and numeracy. However, extreme poverty amongst parents often limited them from providing basic needs for schooling, including books, pencils, and school lunches. As a result, ECOLI hopes to explore how to integrate income-generating activities and livelihood programs into their future education programming.

ECOLI reported increased parent participation in following up on their children's academic progress, visiting schools to observe learning activities, attending meetings, and supporting teaching and learning materials. ECOLI further encouraged parents to send their children to school by covering tuition fees for the most vulnerable.

> *"Before this program, my son Isaac (8 years old) was performing poorly in school. But after the remedial program, he has been doing well, and I have seen improvement in his writing. He can even write his name now! It would be good to have this program continue into higher grades, because these same improvements should happen in later classes too. Isaac loves going to school, and he makes learning materials at home. He is creative and cooperates in household activities. I am able to support him on things he understands and help make materials for the classroom. I attend parent meetings and talk to other parents about what they should be doing to support their children's education. However, it is difficult to for me to contribute food as a single mother with three children, which means that my children sometimes don't get porridge for lunch. My children don't always get the same things as other children." – Parent of child in Primary 3*

ECOLI also reported significant changes in children's attitudes towards learning. With engaging, locally-made teaching and learning materials in their classrooms, they were more engaged in daily lessons. Better communication between students, teachers, and parents also allowed students to communicate their issues and challenges to teachers, who were then able to respond appropriately with remedial classes when needed. In the future, ECOLI wants to explore how to further support children who continue to learn slowly, despite remedial classes. The organization also wants to explore how to involve Primary 3 teachers, so that they can create a seamless learning transition between Primary 2 and 3.

Unfortunately, while ECOLI did suffer a major setback in the closure of five of their ECD centers, they were flexible in changing their model and programmatic focus – twice. However, in order to make sure that ECOLI was aware and involved in changing government education policies, ECOLI partnered with well-known Tanzanian technical experts Haki Elimu to develop an advocacy strategy around national ECD policies and increased financial allocation to ECD. ECOLI planned to continue to work with the government on workable standards or ensuring the local implementation of current standards to enable their ECD centers to operate, as they reported that less than 50% of eligible children in their communities were actually enrolled in

ECD centers. If their ECD program is to launch once again, ECOLI also wants to understand how to become re-involved in improving ECD centers in their communities, perhaps using health clinics and well-child visits to engage parents.

As part of their advocacy work, ECOLI has participated in multiple Tanzania Joint Education Sector Review Technical Working Sessions in 2018 and networking meetings with TECDEN/AECDEN, PANITA, and TENMET. In addition, ECOLI collaborated closely with local government authorities to ensure that they are informed of the program's progress. To improve the overall sustainability of its programs, ECOLI wants to continue to ensure that they are coordinating with government priorities and collaborating closely with the District Literacy/Numeracy Coordinator, who is responsible at the school level for outcomes. ECOLI also wants to find strategies to more actively involve local government authorities in monitoring progress, emphasizing how the program's goals are directly matched with government priorities.

Safina Women's Association (SAWA) – Morogoro, Tanzania

Established in 1996 by twelve widows, SAWA mobilized parents and community members in pastoralist Maasai areas in the Morogoro region (Mvomero District) of Tanzania to build and support community-based "satellite" early childhood and early primary schools (nursery to Primary 2). Community members' contributions were essential in making and donating bricks to build the two centers. In these areas, students often had to walk long distances to attend primary schools, which caused high dropout rates amongst the Maasai population. In addition, government primary schools were taught in Swahili, which posed a significant challenge and discouragement to children who only spoke Maasai and felt left behind in the classroom.

From 2013 to 2014, Firelight worked with SAWA to gather data on early childhood development outcomes using the Zambia Child Assessment Test (ZamCAT), to examine correlates of child development and school readiness, and compare outcomes of children attending partners' ECD programs with outcomes of comparison children in the same communities. To see a full report of ZamCAT results from ECOLI, click here:
https://firelightfoundation.box.com/s/d4ahz4ggeaq8tw7jjjd9n4h03ly74th0

In response, with over two decades of experience in ECD, SAWA identified and trained community-based para-professional teachers in ECD, provided learning materials to schools, supplied schools with desks and new classroom buildings, supported a bilingual approach to teaching, raised communities' awareness about ECD, and established health and nutrition programs at the schools. SAWA placed its largest emphasis on bilingual education with the aim of easing the language transition for students between Maasai and Swahili from their ECD centers to formal government primary schools – thus setting children up for success in mastering their skills in numeracy and literacy.

SAWA worked in partnership with the government to enhance sustainability. They aimed to have their schools designated as satellite schools by the government, administered by the nearby primary schools' headteachers, and their ownership shifted to the government. SAWA

actively shared progress reports with the District Social Welfare Officer and Municipal Council, who often came to visit the schools. In fact, to establish one of their schools (Mantangani), the five acres of land for the building was given by the local government. As a result of advocacy efforts, both of SAWA's schools (Matangani and Vianzi) were recognized in 2016 as satellite schools by the government, which then provided them with two full-time paid teachers at each school and a borehole at Vianzi Primary School.

