

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

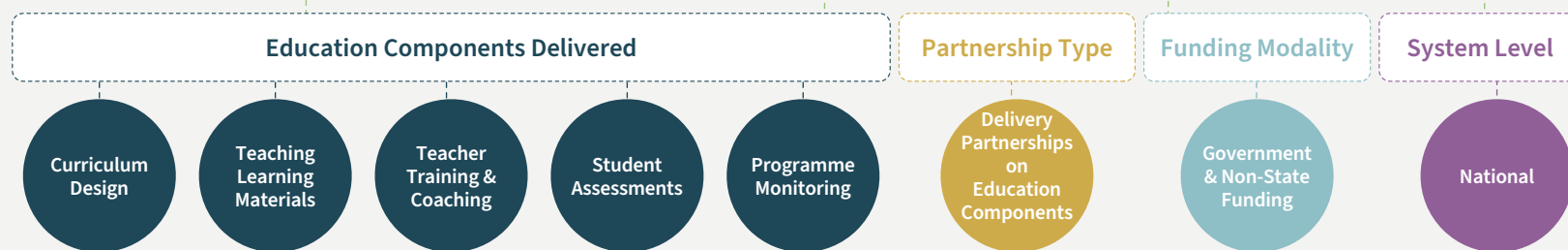
GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Tusome Early Grade Reading, Kenya



Categorisation Framework



CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

KENYA

~53.01 mn
population
(2021)



32,594
Number of primary
schools (public and
private)¹ (2021)



10.3 mn
Number of primary
students (public
and private)¹ (2021)



220,000
Number of public
primary teachers¹
(2021)

Glossary

DFID	UK Department for International Development, now Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)
FPE	Free Primary Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
PRIMR	Primary Mathematics and Reading
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WERK	Women Educational Researchers of Kenya

Timeline of the Partnership Development

2003

Free primary education introduced in Kenya to enhance enrolment

2007

USAID and MoE ran a one-year RCT in 40 schools in Malindi district on remedial reading interventions with positive results²

2012-2014

Low learning outcomes in Kenya led USAID and DFID, with MoE, to fund a three-year applied research programme, the Primary Math and Reading Initiative (PRIMR)³

2014

Tusome was set up as a result of demonstrated impact and learning from the PRIMR interventions⁴

2015-2022

Tusome successfully implemented country-wide, reaching 7.8 Mn students in grades 1 to 3⁵

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Background of the Partnership

In 2003, Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced in Kenya, promising every child the right to free and compulsory basic education. However, despite several years of education investment in the country, literacy rates were below expected levels. In the late 2000's, less than 10% of Grade 2 students in Kenya were meeting national literacy benchmarks for English and Kiswahili in standardised tests.⁶

In 2007, USAID and the Ministry of Education (MoE) conducted a one-year RCT in 40 schools in Malindi District where half the students received remedial reading interventions. This led to significant improvements in reading scores within nine months, and this outcome led to the launch of the PRIMR initiative.⁷

From 2012 to 2014, USAID, along with DFID (now FCDO), MoE, and the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoEST), partnered with RTI International as the technical implementer to launch the PRIMR initiative, which aimed to enhance literacy and numeracy skills in Grades 1 and 2 through innovative approaches and interventions.⁵ PRIMR covered 1,384 schools (funded by USAID and DFID).⁶ Based on the learnings and successful results from PRIMR, a new program was launched in 2014 called the Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity.

Taking its name from the Kiswahili word meaning “let’s read,” Tusome was an eight-year programme developed “to increase learning outcomes for 7.6 million children in Grades 1, 2, and 3 in Kenya”

It was led by the Ministry of Education with USAID-funded technical support provided by RTI International as the primary implementer, and partner organisations, Women Educational Researchers of Kenya, Worldreader, and Dalberg Global Development Advisors⁵.



CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

Implementation Timeline
Design of the Programme

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Overview of the Programme

Implementation Timeline

2012
-
2014

Launch of PRIMR

The PRIMR initiative was launched with the aim to improve literacy and numeracy skills in Grades 1 and 2 through targeted interventions. Under this initiative, three strategies were tested simultaneously for effectiveness and cost-efficiency in three cohorts of schools to enhance reading outcomes:

- 1. Teacher Professional Development (TPD)** and instructional support through coaching
- 2. Literacy and numeracy books** provided to each child with TPD and instructional support
- 3. Structured lesson plans** with TPD and instructional support

RTI's study under PRIMR found that the third strategy (providing structured lesson plans alongwith TPD and instructional support to teachers) was the most effective in improving student learning outcomes.⁸

2014

Scaling the programme leading to the launch of Tusome

After obtaining the results from PRIMR, USAID was eager to scale the programme sooner than was initially planned by RTI. However, RTI preferred to wait for the PRIMR endline evaluation, particularly the study assessing the value of including a teacher guide and the estimates of impacts from the various language choices. Using data gathered through this endline assessment with evidence obtained through field observations by government officials, a decision was taken to scale the programme to the country level. This comprehensive analysis led to the creation of Tusome.

2015
-
2023

Tusome's impact and outreach

Tusome was launched in 2015 and was implemented in over 25,000 schools across Kenya (including 1,500 low-cost private schools), impacting 101,000 teachers and 7.6 million students.

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

Implementation Timeline
Design of the Programme

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Design of the Programme

The Tusome model focused on four key interventions to improve literacy outcomes⁵:

1 Enhance classroom instruction

Each teacher was provided with continuous teacher professional development (TPD) and coaching support, with coaching as a central pillar of support to teachers. They were also given well-designed and easy-to-use teacher guides, including lesson plans aligned to the student textbooks.

2 Improve access to learning materials

Every child studying in a public school in Kenya, from Grades 1 to 3, had access to high-quality textbooks and supplementary material aligned with national standards and curriculum objectives. Additionally, students and teachers with vision and hearing disabilities were provided with adapted textbooks and guides in braille and big book formats.

3 Expand instructional support & supervision

Teachers were given tablets and trained on their use to help track student performance and to provide feedback and receive support in return. To help coaches monitor student learning more efficiently, insights from collected student assessments and classroom observation data were assessed. This enabled data informed decision-making at the Ministry level, strengthening system management and informing implementation approaches. Coaches and Curriculum Support Officers (CSO's) were reimbursed for their travel expenses using mobile money (M-PESA), with the number of schools and classrooms visited verified using GPS.

4 Collaborate with system level literacy players for system strengthening

Senior county and national education leaders were trained in new reading techniques to address gaps in relevant laws, policies, strategies, and regulations affecting early-grade reading. Special funds, including the Youth Fund and the Partnership Fund, were set up primarily to support reading outcomes and foster collaboration between public and private-sector partners. The aim was to create reading champions and instil a reading culture in local communities through collaborative efforts.¹⁰

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Roles & Responsibilities of Partners

The programme worked closely with a range of partners, including the Ministry of Education (MoE), county governments, and development partners, to build support and ensure effective implementation. Below is a detailed roster of their responsibilities.

Ministry of Education

The MoE played a crucial role in integrating Tusome into the government's basic education curriculum. They not only provided TPD and instructional support to teachers, but also developed Teaching Learning Material (TLM) for students and teachers and provided resources to integrate the programme into the public school system.

RTI International

RTI took charge of the implementation of Tusome in line with the annual work plan jointly developed with the Ministry of Education, and provided technical expertise. By working closely with the MoE, RTI conducted test and pilot interventions to trial various implementation approaches, such as scripting teacher lesson plans and determining coach visitation schedules. Collaborating with the Kenyan government, RTI engaged curriculum support officers and coaches to provide continuous support to teachers. They were also able to engage with county directors of education, ensuring active participation throughout the implementation process.⁶



Women Educational Researchers of Kenya (WERK)

WERK played a significant role in supporting the programme's implementation. They supervised the delivery of instructional support provided to teachers through instructional coaches in informal schools (Alternative Provision of Basic Education and Training schools).⁶

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Worldreader

The non-profit organisation provided 660 e-readers loaded with 210 e-books in English and Kiswahili, along with Tusome pupil materials to 66 schools in Kenya under the programme. It also conducted trainings for curriculum support officers and teachers on the e-reading programme.^{9,10}

