

NYANSAPO

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READ, COUNT AND PLAY

Attaining the foundational Literacy and Numeracy Skills for All Learners by Grade 3

BASELINE SURVEY REPORT

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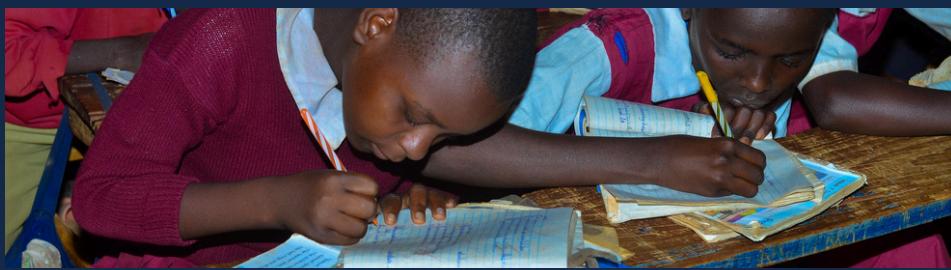
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FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING IN KENYA

A Foundational learning refers to the basic reading and numeracy skills that children are expected to acquire in the early years of primary school. Skills that is essential for continued progress in education. Kenya's education sector has undergone major reforms in recent decades aimed at expanding access and improving quality. Free Primary Education, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), and increased public investments have led to near-universal school enrollment. However, these efforts have not translated into meaningful improvements in learning outcomes. Many children are in school but are not learning at the level expected for their age and grade.

According to UNICEF, about 70 percent of Grade 3 learners in Kenya cannot read and comprehend a simple Grade 2-level story, and less than half can solve basic mathematics problems such as addition and subtraction. [Uwezo Kenya](#) and [Kenya National Examinations Council \(KNEC\)](#) assessments support these findings, revealing significant weaknesses in literacy and numeracy across early primary grades. The problem is even more severe in rural and marginalized areas, where overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of trained teachers, poor infrastructure, and limited access to learning materials hinder effective teaching and learning.

The government has introduced various national initiatives to address this crisis, including the Tusome Early Grade Reading Programme and the ongoing rollout of CBC, which emphasizes learner-centered and competency-based instruction. While these programs have shown positive results in some schools, their impact remains uneven, and large gaps persist, particularly in arid, semi-arid, and underserved regions. The current situation highlights the urgent need for innovative, inclusive, and context-specific strategies to improve foundational learning for all children.



EDUCATION IN KITUI COUNTY



Kitui County, located in Kenya's semi-arid Eastern region, has made considerable progress in expanding access to education. With over 1,500 public primary schools, the county benefits from national education policies such as Free Primary Education (FPE) and capitation grants. However, despite high enrollment rates, the county continues to face critical learning gaps. According to the 2014 [Uwezo Annual Learning Assessment](#), only 33% of Standard 3–6 pupils in Kitui could read a Standard 2 English story, and just 30% could solve a division problem at that level. These findings placed Kitui among counties with below-average foundational learning outcomes, underscoring the persistence of learning poverty even in areas with relatively good school attendance.

Several factors contribute to the poor learning outcomes in Kitui. Many schools are located in remote or drought-prone areas where infrastructure is inadequate, and teacher absenteeism remains a concern. In its 2019 report, the [Kenya National Bureau of Statistics \(KNBS\)](#) noted that only 17% of households in Kitui had access to electricity, and many learners travel long distances to attend school, affecting regular attendance and concentration. Despite interventions such as the Tusome programme, the impact remains uneven. As a result, many learners, especially in wards like Voo/Kyamatu, are still unable to meet basic literacy and numeracy benchmarks, demonstrating the urgent need for targeted, localized interventions to address the root causes of poor learning outcomes.

RATIONAL OF THE BASELINE SURVEY

Before rolling out the Read, Count and Play project in Voo/Kyamatu Ward, it was necessary to first establish a clear understanding of the current learning levels among learners in the targeted schools. The baseline survey was therefore conducted to gather data on learners' foundational literacy and numeracy skills, with a focus on Grades 3 to 6. This information was vital in ensuring that the project design would be responsive to the real needs on the ground, rather than relying on assumptions or national statistics.

The survey provided critical insight into existing learning gaps across the ward. It revealed which learners could read with comprehension or solve grade-level mathematical tasks, and which ones were still struggling with foundational skills. This allowed the project team to identify priority schools and learner groups that required more intensive support, ensuring that interventions were both targeted and equitable.

The baseline findings served as a critical reference point for monitoring and evaluating the project's impact over time. As the project progressed, subsequent assessments — including the endline survey, were designed to be compared against this baseline data to measure improvements in learning outcomes. This approach helped determine whether the Read, Count and Play project was achieving its goal of enhancing literacy and numeracy among early grade learners.

Beyond measurement, the baseline directly influenced how resources were allocated. It guided decisions regarding volunteer and teacher training, the structuring of learning camps, and the distribution of learning materials. By grounding the project in local evidence, the baseline survey ensured that Read, Count and Play was responsive to the actual needs and realities of learners in Voo/Kyamatu Ward , thereby increasing the potential for meaningful and sustainable learning gains.



