

Concept Note: The Early Years Teaching Fellowship (The FLN Ignite)

Introduction

The right to a strong foundation is a cornerstone of every child's education journey. However, millions of children around the world are denied this fundamental right due to a severe teacher shortage. An estimated 6 million more teachers are needed to achieve global education goals, with low-income countries like Tanzania being particularly affected. Alarming, 57% of pre-primary teachers in these countries lack training, leaving millions of children without access to quality early childhood education.

This shortage has devastating consequences. By 2030, a staggering 37% of children may lack reading proficiency, condemning them to a lifelong cycle of educational disadvantage. Moreover, only 4% of the poorest children have books at home, a critical resource for early childhood learning. Without access to quality education and resources, these children are left behind, struggling to catch up and succeed.

The Problem

Tanzania has made significant strides in increasing access to pre and primary education, with the government's decision to make education free for all students. However, despite this progress, the quality of education remains a concern. Many students in Grade 1-3 struggle to read a single word or perform simple arithmetic operations. The system is not well-designed to address the needs of students who are first-generation learners or lack basic literacy and numeracy skills during childhood. Children are grouped by age, regardless of their learning level, leading to students falling behind and struggling to catch up. *With early years teachers already in short supply*, many are assigned to teach older students in Standard 4 and 7 due to high demand for exam prep. This leads to millions of students never reaching their full potential due to inadequate learning outcomes.

This problem is common in many resource-limited communities around Tanzania. In fact, a recent study found that *over 50% of students in Grade 1-3 in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and perform arithmetic operations at an acceptable level.*

The Solution

The FLN Ignite addresses the problem of inadequate learning outcomes in public pre and primary schools by implementing a student-centered approach that prioritizes individual learning levels over age or grade. The program recruits outstanding Tanzanian graduates and provides them with comprehensive residential four week training on the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) methodology, a proven approach to improve learning outcomes and assign them in high-demand and low-resourced public pre and primary schools for a two-year teaching commitment after passing a rigorous selection process.

Project Location

The scale up for the first two years will be in Bunda and Serengeti District in Mara region Tanzania. The first cohort will include 20 fellows who will be placed into 10 public pre and primary schools, two fellows for each school.

Key Programmatic Components:

- Assessment of students using a simple testing tool to identify their learning levels
- Grouping students according to their learning levels, rather than age or grade



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- Targeted instruction in foundational literacy and numeracy skills through engaging activities and materials (Play-Based)
- Placement of trained fellows in high-demand and low-resourced public primary schools for a two-year teaching commitment after passing a rigorous selection process
- Equip parents and caregivers in engaging with their children's education at home and collaborate with teachers

Impact: The FLN Ignite aims to improve learning outcomes for thousands of students in low-income communities in Tanzania by providing targeted instruction and support, we expect to see significant improvements in students' literacy and numeracy skills, as well as increased parental engagement and community involvement in education.

Furthermore, this project will have a positive impact on the holistic development of young children, including:

- Improved cognitive development through enhanced literacy and numeracy skills
- Enhanced social-emotional development through play-based activities and teacher-student interactions
- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem through targeted instruction and support
- Better preparedness for future academic success through foundational skills development

Budget: We are seeking \$250,000 in funding to support the scale up of The FLN Ignite program for the two years 2025-2026. The budget breakdown is as follows:

S/N	Budget Item	Cost
1.	Project Management & Fellows Stipend	\$85,000
2.	Recruitment, Selection & Matriculation	\$20,000
3.	Residential TaRL methodology Training	\$40,000
4.	Placement & On-going support	\$56,000
5.	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning & Impact Measurement	\$35,000
6.	Contingency fund	\$14,000
	Total	\$250,000

Conclusion: The FLN Ignite offers a unique opportunity to address the critical issue of inadequate learning outcomes in low-income families in Tanzania. With this plan to scale up the program, it will empower thousands of students with the skills they need to succeed in school and beyond. This project will also have a positive impact on the holistic development of young children, laying the foundation for their future success.

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We believe that this project has the potential to make a significant impact on the lives of these students and families, and we look forward to partnering with funders and donors to make this vision a reality.

Addendum: Photos of impact during the Piloting



Supporting Documents

A recent case study published by Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). 2018. "Teaching at the Right Level Improves learning." J-PAL Evidence to Policy Case Study. Last modified August 2022. (<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/case-study/teaching-right-level-improve-learning>)

A report by the World Bank on Learning to Realize Education's Promise, highlights the need for improved teaching practices and better learning outcomes for students (<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e3b10485-6eaf-556c-a82e->

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The Global report on early childhood care and education: the right to a strong foundation by UNESCO and UNICEF <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000390215>

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/initiative-project/play-based-learning-intervention-early-childhood-development-rural-tanzania>