Funding Breakdown

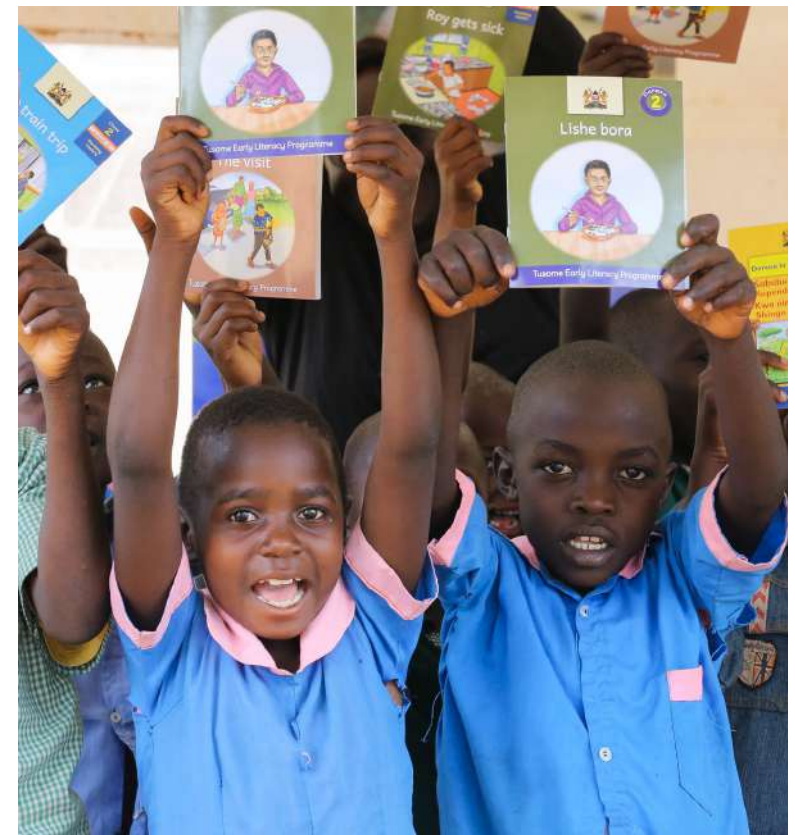
USAID and DFID were initially supporting the government of Kenya to run Tusome. DFID initially contributed USD 5 million, but their program size eventually reduced.

Since 2015, the Kenyan government has invested USD 62.5 million in curriculum support officers, TLM, and teachers to co-fund the Tusome programme with USAID in all public schools and 1500 low-fee private schools.

For every \$1 that USAID invested in Tusome, the Kenyan government contributed \$0.70 to support early primary education.¹¹

USAID

The international development agency provided funded technical support, guidance, and commitment to the initiative, which informed the scale-up of the programme.



CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Key Success Factors of the Partnership

Sustained commitment from the government



The government's continued interest led to significant advancements, such as the distribution of lower-priced books to children across various subjects. Over the years, their investment has grown too, reaching a point where they have distributed materials on a one-to-one ratio for many learning areas, emphasising the broader positive impact of the Tusome programme. The government's financial contribution also expanded to cover additional grades and nearly 1500 non-state schools. This adaptability underscores the success of Tusome in meeting evolving educational needs, reflecting a collaborative approach. RTI managed to accomplish outcomes beyond the initial plans, enabling other opportunities and further rounds of funding from the government.

Typically, bilateral programmes do not request initial financial contributions from partner governments. However, Tusome's case is unique — the Kenyan government used its resources in three rounds to print and distribute materials across different grades, totaling approximately 6 million books over the last five years. The government's decision to allocate its funds for printing and distribution was driven by the evident value and demand for the materials.

Teachers' contribution



The key factor in gaining support for the intervention was the design that allowed teachers to test the PRIMR pilot effectively. The buy-in from teachers came when they found the tasks, especially lesson planning, to be easier and less time-consuming. After implementing the programme, teachers observed significantly better learning outcomes compared to other methods. This ease in classroom instruction and improved results played a crucial role in the high level of teacher support.

