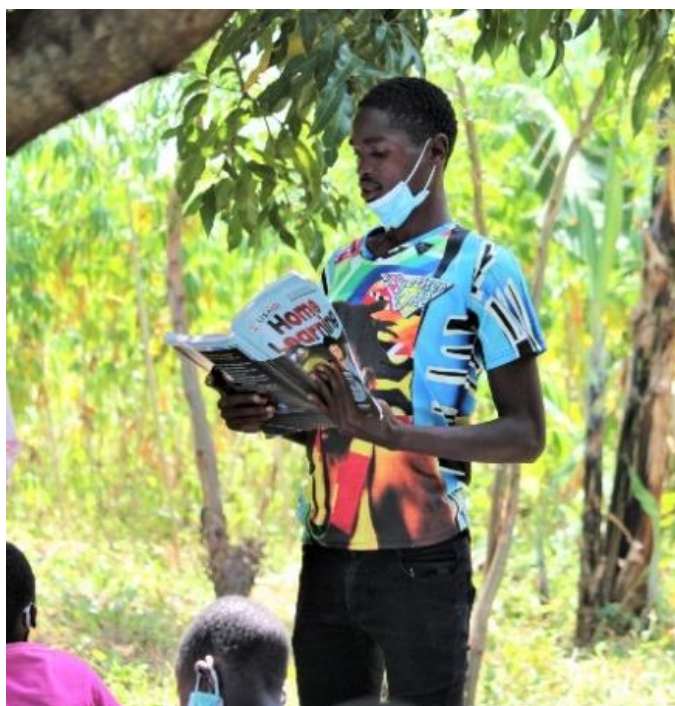


USAID's Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition Activity in Uganda

Briefer, January 2022

REMEDIAL LEARNING CENTERS RE-KINDLE HOPE FOR PARENTS AND LEARNERS



A learner at the Atede Learning Center in Unyama Sub-County, Gulu district, reads to his class.

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Photo

Making learning possible during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown

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Background

In Uganda, the COVID-19 pandemic led to restrictive lockdowns that forced schools to close for almost two years. Education was largely interrupted, and children across Uganda became more susceptible to risky behaviors, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Many parents were completely focused on making ends meet and putting food on the table during this difficult time and were unable to supervise their children.

USAID Uganda's flagship resilience activity, the Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (ICAN) Activity, supported the establishment of **76** Remedial Learning Centers (RLCs) in six out of eight USAID ICAN supported districts (**40** in Acholi, **24** in Karamoja, and **12** in Kigezi) for learners from lower primary, upper primary, and candidate classes. The objectives of the RLCs were to: *i) overcome learning challenges posed by COVID-19, ii) catch learners up on their curriculums, and iii) improve learner performance.* USAID ICAN focused on access to quality education, retention, and completion of the primary education cycle.

USAID ICAN strengthened the participatory governance system within schools and community structures to promote quality education and enhance learners' pre-requisite numeracy, literacy, and life skills (i.e., *hygiene, sanitation, home-economics, etc.*) USAID ICAN strategically collaborated with the USAID Integrated Child and Youth Development (ICYD) Activity and the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) to promote early grade numeracy and literacy skills. USAID ICAN worked closely with existing local government education structures, including District Education Task Forces, School Management Committees (SMCs), Parent Teacher-Associations (PTAs), Child Rights Clubs (CRCs), cultural leaders, and communities to increase enrollment and retention.



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Primary Four (L) and Primary Six (R) learners attend class in the Gulu and Rukungiri Centers, respectively.



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USAID ICAN’s Intervention

USAID ICAN implemented a community-based, remedial learning approach to enable children to continue learning at home while schools remained closed.

In collaboration with the District Education Officers, sub-county coordinators, headteachers, and community leaders, USAID ICAN identified locations (host homesteads and other locations in villages) for the Remedial Learning Centers and engaged **296** volunteer teachers and resource persons across the three sub-regions (**200** in Acholi, **24** in Kigezi, and **72** in Karamoja). Stakeholders prioritized learners in dire need of remedial support using a consistent selection criterion.



USAID ICAN’s intervention reached **11,551** learners across the three USAID ICAN supported sub-regions with a focus on learners in Primary One, Two, Three, and Six (P.1, P.2 P.3, and P.6). These learners were selected because they did not complete their syllabus for the 2020 academic year. Each class accommodated at least **40** or more learners with **76** community learning remedial centers, and lessons took place on only three days a week while adhering to Ministry of Health COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures.



USAID ICAN procured and distributed learning materials to enable these learners complete Term II and III syllabuses. These included **424** teacher’s guidebooks (consisting of a guidebook covering English, Math, Science, and Social Studies for Term II and III) and **13,270** learner’s workbooks for P.1, P.2 and P.3 (covering all subjects for Term I, III and III).



USAID ICAN provided chalk boards, chalk, handwashing facilities, and face masks to the RLCs and continuously collaborated with school headteachers, District Education Officers, and community leaders to ensure the centers had adequate learning materials. Parents also contributed chalk and other items to ensure that the centers could run successfully.





Through the headteachers, USAID ICAN furnished the volunteer teachers and resource persons with UGX 20,000 (USD \$5.70) each day for transport and lunch for the three days a week that lessons took place.