SAWA made major investments in training para-professional teachers – who worked at the ECD and pre-primary levels – as a bridge between Maasai-speaking homes and Swahili-speaking schools. They trained these teachers on children's psychology/learning and friendly pedagogical methods, including the involvement of sports, songs, and games in lesson plans. They also trained these teachers in developing teaching and learning materials that helped students transition from their mother tongue (Maasai) to Swahili. For instance, SAWA helped teachers put drawing and paintings on their walls that showed both the Maasai and Swahili translations for common words that young children would need to know (fruits, vegetables, animals, numbers). These para-professional teachers worked closely with the government teachers, who taught at the Primary 1 and 2 levels.

Though families often lived far apart, which made it difficult to convene them for community meetings, SAWA wanted to ensure that their initiative had significant community buy-in. SAWA trained Village Volunteer Counselors to conduct community sensitizations on the importance of early childhood education, to train parents on early stimulation and nutrition (similar to the Care for Child Development curriculum), and to mobilize internal community resources to build and maintain the centers. However, despite these efforts, ECOLI still struggled with parent engagement, especially engagement of fathers, as some parents in the community were hesitant to register their children at the satellite schools without understanding the financial benefits.

In addition, these communities suffered from extreme poverty and relied on subsistence farming, which did not allow them to adequately invest their time and resources in the program. In response, in order to equip parents to better support their children's educational needs, SAWA trained women in small business management, linking them to different financial services – such as village savings and loan groups – and start-up capital (e.g. to start poultry and dairy farming) while at the same time equipping them with basic numeracy and literacy skills. With this income, parents were able to contribute nominally to teachers' salaries at the centers.

SAWA also facilitated provision of basic health services (such as growth monitoring, malaria treatment, and vaccines) for mothers and children at monthly mobile clinics at the ECD centers. These monthly clinics served as an important way to engage families in their children's education, and ECD management committees used them as a way to advocate for the importance of early childhood education and investment in children's health. Recently, local government authorities became more and more involved in these monthly clinics, with SAWA playing more of a support role than a management role now.

As a result of this initiative, SAWA saw incredible impact at the child, family, and school levels. Attendance at the both the satellite ECD centers and main primary schools increased due to greater community interest in and support of early education, as well as the expansion from three communities to five (see table below).

Year	Attendance at Vianzi Primary School (number in ECD and pre-primary)	Attendance at Matangani Primary School (number in ECD and pre-primary)
2014	15	34
2015	21	23
2016	29	28
2017	27	19
2018	32	52
Total	**130**	**156**

For instance, some Maasai parents decided to live closer to the schools, migrating less often. However, even with the presence of satellite schools that are located closer to where Maasai communities live, children still have to travel long distances to come to school. As such, attendance during the rainy season continues to remain low, which impacts children's learning. Moreover, because some parents migrated with their children during the dry season, this continued to cause disruptions in their children's schooling and impacted their progress.

The quality of teaching at the centers greatly improved, and students who might have been marginalized at primary schools were able to integrate into them more seamlessly. SAWA teachers also remarked that they saw students who were previously shy and withdrawn engaging more actively with both the lessons and with other students. As seen in the tables below, the vast majority of students who attended one of SAWA's ECD centers transitioned successfully to government primary schools – with sufficient skills in reading and writing in Swahili. Those who did not successfully transition were re-engaged in remedial classes at the ECD centers.

Year	Number of students at Vianzi ECD center	Number of students who successfully transitioned from ECD to primary school
2014	15	12 (80.0%)
2015	21	20 (95.2%)
2016	29	27 (93.1%)
2017	27	27 (100%)
2018	32	28 (87.5 %)
Total	**130**	**114 (87.7%)**

Year	Number of students at Matangani ECD center	Number of students who successfully transitioned from ECD to primary school
2014	34	32 (94%)
2015	23	20 (86.9%)
2016	28	25 (89.2%)
2017	19	19 (100%)
2018	52	47 (90.4%)
TOTAL	**156**	**143**

In the final two years, SAWA noticed that at their ECD centers, children beyond the ages of Primary 2 were attending classes – sometimes all the way to Primary 7 (Matangani Primary School had students enrolled to Primary 3, and Vianzi Primary School has students enrolled to Primary 7). SAWA noted that infrastructure at the schools (e.g. playgrounds, desks, books, etc.) could use significant improvement, especially as the enrollment at the centers increases. New classrooms and more books will be needed to account for the children of higher grades who are now attending. Likewise, more teachers are needed at the satellite schools. For instance, one school has only two teachers, who are in charge of 125 children from pre-primary to Primary 5.

As such, after receiving capacity building in social accountability methods, SAWA decided to work even more closely with government authorities, shifting their focus from service provision to advocacy – working to hold government authorities responsible for providing quality education to children who were relying on the satellite ECD centers for higher levels of schooling. SAWA trained and deployed 10 Social Accountability Monitors – representing eight communities – to engage with community members through community meetings and sensitizations, empowering village leaders and ward development committees to advocate for increased resource allocation to their early learning programs.

