Teaching at the Right Level: The power of effective instruction in improving foundational learning skills through contextualization, adaptation, and localization
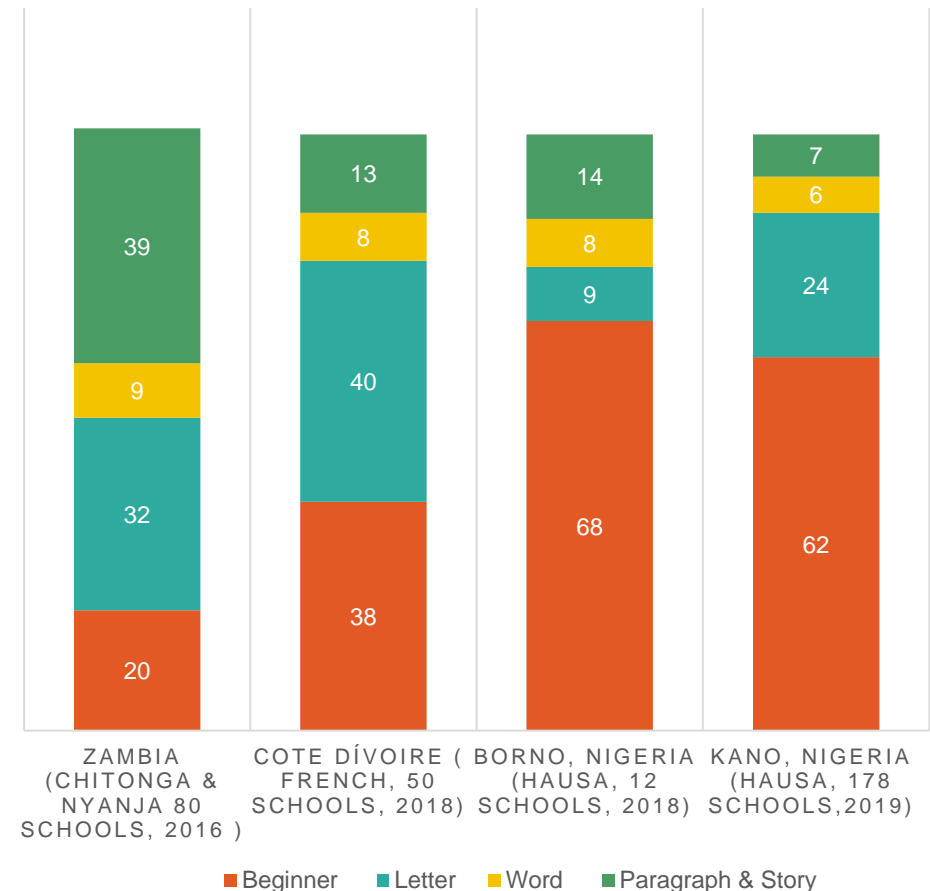
Titus Syengo | 25 July 2024 | Digital Development Dialogue

Catch Up Class in Pemba, Zambia

The Need for TaRL in Sub-Saharan Africa

Example of Hausa assessment

1. Harafi

k
b
t
z
s
d
m
h

2. Kalmomi

jaka	kifi
alewa	taga
nama	dabba
ido	ayaba

3. Sakin Layi

Yara suna wasa.

Ba kullum akan yi wasa ba.

Wasa na da lokaci.

Karatu ma yana da nasa

lokacin.

4. Labari

Wata rana Gizo ya tafi kasuwa. Sai kwaɗayi ya kama shi. Yana isa, ya ga mai gasa tsire. Ya sayi tsinke guda biyu, ya koma gefe. Ya ce, "bari ya huce sai na ci".