STUDY APPROACH



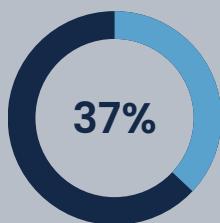
Grade Level	Planned Learners	Achieved
3	352	253
4	367	280
5	428	363
6	382	313
TOTAL	1546	1209

Table 1: Planned and achieved Learners by Grade

BASELINE FINDINGS

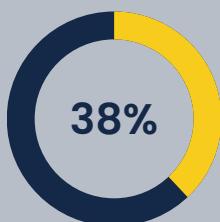


Literacy



2 out of every 5 children enrolled in Grades 3 to 6 in Voo/Kyamatu Ward can read and comprehend a Grade 2-level English story. Although **47% of Grade 6 learners** could read and comprehend, this proportion drops significantly to just **24%** among **Grade 3 learners**. A large number of learners in lower grades remain non-readers or are only able to recognize letters and words without understanding full sentences. These findings point to serious gaps in foundational reading skills and reinforce the need for early intervention.

Numeracy



2 out of every 5 children in **Grades 3 to 6** in Voo/Kyamatu Ward can solve a Grade 3-level mathematics task. While **55% of Grade 6 learners** demonstrated proficiency in numeracy, only **14% of learners in Grade 3** reached this benchmark. Foundational gaps are evident, particularly in early grades where more than half of the learners struggle with basic arithmetic such as subtraction and multiplication. These results highlight the urgent need to strengthen numeracy skills early in the learning cycle to support future academic progress.

Combined Proficiency



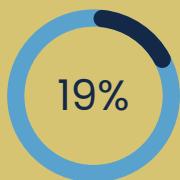
Only **1 out of every 5** children in **Grades 3 to 6** in Voo/Kyamatu Ward is proficient in both literacy and numeracy. Despite some learners showing strength in either reading or mathematics, only a small proportion could successfully complete both tasks at Grade 3 level. This low combined proficiency highlights a significant learning crisis, where a majority of children are missing out on the foundational skills required for continued learning and development.

ASSESSMENT FOCUS

Literacy :Girls Vs Boys



56.7% of girls assessed in Grades 3 to 6 could read and comprehend a Grade 2-level English story, compared to **43.3%** of boys. This gender gap in literacy highlights stronger reading outcomes among girls and points to the need for additional support to improve boys' foundational literacy skills.



Combined proficiency



Literacy: Girls



Numeracy: Girls Vs. Boys



In numeracy, **54.7%** of girls in **Grades 3 to 6** could correctly solve Grade 3-level mathematics tasks, compared to **45.3%** of boys. This indicates that girls are also outperforming boys in foundational numeracy, though the gender gap is narrower than in literacy.



Combined Proficiency: Girls vs. Boys

In Voo/Kyamatu Ward, **57.6%** of girls were proficient in both literacy and numeracy, compared to **42.4%** of boys. This shows that girls are more likely than boys to have mastered foundational skills across both domains, reinforcing the overall trend of stronger academic performance among female learners.

Girls



Combined

Vs

Boys



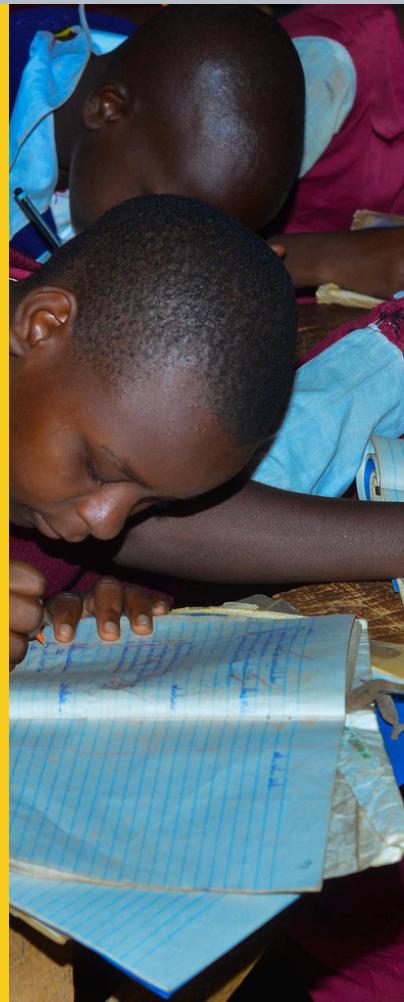
INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The baseline assessment results reveal substantial gaps in foundational learning across Voo/Kyamatu Ward, with marked differences by grade level and gender. Literacy outcomes show that only 36.9%, roughly two out of every five learners in Grades 3 to 6 could read and comprehend a Grade 2-level English story. Although reading proficiency rises to 64% among Grade 6 learners, it falls sharply to just 40% in Grade 3. This steep gradient suggests that a significant proportion of learners begin upper primary with weak literacy foundations, limiting their ability to access the broader curriculum. Many younger learners remain non-readers or are limited to basic decoding skills without full comprehension, pointing to the urgent need for targeted early-grade interventions.

