



CASE STUDY: ARUA DISTRICT UGANDA

March 2019

Plot 1673, Bukasa Close, Kayongo Zone, Muyenga, Kampala

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STiR
education

THE JOURNEY OF THE STiR PROGRAMME IN ARUA

A CHALLENGING BEGINNING

While the district education leadership formally welcomed STiR to Arua in 2017, they made little effort to learn more about the programme. It was unheard of in the early days of our system learning partnership for officials to take ownership of activities such as alignment meetings. STiR Programme Lead Polah Asio had to plead for officials to attend, and it was very difficult to get the District Education Officer (DEO) to host and chair the meetings, as well as to invite other participants. By May 2018, the successfully embedding of our approach into system structures to ensure sustainability still seemed very distant.

Arua district fact file	
Year STiR started working	2017
# primary schools	266
# secondary schools	36
# primary teachers	3,852
# secondary teachers	1,031
# primary pupils	17,687
# secondary pupils	13,090

STORY OF CHANGE 1: A SHARED VISION AS THE STARTING POINT OF AN IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY

Polah reflected on how she could lead through these obstacles and reignite the intrinsic motivation to continuously improve in Arua’s officials, and empower them to prioritise supporting their teachers. With a honed influencing strategy in mind, she visited the Municipal Education Officer’s (MEO) bureau a week prior to the last alignment meeting in 2018. Inspired by STiR’s recent internal Programme Clarity Week, she showed the MEO a sharp vision of how a successful alignment meeting could help not only achieve success for the programme but also in his role as the custodian of education in the district. This ‘lightbulb moment’ changed his mindset and behaviour, and that same day he met the DEO and convinced him that they should lead the programme together.



STORY OF CHANGE 2: CREATING A CULTURE OF IMPROVEMENT IN ARUA’S SCHOOLS

At the district alignment meeting, one week after the MEO’s ‘lightbulb moment’, the DEO and MEO passed on their passion for improvement and a strong sense of ownership to the sub-district officials. They helped them to understand that this is *their* programme and that it is meant to support *them* and not STiR. When the MEO invited Mr. Sam Kuloba (National Commissioner (Secondary)) to visit Arua’s schools, the officials chose to guide him to visit those schools which had showed the least enthusiasm for the programme – this proved to be an effective way to create a culture of improvement through the STiR programme in all of the district’s schools.

“Teachers are now becoming approachable by learners which has made consultation by learners easier and generally, school is peaceful and safe for them emotionally.”

Mr. Wadriga Rogers, School Education Leader, Budrabe

EXAMPLE 1: MUNI GIRLS' SECONDARY SCHOOL

In Muni Girls', one of Arua's biggest girls' secondary schools, teachers worked on their own to plan lessons and manage their challenges. There were small cliques of teachers in the school which mostly socialised for casual reasons, not necessarily to improve their practices. They knew very little about each other and were shy to seek support from each other.

A new culture and shared purpose to cultivate children's joy of lifelong learning was birthed when Mr. Ija Denis joined the school as a District Education Leader (DEL). He has worked hard with the School Education Leader (SEL) to build teachers' interest in network meetings, where they learn new classroom strategies and reflect and plan together. He has observed that relationships between teachers have improved, and they now see each other not as competitors but as supportive colleagues.

"When you meet teachers in the staffroom, you find them laughing and joking with each other. They also openly share classroom challenges and solutions without fearing being labelled as weak. This has made our school environment very healthy. The teachers have taken the same spirit to their classrooms. I'm so proud of these changes which have won me the honour of being promoted to a 'career master.' I'm grateful to STiR for building my leadership and facilitation skills and above all for giving me an opportunity to support my fellow teachers."

Mr. Ija Denis, teacher and District Education Leader, Muni Girls' SS

98% of Arua's
School Education
Leaders attended
the training
institutes
(January 2019)

EXAMPLE 2: BUDRABE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Prior to the STiR programme, the headteacher Mr. Wadriga Rogers was always in his office. He summoned his teachers to the office to communicate with them, and was frustrated to have to chase them to be in class on time and do what they knew was their duty. This culture was mirrored by teachers, who did the same with their learners. However, his perspective of how a real headteacher should be was transformed in one of STiR's training institutes. He found himself desiring to be the change he wanted to see in his teachers and learners.



He started by making discussions during network meetings open and fun. He started to recognise his teachers for their efforts and encouraged them to recognise their colleagues too. He also began to involve them in the school's decision making, supported them in lesson planning and encouraged them to lesson plan with peers. He noticed that he was beginning to enjoy his role and that teachers were becoming more honest with him. They started to share their challenges, and he was willing to support them and also seek their support with his own challenges.

As a result of this transformation, the school produced its best student results during mock exams in 2018. This was confirmed to STiR Programme Lead Polah by the responsible Centre Coordinating Tutor sub-district official.

STORY OF CHANGE 3: INTEGRATION OF THE PROGRAMME IN ARUA CORE PRIMARY TEACHERS' COLLEGE

One of the biggest signs of system ownership is that the very same district education leadership, who had initially shown only low levels of interest in the programme, took the decision not only to deliver the programme content to existing teachers in schools but also to integrate it into the training of prospective teachers at the Arua Core Primary Teachers' College (CPTC). On 22 February 2019, the College rolled out their first programme training to all of their tutors and principals, sharing the strategies and encouraging them to transfer them to classes as they train student teachers. This training was conducted by the already trained CCTs with support from the MEO and inspectors of schools within the district. The Deputy Principal of the CPTC insists that the strategies must be taught at college level if they are to become part and parcel of regular teaching practice, as teachers tend to focus on what they learned from college. This shift in mindset is remarkable – back in May 2018, no PTC principal had ever attended any of STiR's training institutes.

IMPACT FIGURES

“Arua was the most improved district by doubling their first grades from 113 in 2017 to 227 in 2018.”

Uganda National Examinations Board on the 2018 Uganda Certificate of Education

In January 2019, 98% of Arua's School Education Leaders attended the training institutes

In February 2019, 100% of CCTs/DELS gave feedback to SELs after classroom observations

In February 2019, 100% of teachers tried classroom strategies from the current Learning Improvement Cycle and 100% of students were observed to be engaged and felt physically and emotionally safe

Data collected by STiR and based on a small sample observed by our team

Top 2019 priority: Continuously improve support of SELs (especially those in remote schools)

