CASE STUDY: LUWEERO DISTRICT UGANDA

March 2019
THE JOURNEY OF THE STiR PROGRAMME IN LUWEERO

THE CONTEXT OF LUWEERO

Located in the Central region and famous for its agriculture, Luweero is one of Uganda’s larger districts. The local government has had a focus on improving standards of education for many years, and has achieved some successes, most notably in raising access to primary education. But these successes have not supported staff retention and recruitment, or their motivation, which continue to be low. And this means that improvements in student outcomes have been very slow.

OUR OBJECTIVES IN LUWEERO

STiR’s work in Luweero district started with a small number of teachers in 2015, and in 2018 we scaled up to work in every government primary and secondary school. We knew that in order to successfully expand the programme to all schools, we needed to work much more closely with the district education office and other local stakeholders. Although they were already familiar with our work, our new approach meant that their staff had to take a greater role in ensuring the successful implementation of the programme. We focused on three key objectives in building their ownership of the model:

IDENTIFYING ACTORS WITHIN THE SYSTEM

To build ownership within the system, we needed to identify local stakeholders who could perform the roles previously held by STiR staff. At primary level, we identified a cadre of Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs), based out of the Core Primary Teachers College (PTC) at Nakaseke, who would be able to perform as district education leaders (DELS) and run teacher networks. At secondary level, the lack of a middle tier encouraged us to instead work through the major teaching unions, with their representatives playing the roles of DELs.

INCREASING AWARENESS

Many of these actors had no prior involvement in the programme, so it was important to develop their understanding. We provided detailed reports to the District Education Officer (DEO) about what was happening in the district, and invited her to open and close the early training sessions, which improved her knowledge of the programme. We also conducted some joint supervisions with the District Inspector of Schools to see how they could support our work. Finally, we shared information about the programme with other organisations operating in Luweero, and introduced a common language about intrinsic motivation into everyday activities.

SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION

We provided coaching and support for senior officials to help them to integrate the programme into their regular work. The Core PTC were not initially supportive of the programme as they did not see the benefits of this additional work, but after attending the first training session, we were able to include programme activities in their work plans and monitoring tools.

Luweero district fact file

| # primary schools | 229 |
| # secondary schools | 51 |
| # teachers | 3,367 |
| # pupils | 157,640 |
| Teacher:Pupil ratio | 1:47 |
| Classroom:Pupil ratio | 1:72 |
THE CHALLENGES IN LUWEERO

Scaling brought two significant challenges:

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ACTORS:
The Ugandan school system is complex, and it took us some time to understand how the different parts of the system work together. We discovered that although the district education office directly oversees all primary schools, the Core PTC is responsible for the training and continuous development of primary teachers. We introduced regular meetings between the DEO and the PTC Principal to provide a forum to discuss and resolve programme implementation issues in the district. For example, the DEO has limited capacity to monitor activities at school level, hindering information flow, but the PTC has now provided access to their supervision reports to share reliable information and data.

INTEGRATING WITHIN A CROWDED NGO MARKETPLACE:
There are a large number of NGOs seeking to work with teachers, schools and officials in Luweero district. This risks a competition for their attention, damaging the impact of all interventions. We have worked with the DEO to create a forum for all education partners to share their plans, in order to maximise alignment.

EARLY SIGNS OF SUCCESS
We are delighted to have built strong relationships between the DEO and the PTC, and in return the programme has won their full support. We have seen an increase in data-driven decision making at district level, with officials using our monthly alignment meetings to share key learnings and develop strategies to respond to identified challenges. The PTC have started to integrate programme strategies into their training for new teachers, extending our reach beyond those currently working in schools. We are now keen to see the district taking even greater ownership of alignment meetings, and ensuring a higher quality of programme delivery.

“Unlike other interventions, the STiR programme benefits all teachers regardless of the level they teach. It has visibly improved relationships among headteachers which has led to great teamwork and openness, and they are now easily collaborating and handling challenges together.”

Florence Bbosa, District Education Officer (DEO), Luweero district

At the school level, we have seen increased support from headteachers as they see improvements in teaching through the employment of new strategies from network meetings. Classroom observations have become less threatening as the headteachers improve the quality of their feedback, while individual teachers have started to invite peers to observe their lessons independently of headteacher coercion. Early data has been encouraging:

February 2019: 100% of network meetings took place (based on a small sample observed by our team)

91.5% of children passed their primary leaving examinations in 2018 – up from 87% in 2017

The proportion of children receiving first grades increased from 8.3% in 2017 to 13.1% in 2018

(data courtesy of the DEO office, Luweero district)

Over the next year, we want to see more consistent good practice across all schools, and the model of network meetings and classroom observations to be fully embedded into ways of working.