

POLICY BRIEF 4:

Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator (KaLMA) – Encouraging continued engagement with learning at home as schools reopen after the COVID-19 pandemic



Policy brief 4 presents findings from a home-based learning programme that began during COVID-19 school closures to support learning at home and continued in 2021 to support in-school programming and mitigate against the adverse effects of further school closures.



Policy Brief 4: Encouraging continued engagement with learning at home as schools reopen

Introduction and overview of the home-based learning programme

Like many schools across the globe, those in Nigeria were closed for substantial periods of time during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the pandemic outbreak, Kano State government was taking measures to address the challenge of equipping pupils with foundational literacy and numeracy skills. As part of their efforts to address this challenge, the Kano State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Ministry of Education, together with the British Council and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa, and with support from the UK government's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, launched the Kano Literacy and Mathematics Accelerator (KaLMA) in October 2019 in two local government authorities (LGAs) – Wudil and Dawakin Tofa. Implementation of in-school KaLMA activities began in January 2020 with teacher-led assessment (in 180 schools) of primary 4 to primary 6 pupils' foundational skills in Hausa, English and Maths, and their placement in learning-level appropriate groups based on the test results. Facilitated foundational skill learning sessions began the same month in these schools, but stopped a short time later, in March 2020, when schools across the country closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

KaLMA education partners were eager to support pupils' ongoing learning despite the school closures and COVID-19 physical distancing restrictions. Together, partners developed a number of KaLMA-adapted learning activities that could be undertaken at home, delivered through low-tech means such as radio, text message, automated voice message (AVM) and interactive voice response (IVR). This combination of modalities for remote delivery of subject content to children no longer able to attend school became known as the KaLMA Home-Based Learning (HBL) programme.



After schools in Kano reopened in October 2020, high levels of uncertainty persisted regarding further possible school closures, and to the likely learning loss that had taken place during lost learning time. KaLMA partners therefore opted to support a hybrid learning model which comprised in-school elements and HBL support components. This policy brief 4 focuses on the lessons learned from delivering the HBL support components during 2021 while a separate policy brief 3 describes lessons learned from the implementation of in-school activities.

The revised HBL support offer in 2021 (as seen in the blue section of the pie-chart) was informed by findings from a small action-oriented tracking study in 2020, which gathered information from 56 respondents who were called every two to three weeks and asked a series of questions on how they used the different components of the HBL programme. The reworked model included radio and text messages, the delivery channels which had the most engagement during 2020, as well as worksheets which the community had requested, given the shortage of learning materials in the home. The adapted HBL support components for 2021 were designed to reinforce learning taking place in school.



Home-Based Learning Components

Radio programmes	Hausa, English and Maths audio learning content
Text messages	Targeted text messages for Hausa, English and Maths, sent three times a week to ensure pupils receive the support they need for their learning level
Worksheets	Learning level-specific worksheets (28,000) circulated to address the lack of educational resources in households

To understand engagement with the HBL components, a random sample of 926 caregivers (484 Males, 442 Females) and 1,979 pupils (1,005 Males, 974 Females) from Dawakin Tofa and Wudil were surveyed in January 2021 and again in August 2021. Relevant data were collected by Oxford Policy Management (OPM).

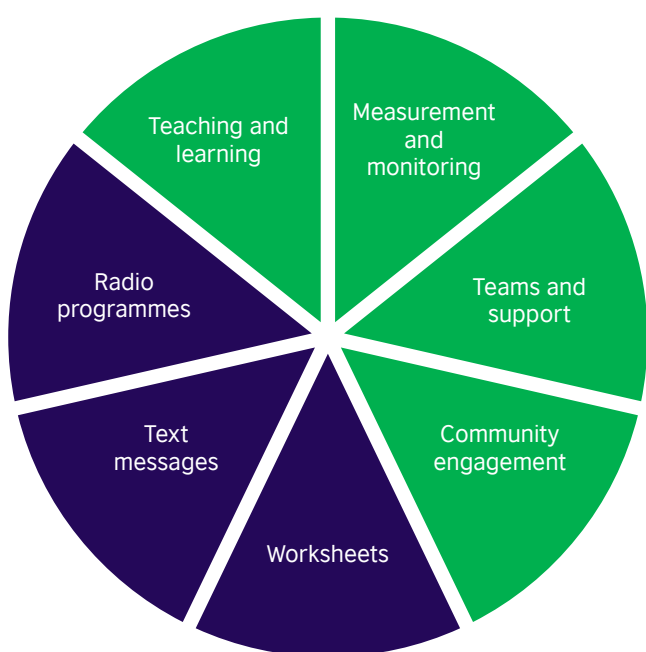


Figure 1: HBL Components of the Hybrid Learning Model

Findings from the home-based learning surveys

Pupils and caregivers engage¹ more with home-based learning content² over time, and a higher proportion of pupils report engaging the content as compared to caregivers.

In January 2021, only 19% (10% Male, 9% Female) of the pupils surveyed reported that they engaged with HBL content. This figure increased to 39% (18% Male, 21% Female) in August 2021. A smaller proportion

of caregivers reported supporting their children's learning, 10% (6% Male, 4% Female) in January 2021. However, this also increased over time as 22% (12% Male, 10% Female) of caregivers reported engaging in support to their children's learning in August. Many caregivers reported being involved in both work and other activities, making it difficult for them to make time to assist their children's learning at home. This may be one reason why their engagement levels are low. Another reason for lower levels of caregiver engagement may be due to low levels of literacy. Only 33% of the caregivers in the survey sample were able to read and write (in either English or Hausa). This may make it difficult for them to help pupils engage learning content at home. In January 2021 we found that more literate parents engaged in support of their children's learning compared to caregivers who were not literate, and that this increased over time for literate caregivers when compared to caregivers with little or no (written) literacy.