These Social Accountability Monitors engaged with the local government's allocation of the Ministry of Education and Sports' capitation grants, which designate funding to each child in pre-primary and primary school. Communities submitted proposals to the local council for, and have continued monitoring expenditure and performance from, the government's capitation grant. SAWA also facilitated the sharing and discussion of findings from the social accountability monitoring process, as a result of which community members partnered directly with government officials to develop, implement, and monitor a joint action plan to improve education service delivery.

Recently, SAWA expanded its ECD program to the Matale, Mtipule, Msongozi, Doma, Luhindo and Sokoine Villages, where 18 Village Volunteer Counselors were trained to deliver ECD

services at the family level. In addition to this, four new ECD centers have been constructed which include Masai Ndama, Lusanga and Gwata ECD Centers at Msongozi Village and Mtipule Njia Panda ECD center at Mtipule Village (in partnership with ChildFund Korea).

Organization for Community Development (OCODE) – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Founded in 1999 by a group of fifteen Tanzanian citizens in Dar es Salaam, Organization for Community Development (OCODE) worked to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of struggling students in Primary 1 and 2 – in partnership with teachers, schools, parents, local school officials, and other community and government stakeholders. In highly populated Dar es Salaam, classes were often overcrowded (with over 100+ students per classroom for one teacher), limiting students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to effectively manage the classroom. At many of these schools, corporal punishment was still used, and school infrastructure was often inadequate (few desks, books, materials) given the number of students. At the same time, many of these students suffered from poverty at home, drug use, long walking distances to school, and child abuse. which further limited their ability to succeed – these challenges continued to be present throughout the course of the initiative.

From 2014 to 2017, OCODE partnered directly with four local government primary schools (Buza, Bwawani, Kibondemaji and Mtoni Kijichi) in the Temeke District of Tanzania, with the aim of establishing child-centered, gender-sensitive, and quality education that supported student learning. Starting in 2014, OCODE built the capacity of 20 Primary 1 and Primary 2 teachers (5 teachers from each school) to identify struggling students, to support slow learning children with afterschool remedial classes in literacy and numeracy, to develop and use teaching and learning materials/aids, and to use child-centered pedagogical methods (with an emphasis on psychosocial support) during all classes. OCODE worked closely with Vikindu Technical Teachers College, Adem College, Right to Play, Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI), and consultants from local Teachers Resource Centers to provide these training sessions to the primary school teachers. Aside from promoting literacy and numeracy, OCODE also facilitated children's clubs (farming, drama) and provided art therapy to children.

At the same time, OCODE worked closely with communities to understand their needs and the improvements they wanted to see in the schools. Driven by community action, OCODE invested in strengthening the physical school infrastructure and learning environments for children, including developing a school feeding program at all four schools. Similarly, OCODE helped to provide materials (e.g. desks, play materials, printers, computers, textbooks), to construct classrooms, offices, and kitchen facilities, and to build in a running water system and pit latrines where most needed. Throughout every step of this work, OCODE focused very specifically on collaborating closely with government authorities and school officials in order to ensure adequate high-level buy-in to the education programs. OCODE also worked closely with government school quality assurers/inspectors to monitor changes in teaching practices and school management.

Realizing that teacher training alone was not enough to truly support struggling children, starting in 2015, from within the community, OCODE identified, trained, and supported Community-Based Facilitators (CBFs) who visited the homes of the most vulnerable children – those who were malnourished or living with their grandparents – who most struggled with literacy and numeracy. During these home visits, CBFs sought to better understand children's home environments, to sensitize parents on the importance of their engagement in their child's schooling, to build parents' skills in supporting learning through play, and to provide support (e.g. homework help) to children. OCODE provided these CBFs with intensive training in teaching literacy and numeracy, facilitating interactions with parents and children, and in psychosocial care and support. In an integrated approach, Community-Based Facilitators provided feedback on children's learning to teachers, so that they could provide more responsive support to children. In 2016, OCODE made a bigger investment in this part of the project, increasing the number of CBFs from 8 to 48.

> *Zulfa is a young girl who lives with her grandmother, her aunt, and her uncle because her mother lives in a different part of the country in order to earn money. At first, she had no numeracy and literacy skills. However, for three months, her Community-Based Facilitator visited her at home twice a week, every week. Over time, she began counting, then doing simple addition, then doing advanced addition. At the same time, she began by sounding out simple syllables, and now she can read complete words and sentences. Zulfa will soon be able to keep up with her more advanced classmates.*

> *This same CBF visits 9 other children, usually visiting each child three times per month for four months – but each plan is tailored to the child.*

In conjunction with the launch of CBFs in 2015, with government support, OCODE set up four Community Evening Learning Centers (CELCs) in the community to support struggling students (currently 154) with the help of 10 professional volunteers – recent graduates from teachers' colleges who were trained by OCODE on supporting children's literacy and numeracy. In OCODE's integrated approach, Community-Based Facilitators were also able to support teaching at these centers and ensure that their home visits were responsive to the lessons taught both at school and at the CELCs. To directly support parents, OCODE sent mobile (SMS) sensitization messages to parents and organized quarterly community meetings to promote involvement in their children's learning. They also trained school committees and community leaders on leadership and management.