Daga nan sai barci ya kwashe shi. Ashe, Shirwa na hange daga sama. Sai ta sauko ta sure naman. Daga nan Gizo ya farka a gigice y aga shirwa ta yi sama da tsiren sa. Sai yak ama kuka da ihu

1. Ina Gizo ya tafi?
2. Me labarin take koya mana?

BASELINE LEARNING LEVELS AT PILOT STAGE
(% CHILDREN AT DIFFERENT READING LEVELS)

	Beginner	Letter	Word	Paragraph & Story
ZAMBIA (CHITONGA & NYANJA 80 SCHOOLS, 2016)	20	32	9	39
COTE DÍVOIRE (FRENCH, 50 SCHOOLS, 2018)	38	40	8	13
BORNO, NIGERIA (HAUSA, 12 SCHOOLS, 2018)	68	9	8	14
KANO, NIGERIA (HAUSA, 178 SCHOOLS, 2019)	62	24	6	7

Theory of Change underlying the TaRL Approach

| Children lack basic skills in reading and math. Learning levels vary within the classes. | Teachers trained and mentored to assess children and regroup them by learning level | Children regrouped by learning level. Teachers have dedicated time for instruction | Teachers use appropriate materials and activities to accelerate learning at each level | Basic reading and math skills improve |

TaRL was developed through a process of experimentation and refinement

Proof of concept

2001-2003
"Balsakhi" programme; Pratham community volunteer "pull out" remedial programme in urban schools

2005-2006
Village volunteers conducted community classes for rural primary school children

Identifying a scalable model in India

2012-2014
Teacher-led model, on-site mentoring by govt academic officials; Learning camps in govt primary schools, led by Pratham teams and supported by village volunteers

2008 – 2010
In-school one-month govt teacher-led summer camp with support from village volunteers; in-school govt teacher-led learning improvement program & support from volunteers

Pilots and scale-ups in Africa

2016-
Catch Up piloted in Zambia in 2016 and it continues to grow (2000+ schools in 2021)

2018-
PEC piloted in Ivory Coast in 2018 and continues to grow (1,000 schools in 2021)

2018-
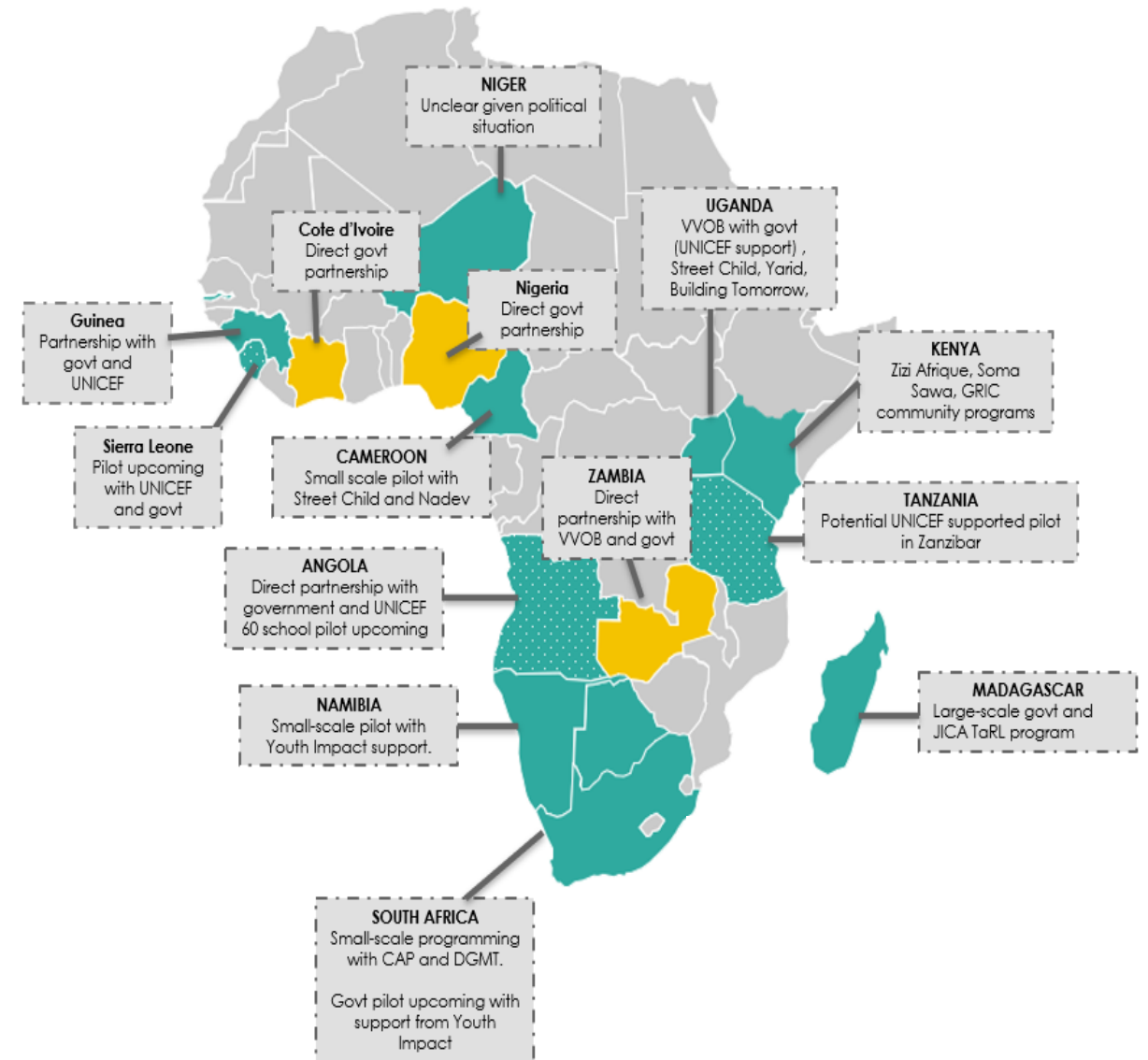TaRL started in Borno and is now active across five states in Nigeria