Pupils engage less with HBL content for English compared to that for Hausa and Maths, as reported by both pupils and caregivers.

In both January 2021 and August 2021, pupils engaged in more Hausa and Maths learning using HBL support at home compared to English. From the pupils' survey in January, 13% of them reported engaging in HBL content in Hausa, 13% in Maths and only 5% in English; by August 2021 these figures had at least doubled, to 30%, 27% and 10% respectively. For caregivers in January 2021, 8% reported supporting their children's HBL for Hausa content, 4% for Maths and 2% for English; in August 2021 this increased significantly, to 20%, 13% and 7% respectively. There are a number of reasons why pupils are engaging less with English content than that for Hausa or Maths. One reason may be that, while children report liking English, they find the subject difficult - due to it being an additional or foreign language - and get limited support at home

¹ Engagement is defined as using text messages, radio broadcasts or worksheets within the last two weeks for the purpose of learning (in the case of pupils) or helping pupils learn (in the case of caregivers).

² Home Based Learning content refers to foundational learning content in literacy and numeracy accessed through radio broadcasts, text messages or worksheets.

to learn it. In addition, more caregivers were found not to be literate³ in English (between 79% and 82% of caregivers surveyed) than in their own language, Hausa (between 64% and 69%).

Worksheets were reported as the most used HBL support component by both pupils and caregivers for all the subjects in both January and August 2021.

From the caregivers' survey, there is a noticeable increase in the proportion of caregivers that use worksheets to support their children's learning, from 0.9% in January⁴ to 9.7% in August. Across all subjects, more caregivers report using worksheets to support their children's learning in August (2.5%, 3.3% and 3.9% for English, Maths and Hausa respectively) than in January (0.1%, 0.2% and 0.6% for English, Maths and Hausa respectively). One reason for the increase in the use of worksheets may be related to the supply of worksheets tailored to pupils' learning

³ Literacy is defined based on the 2006 Uzbekistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) as the respondent being able to read/write a simple sentence/or a list of 2-digit numbers presented in Hausa or English. Note that the respondents' ability to write is self-reported while its ability to read is tested.

⁴ Worksheets were distributed in November 2020, with pupils exposed to this HBL resource for about a month before they were surveyed in January 2021.

levels. In August 2021, 73% of the pupils reported that they engaged with worksheets. They also reported preferring Hausa (35%), Maths (27%) and English (7%) worksheets to support their learning at home as they are directly accessible and give them autonomy to continue learning even in the absence of caregivers, as in many instances radios and phones are owned by the adults in the household.

Small proportions of caregivers used radio and text messages to support their children's learning at home, and this increased between January and August 2021.

From the caregiver survey, the proportion of caregivers that use radio to support their children's learning at home increased from 0.1% in January to 0.2% in August. In January, 0.1% of caregivers reported using radio broadcasts to support their children's learning in Maths as well as Hausa. In August, this proportion increased to 0.2% in Maths but remained the same (0.1%) in Hausa. However, no surveyed caregiver reported using radio broadcasts to support their children's learning in English in either January or August.





A similar trend is observed in the use of text messages, with no sampled caregiver reporting the use of text messages to support their children’s learning in Maths in January 2021, and only 1.2% reporting using them to support Maths learning in August 2021. For English and Hausa, however, more caregivers reported using text messages to support their children’s learning in August (0.8% and 1.7% respectively) than in January 2021 (0.2% and 0.1% respectively). In August, 11% of pupils reported using radio to support their learning, while 0.12% of pupils reported using text messages to support their learning.

Policy Lessons

Providing tailored home-based learning support may increase pupil and caregiver engagement in learning at home.

A key change to the HBL package of support in 2021 was tailoring worksheets and text messages to children’s learning level. While we do not see large increases in text message use to support learning across subjects, we do see sizable increases in worksheet use across all subjects. We cannot be sure that tailoring the content to children’s learning level is driving these increases. However, given that related education literature suggests that tailoring

home based learning content⁵ can improve learning, this may be worth exploring further.

Cost-effective paper-based learning support tools can enable independent learning at home and may be an important complement to low-tech home-based learning support.

In many households, technology devices such as phones and radios are largely owned and used by adult caregivers. This limits children’s direct access to learning support via radio or mobile phone, particularly when caregivers are away. The large proportion of children who report using worksheets to support their learning, as compared to the relatively low proportion who report using text messages and radio, indicates that printed learning material is an important supportive tool for learning engagement at home.

Limitations

The HBL engagement findings are based on data from caregiver and pupil surveys which were conducted at two points in time, January 2021 and August 2021. There could be a degree of fluidity in what children use to support their learning, and these data only enable us to see two snapshots of this. In addition, the data are self-reported. Social desirability could thus bias the results, especially for caregivers.

⁵ Angrist, Noam, Peter Bergman, and Moitshepi Matsheng. “School’s Out: Experimental Evidence on Limiting Learning Loss Using “Low-Tech” in a Pandemic.” NBER Working Paper 28205, January, 2021. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w28205>