Through their emphasis on home visits conducted by community facilitators and the establishment of CELCs, OCODE reported that parents' engagement in learning outcomes of their children increased – verified by teachers, who continued to work closely with parents to understand and address children's learning difficulties. In addition, they reported that there was strong cooperation between teachers, community-based facilitators, and parents, who frequently met together to discuss their children's education. OCODE hoped that more teachers could run remedial classes, but since teachers were not paid for their services, this continued to pose a challenge. This same challenge applied to the Community-Based Facilitators, who also worked on a volunteer basis.

In the classroom, OCODE promoted inclusivity, increasing the number of children living with disabilities in their schools through school and community awareness meetings to reach 19 (7F and 12M). In addition, OCODE reported improved use of teaching aids in the classroom.

Importantly, OCODE observed that the program achieved its objectives in helping struggling children achieve mastery of literacy and numeracy, as seen in the table below. OCODE noted that because the program typically had higher enrollment than the program could support, the percentage of students reached who were able to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy was not as high as it could be. This was a challenge throughout the initiative – general class sizes continued to be very large, with not enough classrooms to support the high numbers of students. Due to increased community interest in the program, both the schools (sometimes 300+ children per classroom now) and remedial classes became overenrolled (100+ children per facilitator), threatening the quality of teaching and leading to teacher burnout. In addition, students in the program were not all of the same age (ranging from 5 to 8 years of age), which was a challenge for teachers. However, despite these obstacles, OCODE consistently improved the skills of a very large percentage of their target number of students.

Year	Target number of students for the program	Actual number of students reached	Number of students reached who improved their literacy and numeracy skills (% of children reached) (% of target)
2014	710	710	638 (89.9%) (89.9%)
2015	269	341	276 (80.9%) (102.6%)
2016	410	600	438 (73.0%) (106.8%)
2017	300	300	192 (64.0%) (64.0%)
*2018	500	773	410 (53.0%) (82.0%)
TOTAL	2,189	2,724	1,954 (71.7%) (89.2%)

The numbers in 2018 are from the Ilala District, where OCODE expanded in 2018.

Due to an overwhelming number of enrollments each year as a result of the Fee-Free Education guideline, OCODE expanded its Early Learning Program to; first, build capacity of teachers who assist children under general (normal) classes[5]. Secondly, because of the congested classrooms, some children couldn't master numeracy and literacy during normal classes and hours; thus, remedial programs came along[6] to rescue those lagging behind through the Community Evening Learning Centers[7]. These were facilitated by 10 professional volunteers. Approximately every center harbored around 50 children who were assisted by two professional volunteers per center. Furthermore, Community Based Facilitators (CBFs) were added to

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[5] Approximately over 300 children are enrolled in STD 1 per year, the number exponentially increases.
[6] Evening program for slow learning children
[7] Over has established 5 of these centers in the five project schools

extend their support to children with severe challenges in their respective households. A total of 11 CBFs[8] managed to attend approximately 33 children monthly.

In terms of engaging in social accountability activities, OCODE was careful to strike the appropriate balance between maintaining their collaborative relationship with government authorities while working together with them to understand how to improve their service delivery. As such, in 2017, OCODE established a group of 10 members to focus on monitoring the expenditure and performance of the Ministry of Education and Sports' Capitation Grant in two of their schools to ensure that the grant responded to the schools' needs. Identification of the schools' needs and priorities actively involved key stakeholders from the government authorities, head teachers, parents, and families.

Following government spending guidelines, OCODE found that 30% of the grant was used for renovation of school infrastructure, 30% for equipment, 20% for school examinations, 10% for sports, and 10% for administration. Though the grant responded to some of the schools' needs, not all of the concerns raised by community stakeholders were addressed by the grant -- indicating the need for flexibility in the way this capitation grant could be spent by schools. In response, OCODE continued sensitizing community members about social accountability, as well as using its seat on the Education Sector Development Committee and the Tanzania Education Network to revise capitation grant guidelines so that they could better response to school needs.

In 2018, based on the success achieved in the Temeke District, OCODE decide to launch the same program in the nearby Ilala District of Dar es Salaam – partnering with five new local primary schools namely Msongola, Yangeyange, Nzasa II, Viwege and Tungini. Having learned from experience, OCODE established the CELCs within the schools' infrastructure, as opposed to within the community in order to avoid children walking back and forth from home multiple times. The main challenge, however, was high enrollment (773), far beyond the capacity of the available infrastructure, leading to only 410 children out of the targeted 500 who could master skills in literacy and numeracy. However, thus far, parents were very supportive of the program.

It is important to note that despite moving to a new district, OCODE monitored the sustainability of the work achieved in the Temeke District. OCODE reported that the Community-Based Facilitators were still well-recognized within the communities, continuing to be called upon by schools and families for support. In addition, teachers trained by OCODE continued to use teaching and learning materials in their classrooms.

