

# TaRL Africa Managing Director

Teaching at the Right Level Africa is a new high-profile initiative jointly led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and the Indian Education NGO Pratham. We currently seek a dynamic Managing Director to drive a scale up of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) learning approach to more than 3 million primary school children in Africa over the next five years. Core to this role is helping to build a collaborative, unified TaRL Africa team that works across multiple countries and partners to achieve our goal of supporting education systems throughout the continent.

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## About Teaching at the Right Level Africa

Despite immense progress in school enrollment in Africa, millions of children in schools across the continent are not acquiring basic reading and arithmetic skills.

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) is an evidence-backed approach that helps children develop basic reading and mathematics skills, opening doors to a brighter future. Pioneered by Pratham, TaRL is based on several key elements at the classroom level:

1. Using a simple tool, children are assessed on their ability to read and do arithmetic.
2. Children are then grouped for instruction by level, rather than by grade. For a dedicated time each day the focus is on building foundational skills through activities and materials appropriate for each group.
3. As children progress, they move to the next learning group and continue to grow.

Shifting from "schooling for all" to "learning for all" also requires critical systems-level support. This includes working with stakeholders to adjust the approach to local contexts, developing and supporting a cadre of mentors, continually assessing basic skills, and empowering government officials and teachers to act on data.

Since 2001, J-PAL affiliated researchers have tested the TaRL approach through rigorous impact evaluations. Six randomised evaluations in India over the past two decades and a growing body of research in Africa have shown that TaRL has achieved some of the most consistent and cost-effective learning gains of any primary education programme evaluated.

Pratham and J-PAL have come together to launch a new team in Africa to support the growth of Teaching at the Right Level across the continent.

**In order to support TaRL approaches in multiple countries, the team is working to:**

- **Embed TaRL in government systems.** We directly support governments and their partners to develop TaRL approaches that are adapted to local contexts, and embedded within existing education systems.
- **Support nimble TaRL innovators.** Several partner organisations are also currently designing, implementing, or supporting TaRL approaches in Africa. We provide both technical support and learn from their programmes.
- **Build a movement.** Across Africa, the education community has recognised a need for focusing on foundational reading and mathematics. We aim to connect and grow TaRL "leaders of practice" who will innovate and spread effective approaches to build a movement for foundational learning across Africa.
- **Learn and improve.** We are crafting an ambitious research and learning agenda to explore how to adapt the TaRL approach in a portfolio of countries and settings such that it can be cost-effectively scaled across the continent.

For more information about Teaching at the Right Level in action, visit [tarl.info](http://tarl.info).

## About J-PAL and Pratham

J-PAL is a global research centre based at MIT working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. We build partnerships with governments, NGOs, donors, and others to share this knowledge, scale up effective programmes, and advance evidence-informed decision-making.

Pratham is an innovative learning organisation, with a belief that every child should be in school and learning well. For the past two decades and more, Pratham has focused on high-quality, low-cost learning improvement interventions that help millions of children progress and thrive.

## The TaRL Africa Managing Director

The inaugural TaRL Africa Managing Director will report to the TaRL Africa Board<sup>i</sup>. The position will be based in Accra, Johannesburg or Nairobi, a decision which is currently being finalised. She or he will lead and grow the TaRL Africa Initiative. The Managing Director will be passionate about people, partners, evidence, and shifting education systems to deliver on "learning for all". She or he will be respectful of, and adaptable to different cultures and contexts, excited to build a diverse team, and create a new organisational culture spanning multiple countries. The Managing Director will work with existing staff from J-PAL and Pratham already staffing the TaRL Africa Team.

### Role

- Drive the mission and strategy of TaRL Africa to improve basic literacy and numeracy of children on the continent through enabling systems to deliver quality TRL programmes sustainably at scale
- Build TaRL Africa as an organization which is effectively communicating and functioning as one team across 4 or more countries.
- Recruit, lead and manage the TaRL Africa team to an eventual strength of over 20 staff members based in central and country offices.
- Develop an organizational culture promoting the values and ambitions of learning for all children, innovation and research, scale, and sustainability
- Efficiently manage an annual budget of more than US\$ 5 million including financial, operational, and legal controls
- Develop and manage partnerships with key stakeholders, including government and NGO partners
- Engage with the global donor community and fundraise for TaRL Africa delivery and long-term sustainability

### Experience

The Managing Director will have a minimum of 10 years relevant experience including:

- Building and directing a significant organization with a track record of achieving results at scale
- Leading and managing a portfolio of programmes/ initiatives in international development coupled with on-the-ground implementation experience
- Growing and supporting teams across multiple locations to work collaboratively and deliver effectively on a common vision
- Working with governments to deliver programmes and strengthen systems
- Living in a developing country for at least 5 years
- Demonstrating contextual knowledge of Africa
- Building a track record of managing demanding donor relationships and proactively cultivating new donor relationships

### Education

Master's or advanced degree in public policy, education, economics, business or another related field.

### Competencies

- Exceptional critical and strategic thinking and delivery capabilities
- Exceptional people leadership skills
- Skilled in building constructive dialogue and collaboration, developing teams in multiple locations and building organisation
- Action-oriented, flexible approach and problem-solver, with an ability to manage multiple competing deadlines and dynamically reprioritize as evolving programme needs and resources require
- Highly organized with outstanding project management skills
- Ability to build strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders around the globe
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English and demonstrated ability to foster strong communication across diverse team members, partners and audiences
- Availability for and willingness to travel extensively

### Advantageous

- Strong preference for African nationals
- Experience innovating with large-scale education systems
- Language skills: French and/or African languages

### How to apply

Please visit [tarl.info/app](http://tarl.info/app) to complete an application and include:

- Cover letter detailing your experience and interest in this position
- CV

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and we encourage you to apply early. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted and will likely be required to undergo an assessment process before interview rounds.

This position is planned to be hired by MIT as an Africa-based, grant-funded position. Short-listed applicants may be required to enter their details into MIT's recruitment system later in the process, but this is not necessary at this time. MIT is an equal employment opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, or national or ethnic origin.

If you have questions about the position, please email [recruitment@teachingattherightlevel.org](mailto:recruitment@teachingattherightlevel.org).

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i. The TaRL Africa Board will include Abhijit Banerjee (Co-Founder and Director of J-PAL), Rukmini Banerji (CEO of Pratham), Madhav Chavan (Co-Founder of Pratham), Laura Poswell (Executive Director of J-PAL Africa)