“As a district and through the DEO’s office, we agreed that the number of days for attendance would be increased from three to all five working days in the week. USAID ICAN supported three as we agreed, and we found a way to ensure the volunteer teachers were catered for the other two days”

- Resident District Commissioner, Nwoya District

Key Intervention Highlights

Learner attendance at Remedial Learning Centers between March 2021 - December 2021

Learners	Kigezi sub-region (Rukungiri)	Acholi sub-region (Gulu, Nwoya, and Lamwo)	Karamoja sub- region (Kotido and Kaabong)	TOTAL
Girls 	354	3,122	2,339	5,815
Boys 	496	3,485	1,755	5,736
TOTAL	850	6,607	4,094	11,551

Learner Attendance:

Some parents were initially reluctant to enroll their children in the centers because they worried about the cost of the RLCs, and others worried that if their children attended the RLCs, they would neglect their household chores. Certain parents did not understand that the RLCs were set up to support remedial learners only, and not all the children in the village. USAID ICAN collaborated with the district, parish, and cultural leaders to encourage parents to bring their children to RLCs as needed to allow them catch up on their curriculums, while reassuring parents that all costs were covered. These parents eventually saw the value of the RLCs and fully supported them. Overall, RLCs enabled learners across Uganda to stay in school and continue their education during the lockdowns.

Collective Responsibility:

This intervention catalyzed parents’ active involvement in their children’s education. Parents recognized that the RLCs presented their children with an opportunity to stay in school. Many of them proactively mobilized to fill gaps and meet needs, because they felt they had an important role in ensuring that the RLCs continued to run successfully. They also encouraged children to attend classes at the RLCs rather than wander idly in the villages.

All hands on deck! Parents in Lamwo District Mobilize to Equip Learning Centers

Parents in Kwonodongo village, Lelapwot Parish, Lokung sub-county of Lamwo district mobilized resources to construct sanitary facilities to reduce the burden on host homesteads. They made temporary shelters and seats for the children using bamboo, contributed funds for chalk and chalk boards, and even jointly raised additional money for the volunteer teachers to increase the learning days from the originally planned three to five. These parents had lost hope in their children’s educational progress due to the two-year COVID-19 imposed school closures. This collaborative Remedial Learning Center initiative between USAID ICAN, district leaders, and cultural leaders rekindled their hope, and parents pledged their continued involvement in supporting RLCs until schools were re-opened.

Staying Out of Trouble:

Before the lockdowns, children had very busy days attending classes at scheduled times, doing homework, participating in household chores, and playing with friends. Parents were anxious when the lockdowns went into effect and struggled to watch over their children at home during the day. RLCs helped ensure that children were not idle, and parents felt confident that their child was supervised by teachers. The RLCs also helped transition the children back to regular school when the lockdowns ended.

Safety:

Communities in Uganda are still grappling with gender-based violence, early child marriages, and teenage pregnancies—all of which escalated during the lockdown because victims were forced into closer proximity with perpetrators. RLCs kept children—especially girls—safe and focused on their education. Girls engaged in school and community activities are less vulnerable to being sent off into early marriages. RLCs also gave boys the opportunity to stay in school rather than entering full time businesses or into an early marriage themselves.

“My son was tired of housework. He was idle and he constantly asked when he could return to school”

- Parent in Buhunga, Rukungiri District

Barriers

Absenteesim:

Across all sub-regions, fluctuation in attendance is common, especially during the harvesting period (when children support their parents with garden work), or when wild animals destroy gardens (and children must help physically chase animals away).

Insecurity:

In Kotido and Kaabong, the ongoing insecurity issues were very disruptive to learners' attendance.

Teenage pregnancy and early child marriage:

The Acholi sub-region registered an especially high increase in teenage pregnancies during the lockdowns, which disrupted girls' education.

Initial reluctance towards enrollment:

There was some reluctance from certain parents to enroll their children in RLCs; however, with the guidance of the district structures, parents eventually fully supported RLCs.



Emmy Dennis (P.2) attending class at the Patira Center

USAID ICAN
Photo

Going forward



A class in progress at a RLC

USAID ICAN Photo

Re-integration into in-school learning

- USAID ICAN-supported back-to-school campaigns conducted by Governance Champions and community elders and the continued push and encouragement to parents by School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) ensured smooth transitioning from remedial to in-school learning. Learners who attended RLCs have since set the pace for high levels of concentration in class.
- The teacher's guidebooks and learner's workbooks are being used for in-school learning in USAID ICAN-supported schools to which the remedial learning centers were affiliated.

Going forward

The involvement of key stakeholders like parents, community leaders, volunteer teachers, and learners is critical for the successful and effective delivery of a home-based learning package. Enthusiasm from all these stakeholders helped ensure that RLCs met community needs.

District leadership involvement was also critical in RLC success. Before the pandemic, there were already ongoing programs overseen by the District Education Officers, under the Ministry of Education and Sports. District Education Officers can mobilize resources to ensure program continuity even when partner support ends. Home-based remedial learning is highly recommended as an effective buffer model for disruptive events to ensure the continuation of learning in case schools are closed. District leadership can spearhead the implementation of initiatives like this by effectively mobilizing resources.

USAID's Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition Activity is implemented by Abt Associates, in partnership with Arid-land Development Programme, Caritas Kabale, Children of the World Foundation, Diocesan Development Services North Karamoja, Mango Tree, and The Manoff Group.

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This Technical Note has been made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.