Kikundi Cha Wanawake Kilimanjaro Kupambana Na Ukimwi / Women Against AIDS in Kilimanjaro (KIWAKKUKI) – Moshi, Tanzania

Women Against AIDS in Kilimanjaro (KIWAKKUKI) was founded in 1990 by six women who were concerned about the impact of HIV in their community. Women were unknowingly

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[8] More 37 CBF are also involved in early learning under support from another source.

contracting HIV and dying, leaving children parentless. In response, KIWAKKUKI aimed to increase HIV prevention efforts, educate communities about HIV, and increase access to treatment and care for people living with HIV. KIWAKKUKI functions through a coordination of over 150 grassroots community groups (with over 5,000 community volunteers), who are mobilized to respond to community needs – such as managing support groups or home visits for people living with HIV, training for income-generating projects, and following up with children's progress at school.

Through these grassroots groups, KIWAKKUKI understood that children were often the most marginalized and severely affected by the AIDS crisis. At the same time, they noticed that mass numbers of children were completing their primary education without the ability to read and write. Thus, KIWAKKUKI evolved to focus on opportunities that allowed children to meet their full potential – with early education being a key component of this. In addition, with the reduction in global funding for HIV and AIDS relief, KIWAKKUKI knew that an expansion in its focus area would present new opportunities for organizational and programmatic funding. Under the belief that the best way to help children was to help their parents, KIWAKKUKI focused a major part of their intervention on the interaction between parents and children.

Under their early learning initiative, KIWAKKUKI took a multi-pronged approach, working to improve both the school and home learning environments. KIWAKKUKI's approach was guided by the International Child Development Program (ICDP) – a program on which they received capacity building from Norwegian professors in 2003. ICDP is based on the belief that children deserve to be treated with respect and kindness. It supports adults to use culturally appropriate strategies, including play, to support children's social, emotional, and cognitive development, and to respond to children with kindness and respect. KIWAKKUKI – acknowledging the prevalence of corporal punishment and unsafe environments in schools – wanted to use this approach to develop their education program. In 2014, they worked together with the District Education Officer to identify five schools in the Kibosho area that could most use support.

Inspired by TAHEA's Vutamdogo model, KIWAKKUKI established and supported "Learning Clubs" for children in Primary 2 and Primary 3 in the Kibosho Moshi district of Kilimanjaro[9]. These twice-weekly Learning Clubs were facilitated by teachers and peer

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[9] These children are starting primary school from home or from nursery class where they have one teacher. The transition to primary classes is a kind of a shock to children, so in schools supported by KIWAKKUKI they minimize the shock by allocating only one teacher to a class one of Primary- (easier for children to become familiar with one teacher). From class two, the classes are attended by more teachers and para-teachers are also welcomed. The Government directives are mostly emphasizing on literacy and numeracy skills at class two level of primary school.

educators, or unemployed youth leaders in the community who had the ability and passion for community service. These peer educators were trained in the ICDP approach – to provide children with developmentally-appropriate learning experiences, play-based and child-centered activities, and additional homework to improve their literacy and numeracy skills by the time they reached Primary 4. Teachers and peer educators were also trained to develop learning materials from local resources and educated on issues of child rights and child protection, ensuring that all children were treated fairly and kindly. In terms of government involvement, KIWAKKUKI worked hand in hand with the Ward Education Officers to ensure that these officers were regularly visiting the schools to observe progress. In addition, where needed, KIWAKKUKI provided scholastic materials such as pens and exercise books to support the program. Inadequate or lack of infrastructure continue to be a challenge – including inconsistent electricity, crumbling classrooms, and lack of textbooks.

Within KIWAKKUKI's organizational culture, there is a heavy emphasis on community contributions to programs. Whether in the form of time or material goods, the organization saw these contributions as essential to building a sense of community ownership and responsibility into their project. However, parental involvement – and especially male engagement – posed an ongoing difficulty in the program. Many parents lived away from home (working in Dar es Salaam while their children were in Moshi), and many were hesitant about contributing to the school feeding programs – assuming that "fee-free" education meant that no parental contributions were necessary.

KIWAKKUKI wanted to encourage more parents to be involved in the program and wanted to boost the relationship between parents and teachers in service of their children's education. As such, KIWAKKUKI engaged with parents and caregivers through home visits, facilitated by community volunteers (grassroots members of KIWAKKUKI). Trained in the ICDP approach, these volunteers ran a series of right ICDP meetings per cohort and visited parents at home to follow up and train them in ICDP to promote their economic strengthening (through microfinance groups for parents of Primary 2 children), parenting skills, and involvement in their children's schooling. These visits ensured that parents and caregivers were providing a good learning environment for their children, including setting aside dedicated time for homework.

With training from HakiElimu, KIWAKKUKI conducted social accountability monitoring in two of their schools (Usagara and Kirima Juu) to identify reasons for low performance. Through this process, they identified that the poor performance of the two schools was highly correlated with parents' resistance to participating in improving the schools' conditions. KIWAKKUKI conducted a feedback meeting with stakeholders (involving teachers, parents, the ward education officer, village leaders, and community facilitators) and discovered that a major challenge was a lack of hygienic kitchen facilities in the schools – children's food was being exposed to the outside elements and thus causing illness and reduced attendance.