TaRL in Africa

Over 5.5 million children have been reached with TaRL programming in SSA since TaRL Africa's inception
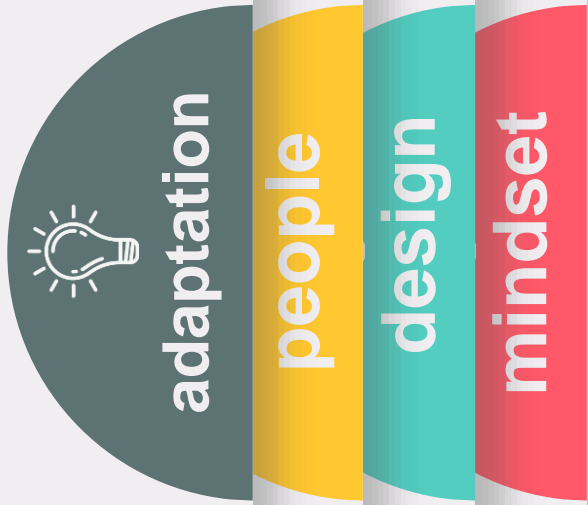
2015: Pratham and J-PAL start working with the MoGE in Zambia and VVOB to adapt and scale the TaRL approach

2019: TaRL Africa, a joint venture by Pratham and J-PAL, was formed to support partners working to address the learning crisis in primary schools in Africa through the evidence-based TaRL approach.

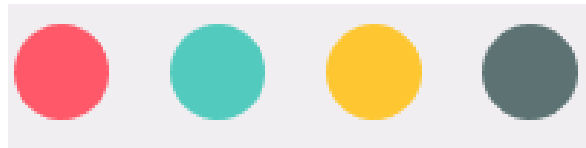**2022**: TaRL Africa registered in Kenya, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria

2024: TaRL Africa supports partners and governments across **15+ countries in SSA** to design and deliver TaRL programming.

NIGER
Unclear given political situation

UGANDA
VVOB with govt (UNICEF support), Street Child, Yarid, Building Tomorrow,

Cote d'Ivoire
Direct govt partnership

Nigeria
Direct govt partnership

KENYA
Zizi Afrique, Soma Sawa, GRIC community programs

Guinea
Partnership with govt and UNICEF

Sierra Leone
Pilot upcoming with UNICEF and govt

CAMEROON
Small scale pilot with Street Child and Nadev

ZAMBIA
Direct partnership with VVOB and govt

TANZANIA
Potential UNICEF supported pilot in Zanzibar

ANGOLA
Direct partnership with government and UNICEF 60 school pilot upcoming

NAMIBIA
Small-scale pilot with Youth Impact support.