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Streamlining teacher workload



A national survey revealed that over 80% of teachers preferred using the books from Tusome as it simplified their teaching tasks.¹² The resistance to switching back to a more time-consuming approach without teacher guides emphasised the importance of having a practical starting point for teachers, making their workload lighter while yielding better outcomes for students.

Proactive support from USAID



From the funder's end, USAID displayed patience in waiting for results, and used evidence and teacher perspectives to guide scaling decisions. The study was complex, involving different treatment groups, but USAID was open and willing to learn from the process.

Affordable & sustainable implementation



A fixed budget of USD 5 per student¹³ ensured affordability and sustainable implementation at scale (costing the government USD 14.2 million for all students in primary school). Tusome invested in building the capacity of government systems, including training CSOs to provide instructional support to teachers and headteachers, and providing tablets with instructional support tools to teachers.

Technology-driven quality improvement



The programme used technology to improve the quality of instruction and support for teachers, including tablets with instructional support tools and a classroom observation feedback system. It also used the learnings from PRIMR, and went beyond it to achieve national coverage. It refined and adapted key elements of the programme based on feedback from teachers, and other stakeholders, which helped to ensure that the programme was effective and sustainable. Tusome was externally evaluated, which helped to build evidence of impact and inform ongoing programme improvements.

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS


ENDNOTES

Impact of the Programme

Improved learning outcomes


The success of the partnership was measured by improvement in student learning outcomes and adoption of the TLM.⁵ The focus on these outcomes remained throughout the duration of the programme and was consistently measured with the programme before (and aims to continue as the government focus).

Tusome's Impact (2014-2023)

 **25,000+** schools
1,500 low-cost private schools included

 **101,000** teachers

 **7.6 million** students

 **26 billion** textbooks and supplementary material provided to primary school students



Significant improvement in education capacity in Kenya

A noteworthy outcome is Kenya's enhanced capacity for large-scale instructional reform. Given that Tusome was implemented nationally and sustained for nearly a decade, the Kenyan education system has been re-oriented to ensure that all children acquire foundational literacy skills in English and Kiswahili in the first few grades of primary school. Tusome also proved to be a valuable initiative demonstrating to officials how large-scale instructional reform should be undertaken. Tusome improved Kenyan education institutions' capacity to create and distribute literacy materials. It involved developing reader frameworks by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and the Kenyan Publishers Association — further establishing new reading benchmarks and national early-grade reading assessments by the Kenya National Examinations Council, and contributing to enhanced literacy resources and assessment standards in Kenya.⁶

Efficient procurement due to cost savings

This collaboration resulted in substantial cost saving for the government, leading to more efficient procurement processes. This further led to more effective use of competition grants and, ultimately, greater impact in providing educational resources.

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Challenges & Mitigation Measures

- **Uncertain political environment**
Because of the change in government leadership, there was uncertainty regarding Tusome's future. However, the government's continuous engagement and commitment played a crucial role in the programme's successful implementation.
- **Reluctance of teacher unions**
In Kenya, the teacher unions were initially hesitant about scaling the programme, as they wished to do their own evaluation of PRIMR's impact based on anecdotal and qualitative evidence. After conducting the evaluation, they supported the scale-up, indicating their support to the programme without seeking additional resources.
- **Regulatory challenges in innovation**
The regulatory environment made innovation hard because of the complex system of stakeholders and different government bodies looking after different functions across school education, and across levels of education. Tusome navigated the complex regulatory environment by aligning with national policies, collaborating with key stakeholders at all levels, and leveraging existing government structures and resources for scalability and sustainability. Additionally, they fostered community engagement to promote literacy beyond school education.¹⁴



CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Guidance for Similar Government-Non-State Partnerships

Guidance for Governments



Increase stakeholders' commitment

Involving relevant stakeholders early and piloting and testing interventions in collaboration with relevant stakeholders enhances ownership and facilitates integration into local practices.^{7,8}

Integrate into local government ecosystems

To ensure a programme's widespread impact and success, it is crucial to incorporate it into existing government structures and education strategy. The evolving education sector emphasises connections with on-the-ground organisations, encouraging a balance between large-scale initiatives and support for local providers like low-fee private schools. Striking a balance is key, ensuring that organisations capable of managing the complexity of major programmes also connect with, and support, local providers without becoming overwhelmed by administrative demands.