This was a key area where parents could improve their participation and contribute a meaningful solution to the schools. A committee (including village leadership, the ward education officer, the school committee, and parents) came together to create a joint action plan to conduct a sensitization campaign that asked each student's parents to contribute at least two bricks or an

equivalent amount of money to the schools to build a kitchen. With a hygienic and safe kitchen, children's health and nutrition status would improve, and thus attendance and performance would improve. With the community's contributions, parents constructed a kitchen that now serves both schools. Teachers subsequently noticed a reduction of students who were missing school due to food-related illness. KIWAKKUKI believed that this was a first step to developing clear pathways for parents to participate more actively in their students' learning and wellbeing, which would likely improve students' learning outcomes.

Similarly, KIWAKKUKI worked to connect the two schools with a pipe water system so that children no longer had to walk long distances to fetch water by crossing a dangerous road. As of 2019, this running water was supplied to one of the primary schools. KIWAKKUKI planned to conduct this same social accountability monitoring in the remaining three schools they support.

In terms of learning outcomes, KIWAKKUKI reported that the literacy and numeracy skills of children in the program greatly improved. KIWAKKUKI learning clubs impacted over 400 children per year, with 75% of club sessions having good attendance and 90% of children completing Class 4 with mastery in literacy and numeracy skills. At the time of the impact study, 1090 children had benefitted from KIWAKKUKI's initiative. The number of pupils who could not read or write dropped by 37.5% from the time of enrollment in learning clubs in 2015 to the end of 2017. In addition, KIWAKKUKI stated that in all of their schools, there was no child in Primary 5 (who participated in the program) who did not have adequate skills in literacy and numeracy. Previously, many students were entering Primary 7 without these basic skills. The tables below indicate the number of children who mastered the 3 Rs, out of the total number of children in the class, per school in 2015 and 2018. Notably, the children who were in Class 2 and 3 in 2015 were in Class 5 and 6 in 2018 – with almost all children having achieved mastery in literacy and numeracy.

2015	Class 2	Class 3
Kirima Juu	29/46	26/37
Usagara	28/35	24/33
Mango	33/46	44/50
Matunya	21/31	23/30
Nkosangana	35/45	33/50

2018	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6
Kirima Juu	31/34	37/39	40/40	47/47	43/43
Usagara	30/33	36/37	32/36	37/37	29/29
Mango	49/51	34/37	38/40	49/49	54/54

Matunya	52/56	40/43	42/44	30/30	30/30
Nkosangana	52/55	48/49	42/45	50/50	49/49

Before their intervention in 2014, their schools ranked amongst some of the lowest in their respective districts but showed steady improvements over time, as indicated below. As of 2018, one of the schools (Kirima Juu) under KIWAKKUKI was among the top ten schools that posted best results in the Class 7 National Examination in the district, which could be attributed to the intervention made in Primary 3 in 2015.

School	Year	Ranking	
		Primary 4	**Primary 7**
Kirima Juu	2014	-/-	134 out of 262
	2015	188 out of 267	186 out of 266
	2016	. out of 185	16 out of 96
	2017	51 out of 76	-/-
	2018	23 out of 84	7 out of 173
Usagara	2014	-/-	160 out of 262
	2015	249 out of 267	250 out of 266
	2016	130 out of 185	45 out of 171
	2017	89 out of 193	-/-
	2018	170 out of 184	27 out of 173
Mango	2014	-/-	103 out of 262
	2015	200 out of 267	170 out of 266
	2016	92 out 185	63 out of 96
	2017	34 out of 76	-/-
	2018	63 out of 84	35 out of 95
Matunya	2014	-/-	239 out of 262
	2015	222 out of 267	172 out of 266
	2016	180 out of 185	89 out of 171
	2017	70 out of 76	-/-
	2018	78 out of 84	70 out of 95
Nkosangana	2014	-/-	232 out of 262

	2015	243 out of 267	209 out of 266
	2016	181 out of 185	142 out of 171
	2017	162 out of 193	-/-
	2018	158 out of 184	81 out of 95

In addition, KIWAKKUKI reported increased school attendance during the learning clubs, with learning being more enjoyable for children, who were engaged by the more stimulating learning environments. Teachers and peer educators worked together collaboratively, lessening the burden on each group. In addition, these teachers passed on lessons from their training to teachers at the pre-primary and Primary 1 levels – teaching them to develop classroom learning materials and actively engage children. As a result of these peer learning efforts, teachers in Primary 2 and 3 noticed that children were better prepared for learning by the time they joined Primary 2.

In the community, KIWAKKUKI continued to conduct refresher trainings for parents/caregivers on the ICDP approach through intensive meetings. They reported that families were more involved and communicative in their children's learning, aware of the importance of early learning. They reported that 65% of caregivers signed the children's homework exercise books. Likewise, parents were more engaged in their children's schooling through the ICDP training and social accountability training, with 55% of parents attending school meetings and 77% of parents participating in school affairs in 2018 (as compared to 24% in 2014). Due to the KIWAKKUKI's social accountability activities, many of these parents and community members were able to identify issues in their communities (such as overreliance on the government and few teachers) and resolved to work on finding solutions.