MADAGASCAR
Large-scale govt and JICA TaRL program

SOUTH AFRICA
Small-scale programming with CAP and DGMT.

Govt pilot upcoming with support from Youth Impact

Spotlight: Catch Up programme in Zambia

Target group: Grades 3 to 5 / Age 8 to 10++
Language(s): Local languages (e.g. Icibemba...)
Type of schools: Government schools
Duration: 3 terms every academic year, Jan-Sept

Timing and Modality : during school day, outside class hours
1 hour of instruction daily, language or math

Instructors: school teachers

Mentors: District Coordinators, Zonal Coordinators, School mentors

Role of Government: Owner of the programme; provides strategic orientation / defines Policy; implementation

Even with increasing scale, learning outcomes continue to improve.

Year	Reach	Results			
		Children who can read at least a simple para		Children who can do 2 by 2 subtraction	
		Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Nov'16 – July '17 (Pilot)	80 Schools	40% **+7**	47%	37% **+13**	50%
Scale Up					
Jan – July 2018	470 Schools	40% **+15**	55%	35% **+16**	51%
Jan – July 2019	~1100 schools	35% **+21**	56%	27% **+24**	51%
Jan – July 2020	~1800 schools	37% **+11**	Midline: 48%	29% **+13**	Midline: 42%
Feb – Nov 2021	~1900 schools	33% **+19**	52%	27% **+21**	48%
Jan-Oct 2022	~3390 schools	31% **+20**	51%	30% **+19**	49%
Jan-Oct 2023	~4894 schools	33% **+22**	55%	28% **+23**	51%

Getting started with strong foundations in pilot

- Listen to government requests and needs and signals of upfront ownership
- Fill a gap
- Co-develop a program that draws on global evidence and is grounded in local context
  - Process fosters ownership and sets program up for scale and sustainability
- Involve the relevant departments and roles within the Ministry
- Demonstrate potential

Governance	FLN alignment	Measurement	Teacher Support
MoGE led a working group of partners who led the decision-making on the program	Target grade identified so that they didn't overlap with other FLN initiatives.	Align with paper-based system to integrate into existing ways of doing things	Focused on existing structures and trained ZICs and Senior teachers as core mentors