Numeracy performance presents a similar pattern. Only 38.1% of learners in Grades 3 to 6 could solve a Grade 3-level mathematics task. While more than half (53%) of Grade 6 learners met the benchmark, just one in four (25%) Grade 3 learners demonstrated the same proficiency. This indicates that mathematical understanding is building over time, but too slowly to ensure all learners are on track. The largest gaps appear in early grades, where many children struggle with fundamental arithmetic operations such as subtraction and multiplication, underscoring the need for consistent and progressive numeracy instruction from the lower grades.



When literacy and numeracy performance are considered together, the picture becomes more concerning. Only 21.8%, about one in five learners demonstrated proficiency in both domains. This means that even among children who are strong in one area, few possess the balanced skill set required to thrive in the next stages of learning. Such low combined proficiency signals a foundational learning crisis, where the majority of learners risk falling behind in more complex academic tasks.



Gender analysis reveals that girls are consistently outperforming boys across all domains. In literacy, 56.7% of girls could read and comprehend a Grade 2-level text compared to 43.3% of boys. In numeracy, 54.7% of girls met the Grade 3-level benchmark versus 45.3% of boys, with the gap narrower than in literacy. For combined proficiency, 57.6% of those achieving competency in both literacy and numeracy were girls, while boys accounted for just 42.4%. These findings point to a sustained advantage for female learners in foundational skills, and highlight the need to explore and address factors contributing to boys' lower performance.

Overall, the results provide a clear starting point for the Read, Count and Play project. They identify priority areas, notably early-grade literacy and numeracy support, gender-responsive interventions, and targeted assistance for the lowest-performing schools, which will guide the design and implementation of project activities.



IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

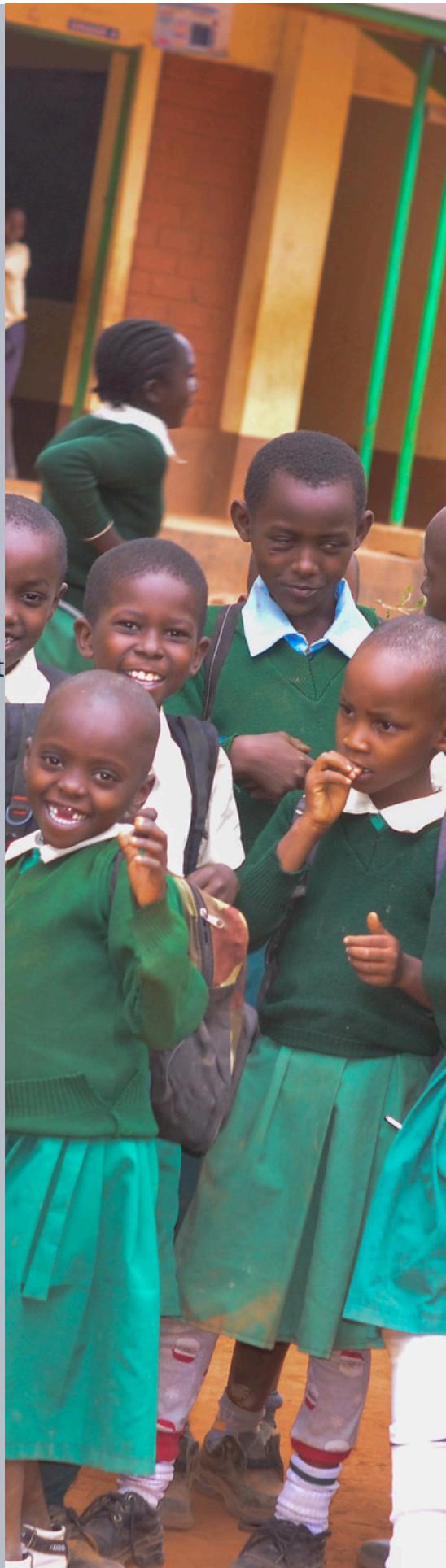
The camps will prioritize literacy activities in the initial phase, given the significant gaps identified in early grade reading skills. Participation will focus on learners in the lower grades, as most Grade 3 pupils leave school by 2:00 PM and are therefore unable to attend the camps, which will be conducted between 2:45–3:45 PM.

The sessions will be designed as fun, game-based activities that promote active participation and reinforce core skills. This learner-centered approach will ensure that foundational skills are strengthened engagingly and memorably.

To guarantee effective delivery, teachers in the pilot schools will be trained and supported with a structured curriculum, teaching materials, and classroom resources. The training and implementation will be coordinated by lead coaches, who will provide continuous mentorship throughout the program.

The project will also work closely with education stakeholders, including the county government, curriculum support officers, and headteachers, to strengthen ownership, align with county education priorities, and ensure smooth implementation at the school level.

Finally, endline assessments will be conducted after the camps to measure learning progress and identify successful strategies. These results will not only inform improvements to the program but also provide a foundation for scaling effective approaches beyond the pilot schools, extending impact to more learners across the ward and eventually the county.



THANK YOU