Parents have noticed that after receiving training in the ICDP approach, they have better, closer relationships with their children. For example, one father was very violent at home, and it was difficult for his children to study properly. After the community volunteer came to the home to discuss positive parenting practices in a calm, but firm manner, the family has been more peaceful. This father now buys school buy exercise books for his children and even sends money to the community volunteers for their work. He no longer engages in corporal punishment and is engaged in what his children are learning at school. Stories like these have made the community pay attention to issues of children's learning and child protection – and parents in the program have been sharing what they have learned with others in the community.

In the future, KIWAKKUKI wants to acknowledge and respond to children's backgrounds. Many children come from very low-income families, and many live with their grandparents. KIWAKKUKI potentially wants to invest in microfinance programs that help families with income-generating projects, so they can more actively contribute to their children's educational needs. In addition, KIWAKKUKI wants to understand how to respond well to children with disabilities and determine tailored plans for identifying and supporting them.

Lessons Learned

CBOs can improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for the most vulnerable children during their early years.

As seen in each of the partner profiles above, CBOs' holistic interventions hold important potential in improving children's learning outcomes in the early years, and partners measured real changes in literacy and numeracy outcomes for their children. Given the focused nature of our CBO grantee-partners on literacy and numeracy in Primary 1 and 2 (and Primary 3 in one case), it is an area for further exploration as to whether CBOs are equally effective in improving learning outcomes in the later years of school.

In fact, CBO grantee-partner OCODE found that when they switched their target population for intervention from Class III through VII students to Class I and II students, they were able to make a bigger impact on learning outcomes.

> *"When we first started this program, we worked with students in Class III to VII, but we realized that we were not making the impact we wanted. Students kept on entering and graduating Class VII without the necessary skills in reading and writing, so we thought we would try working with the lower grades. Since then, we have seen much bigger impact on literacy and numeracy." - Samson Sitta, Project Officer, OCODE*

Because CBOs are experts at navigating the intersection between the child, the family, the teacher, and the school, it is possible that CBOs are *most* effective at changing learning outcomes in the early years, when this intersection is largest. While this hypothesis must be further tested, our support of these five CBO grantee-partners to expand their services in early childhood development allows them to continue and deepen their work at this intersection.

It is difficult to invest in early learning without preparing grounds for transition into the upper classes and expect maximum returns. Although the benefits from the early learning programmes continue, measures should be put in place minimize the drop off of the positive effects. These include creation of positive and attractive learning environments (physical and social) and teaching strategies used. It will be important to investigate how these models sustainably produce measurable impact year over year.

Family, community, and teacher engagement is critical in the success of early learning programs.

Firelight believes in the power of CBOs to engage their community in sustained social change. Beyond their perceived roles as service providers, we continue to see CBOs as pivotal facilitators of local action, which can often be essential to changing education outcomes for children.

During our guided inquiry and learning questions process, we asked our grantee-partners about the factors in their approach and in their context that enabled and limited their programs to

support children's early learning outcomes. The theme of community engagement as both a powerful enabler and limiter became clear.

Harmful traditional practices and cultural norms sometimes inhibited children's ability to succeed, and the best way to combat them was to involve communities actively in the process of changing mindsets. All CBOs remarked that community engagement and building community awareness of education programs was essential to the success of their programs – as without parental and community involvement, learning would not be as actively supported in the home. For young children, a strong learning environment at home contributed to their ability to learn well at school, and the two environments had to work hand in hand. Growing research indicates that children who have developmental support from their families and communities are more likely to arrive in primary school ready to succeed in school than children who are subjected to excessive stress, such as growing up in poverty or being exposed to violence in their homes.

Building the synergy between home and school can greatly enhance children's readiness and transition. For this reason, CBOs also included government school teachers as key components of their programs – training them not only to use more friendly pedagogical methods in the classroom but also to engage parents in their children's learning. Teachers at the early learning levels were often responsible for interacting directly with parents to identify children who are struggling, and together, they could define and implement strategies that will improve children's learning outcomes.

However, whether through community meetings, home visits, and/or meetings between parents and teachers, these strategies for community engagement required time and investment of resources, whether on the part of CBO staff, volunteers, or teachers themselves. CBOs noted that many teachers and community members volunteered to engage in these processes without any payment, but it is difficult to know how/if these activities could be sustained in the long-term.

Limited funding, staffing, and time, as well as inadequate learning materials and environments, limit what CBOs are able to accomplish.

A consistent message heard from all CBOs in this cluster was that without adequate funding to support both their organizational development as well as basic physical materials and infrastructure, it was difficult to maintain high quality programs. This is most evident for OCODE: after developing a highly successful early learning program, they saw a drastic increase in enrollment at the schools and afterschool classes they supported, which then threatened the quality of the program itself. In the future, CBOs will need support to either invest in the basic requirements for programmatic success, or will have to work with communities to ensure that enrollment limits on the program are understood.