2016

2018

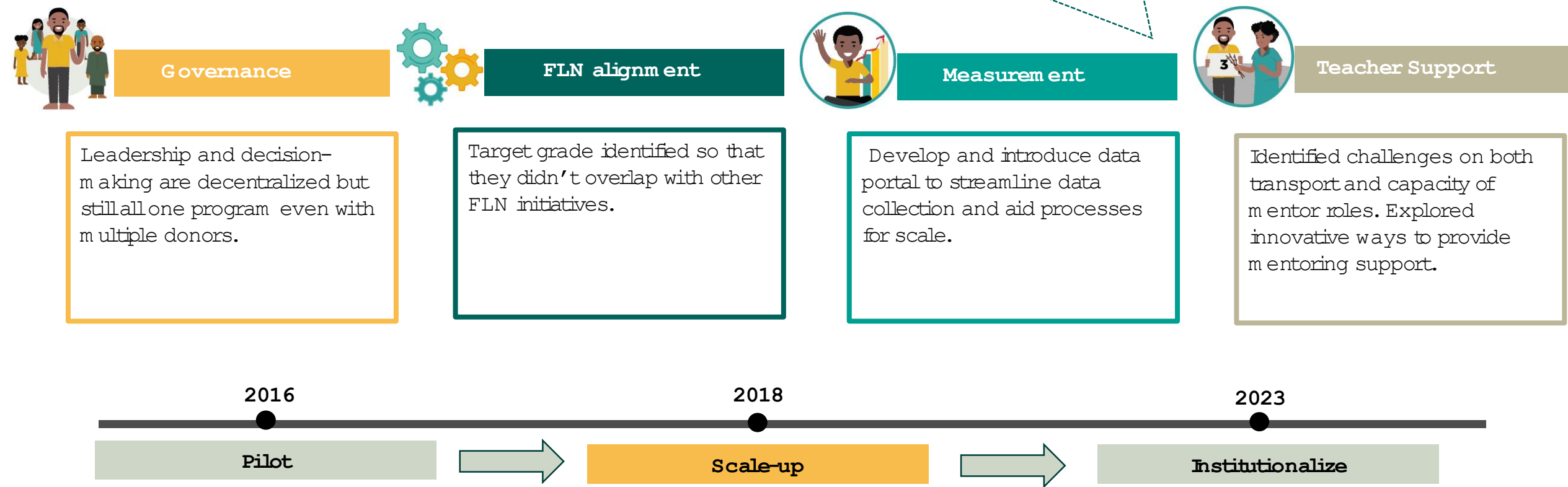**2023**

Pilot → Scale-up → Institutionalize
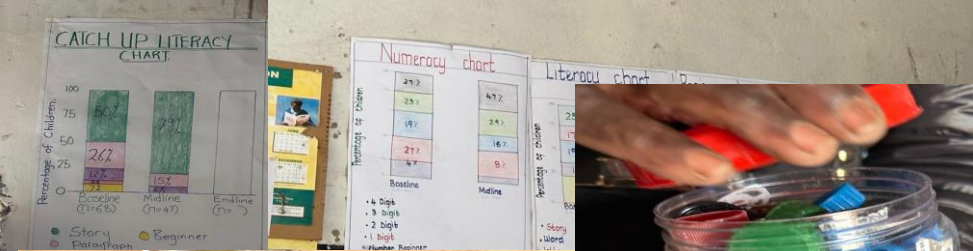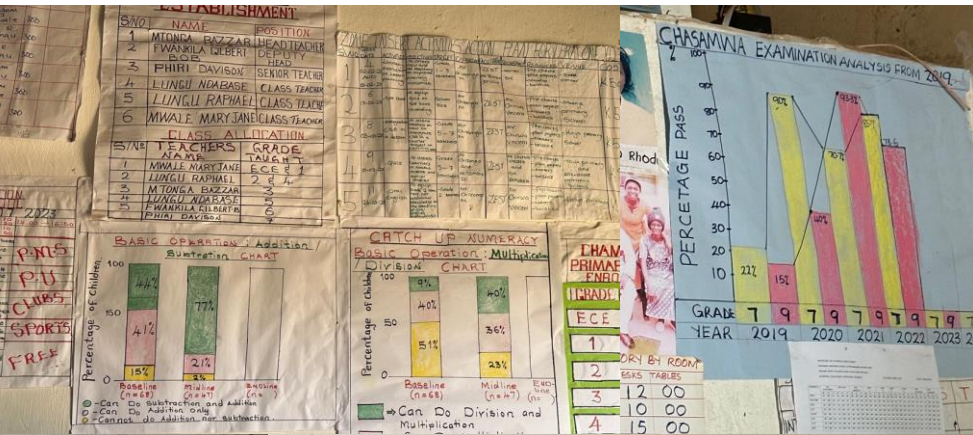
Growing, learning, adapting

- Keep focus on learning improvement
- Actively interrogate what is working and what isn't
- Adopted a multipronged approach to understanding problems and identifying solutions
- Be flexible

Throughout Catch Up's implementation and scale-up partners reflected regularly on emerging challenges and potential.

Governance

FLN alignment

Measurement

Teacher Support

Leadership and decision-making are decentralized but still all one program even with multiple donors.

Target grade identified so that they didn't overlap with other FLN initiatives.

Develop and introduce data portal to streamline data collection and aid processes for scale.

Identified challenges on both transport and capacity of mentor roles. Explored innovative ways to provide mentoring support.