Build in essential factors for success

The government must prioritise drivers of success such as capacity building, pedagogy, and systemic policies in education interventions for positive outcomes⁷, as well as ensure that key government officials (e.g. Curriculum Support Officers) are equipped and enabled to do their job (e.g. M-Pesa transport subsidies).

Include low-fee private schools in large-scale programmes

There is an argument against including low-fee private schools from large-scale programmes, considering their relatively small marginal cost of inclusion. The experiences from Tusome emphasise that these schools, along with those in refugee settings, should not be overlooked, as demonstrated by the positive impact and enrolment growth seen in low-fee private schools that participated in Tusome.

CASE STUDY

TIMELINE & GLOSSARY

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS

FUNDING BREAKDOWN

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS OF THE PARTNERSHIP

IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

CHALLENGES & MITIGATION MEASURES

GUIDANCE FOR SIMILAR GOVERNMENT NON-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

ENDNOTES

Endnotes

1. “Global Knowledge Sharing Can Transform Kenya’s Education - Teach for Kenya.” Teach for Kenya , October 12, 2023. <https://teachforkenya.org/global-knowledge-sharing-can-transform-kenyas-education/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20teachers%20in,percent%20to%2012%2C279%20in%202021>
2. Keaveney, Erika, Carlos Fierros, Alexander Rigaux, and Alicia Menendez. “Tusome External Evaluation - Endline Report.” USAID, July 2020. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00XVBP.pdf
3. “The Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative ... - USAID.” USAID. Accessed May 15, 2024. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00hx75.pdf
4. Piper, Benjamin, Stephanie Simmons Zuilkowski, Margaret Dubek, Evelyn Jepkemei, and Simon J. King. “Identifying the Essential Ingredients to Literacy and Numeracy Improvement: Teacher Professional Development and Coaching, Student Textbooks, and Structured Teachers’ Guides.” World Development, March 27, 2018. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X18300287?via%3Dihub>
5. Strigel, Carmen, Margaret Dubek, and Jessica Mejía. “Let’s Read: Understanding Kenya’s Success in Improving Foundational Literacy at Scale.” RTI, December 2016. [https://www.rti.org/impact/lets-read-understanding-kenyas-success-improving-foundational-literacy-scale#:~:text=A%20decade%2Dlong%20collaboration%20between,initiative%20\(2012%2D2014](https://www.rti.org/impact/lets-read-understanding-kenyas-success-improving-foundational-literacy-scale#:~:text=A%20decade%2Dlong%20collaboration%20between,initiative%20(2012%2D2014)
6. “Tusome Case Study - Final Report.Pdf - Education Links.” Education Links, December 2019. <https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Tusome%20Case%20Study%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>
7. “USAID/Kenya Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative: Final Report.” USAID, July 2014. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pa00k282.pdf
8. Caleiro, João Pedro. “Learning from Kenya: The Experiences of Tusome and PRIEDE.” Blavatnik School of Government at University of Oxford, 2023. <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline-files/South-South Programme - Discursive Kenya.pdf>
9. “2016 Annual Report - Worldreader.” Worldreader, 2016. https://comms.worldreader.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Annual_Report_International-2.pdf#page=20
10. “USAID Kenya Tusome Early Grade Reading Activity Annual Report.” USAID, November 2016. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WBDP.pdf
11. “Tusome Early Grade Reading.” USAID, 2022. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Tusome_Fact_Sheet_2022.pdf
12. “Tusome Early Grade Reading FY 2020 Annual Progress Report.” USAID, October 30, 2020. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-05/Tusome_Fact_Sheet_2022.pdf
13. “Making Progress.” Basic Education Coalition. Accessed May 15, 2024. <https://www.basiced.org/impact-quantitative>
14. “Tusome Case Study: Final Report.” Laser Pulse Network, December 10, 2019. <https://laserpulse.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Tusome-Case-Study-Final-Report.pdf>