Lateral replication of effective models can offer a way to scale and deepen impact, but it requires facilitation.

While organizations typically did not adopt the entire program models of others, positive lateral replication of program elements speaks to its potential as a tool for scale – especially across a district or a country. But such replication had to be *facilitated* through external means such as

Firelight-funded quarterly meetings of grantees or networking events or site visits. In other words, it was typically not enough to share lessons virtually or online, and our CBO grantee-partners learned best when supported to physically visit each other through either site visits or in-person meetings.

However, it is also important to note that because community-based organizations developed their models in close collaboration with their specific communities, and within their specific contexts, the potential for lateral replication may have been limited to a certain degree. As such, there is potential in understanding how CBOs can share their program models with nearby CBOs (external to Firelight's clusters), where contexts might be more similar to their own.

With the establishment of a strong cluster of organizations that has been able to cross-pollinate lessons learned on an ongoing basis, lateral replication is a tool that CBOs continue to explore. In addition, with the integration of the early learning partners into the wider early childhood development initiative at Firelight, we are excited to see how partners in this cluster learn from a wider group of community-based organizations – supporting both the lateral replication of their own models and other organizations' models. For example, TAHEA's Vutamdogo model has also been shared with Firelight partners outside of Tanzania, including Namwera AIDS Coordinating Committee in Malawi and Luapula Foundation in Zambia – with the hope of a cross-country partnership to support the replication of TAHEA's model.

> Given the Tanzanian political context, social accountability activities enable CBOs to engage government in a positive manner.

It is important to note the power and potency of strong, collaborative relationships with local authorities – these should not be overlooked in education systems where CBOs are exceptionally well-placed to, and often *must*, work with government authorities. Because the process of engaging communities to then hold government accountable takes time, resources, and careful planning, it will be important for Firelight to monitor grantee-partners' activities and results in social accountability over the coming years.

In summary, we learned:

1- Social accountability and monitoring can serve as strong catalyzing tools to bring about significant improvements in education service delivery. These processes raise awareness among communities about their rights, and mobilize them to hold government officials accountable as 'duty bearers' – in ensuring education services are delivered effectively.

2- Involved CBO and community stakeholders were receptive and accepting of the values and concepts involved in the notion of social accountability. They appreciated that the capacity building provided them with skills to engage diplomatically and collaboratively with government officials.

3- Government officials were receptive to CBOs' and communities' engagement in social accountability. Good relationships with district officials facilitated access to documents

such as strategic plans, expenditure frameworks, and audited and unaudited reports. District officials noted that community involvement can improve the quality and relevance of services provided.

Overall, our CBO grantee-partners found social accountability practices and social accountability monitoring to provide a powerful approach and set of tools to mobilize community-driven advocacy for improvements in government education delivery. The ways in which CBOs, communities, and governments engage with each other will continue to require thoughtfulness, respect, and accountability, in order to achieve the best education services and outcomes for young children. As we build the capacity of other clusters of Firelight grantee-partners in social accountability, it will be important to continue to explore and learn from how CBOs implement social accountability process.

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A systems approach is required from the beginning.

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For Firelight, it is important to note that our self-reflections from this grant, our other initiatives, and our recent Hewlett-supported research into CBO capacity building have encouraged us to initiate changes to our own model of capacity building support. These include a focus on systems thinking and tools to approach systems change from the beginning of an initiative, a greater emphasis on research and evidence that is rigorous and can be incorporated into the skillset of our CBO partners and a wider range of capacity building from normative change approaches to social accountability tools.

Whether we were seeding innovations or supporting ongoing initiatives, Firelight and our CBO grantee-partners have been committed to doing so much more than simply funding services. Our investment remained focused on supporting community-based organizations to help change the fundamental structures in which children live and therefore their long-term outcomes. For instance, our facilitation of capacity building in social accountability for CBO grantee-partners in this cluster allowed them to take a high-level view of their role in the system – and they began to see themselves more as collaborative enablers of community action for government accountability, rather than only as direct service providers.

For Firelight, we have learned that it is essential to take a systems thinking approach from the beginning of an initiative –looking at the role played by all stakeholders including communities and the government, looking at what points of leverage and influence are or could be within the purview of the CBO and the community and looking at how to involved all stakeholders in that fundamental change. We are grateful for the substantial extension on our final grant in order to be able to put some of these systems practices into place and we believe that any initiative needs to consider and fund them from the beginning.

Way forward

While some of these CBO grantee-partners have already been active in implementing early childhood development initiatives, all five CBOs indicated a desire to expand their early learning programming beyond the early primary years. As such, all of our early learning CBO grantee-

partners have joined our larger ECD initiative, with grantees in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia. Under this initiative, these CBOs will have the opportunity to continue to grow their expertise in early childhood education while building a strong pipeline of opportunity for children from home to primary school. Partners will benefit from capacity building that deepens their understanding of ECD to better equip them to implement activities that promote numeracy and literacy levels and smooth transition into early primary education.