2016

2018

2023

Pilot

Scale-up

Institutionalize

Growing, learning, adapting

1 **Deep support from senior technical team members over a long period**

2 **Qualitative and quantitative research to unpack challenges and identify potential solutions to persistent challenges**

The qualitative analysis helped us identify what support teachers valued

- Team based problem solving
- Verbal encouragement in discussions
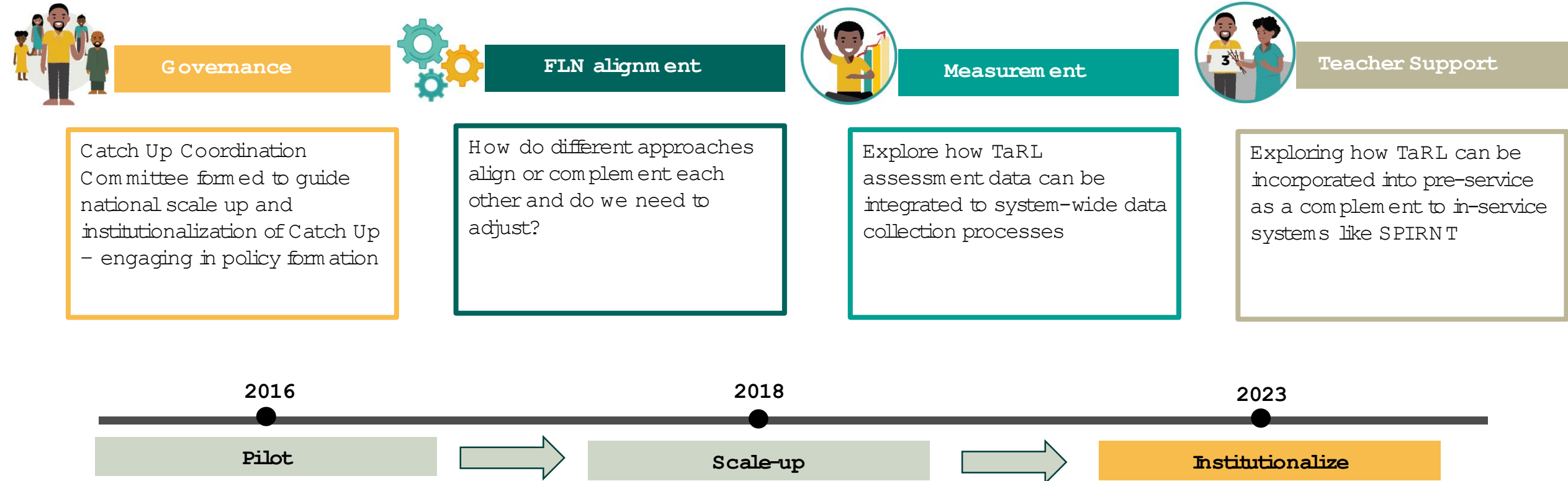- Learning about new methods of training

Now rigorously evaluating potential solutions (integrating into SPRINT, WhatsApp content)

3 **Unearthing school led-initiatives to challenges**

- School leaders encourage teachers to improvise materials and incorporate CU in regular lessons.

- After data collection great schools hold review meetings to analyze the results to understand where are the challenges and what has worked well.

- Some districts dedicate two weeks for additional remedial classes to reduce the number of beginners in grades 5 and 6.

Sustaining gains through institutionalization

- Engage on institutionalization and systems change once the approach is adopted at a sizable scale.
- Ensure the Ministry of Education is in the driver's seat
- Never stop champion building

Governance

Catch Up Coordination Committee formed to guide national scale up and institutionalization of Catch Up – engaging in policy formation

FLN alignment

How do different approaches align or complement each other and do we need to adjust?

Measurement

Explore how TaRL assessment data can be integrated to system-wide data collection processes

Teacher Support

Exploring how TaRL can be incorporated into pre-service as a complement to in-service systems like SPIRNT

2016

2018

2023

Pilot → Scale-up → Institutionalize

There is still so much more to learn

- How will program improvement initiatives fair and how will they be sustained?

- What happens when external funding completely dries up? How lean do programs need to become to sustain without reliance on external funding?

- How can we most effectively integrate TaRL into government budgets, existing governance and accountability structures, policies, and plans?

- What does it take to maintain impact/quality when an initiative is completely institutionalized?

Thank You!

TaRL Africa — Teaching at the Right Level Africa