



FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SUMMARY REPORT

(April 2025, October 2025 & March 2026)

1. Introduction

This consolidated report presents findings from three rounds of foundational learning classroom observations conducted in April 2025, October 2025 and March 2026 across 32 schools in Oyam, Alebtong, Kole and Arua districts. The exercise was implemented by FICH in collaboration with Growth Care Uganda, Arua Youth Development Initiative and Change Lead Agency for Social Support

The purpose of the observations was to understand how teaching and learning is being implemented in real classroom settings with a focus on lesson delivery, learner engagement, classroom management, gender responsiveness and use of foundational learning approaches such as TaRL. Over the three cycles, the observations provided a clear picture of both progress and persistent gaps in foundational learning delivery.

2. Scope of the Observations

Across the three observation cycles, a total of 144 teachers were observed teaching in classrooms. Of these, 78 were male and 66 were female showing a fairly balanced teaching workforce across the targeted schools.

In terms of learners, a total of 10,745 learners were present during observation days, with 5,401 boys and 5,344 girls. This near-equal distribution reflects encouraging progress in gender parity in school attendance.

The observations covered Primary 3, 4 and 5 classes where foundational literacy and numeracy skills are expected to be consolidated. English and Mathematics remained the most frequently observed subjects accounting for the majority of lessons across all cycles, followed by Literacy, Science, and Social Studies.

3. Teaching and Learning Practices

Lesson planning and delivery

One of the most noticeable findings across all three observation cycles was the inconsistency in lesson planning. While many teachers demonstrated strong preparation, with lesson plans clearly guiding their instruction, others showed gaps in planning or failed to use lesson plans effectively.

On average, about 60–80% of teachers across the cycles had lesson plans that were mostly evident and followed during lessons. However, a smaller but significant proportion ranging between 15%



and 30% depending on the cycle either used lesson plans inconsistently or did not demonstrate them at all.

This inconsistency often affected lesson structure, pacing, and learner engagement. In classrooms where lesson planning was strong, lessons were more organized, interactive, and easier for learners to follow.

Use of TaRL and student-centered approaches

The use of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and learner-centered methodologies showed gradual improvement over time but remained uneven. In the most recent cycle, about 33% to 44% of teachers applied TaRL strategies consistently while a similar proportion used them partially. However up to 24% in some cycles showed no evidence of TaRL application.

Where TaRL was effectively used, learners were grouped by ability, engaged in practical activities, and given tasks appropriate to their level. In such classrooms, learning was more inclusive and participatory. In contrast, classrooms without TaRL often relied heavily on teacher talk and chorus responses, limiting individual learner participation.

Gender responsiveness in classrooms

Gender inclusion showed moderate but inconsistent progress across the three observation periods. In many classrooms, teachers ensured both boys and girls participated equally, used inclusive language and adopted mixed seating arrangements. However, across cycles, between 40% and 55% of lessons still showed only partial or inconsistent gender responsiveness.

In a few cases, boys were more frequently called upon than girls, or participation was not intentionally balanced. While overt discrimination was rare, deliberate promotion of gender equality in participation remains an area needing strengthening.

Classroom management and environment

Classroom control was generally strong across the three cycles. On average, over 70% of lessons demonstrated strong classroom management with teachers maintaining order while keeping learners engaged.

However, overcrowding remained a major challenge. In some schools, large classes limited movement, interaction and teacher attention to individual learners. Some learners sat on floors due to insufficient desks which also affected writing and concentration.

Classroom physical arrangement varied widely. Only about 15–20% of classrooms were consistently well organized, while the majority were functional but not optimally arranged. Poor spacing and limited learning displays were common in several schools.

Time management and lesson coverage



Time management showed steady improvement across the observation cycles. In the most recent observations, about 60–70% of teachers effectively managed lesson time ensuring activities were completed within allocated periods.

However, between 20% and 35% of lessons still experienced timing challenges such as rushed activities, incomplete content or extended explanations that reduced learner practice time.

Lesson coverage followed a similar pattern. While most teachers covered planned content, approximately 10–25% of lessons showed incomplete or inconsistent coverage, often due to poor pacing or classroom disruptions.

Teaching and learning materials

The use of teaching aids improved slightly over time, especially with increased use of locally available materials such as charts, bottle tops, sticks, and flashcards. These helped make lessons more interactive and concrete.

However, many classrooms still relied heavily on chalk and talk methods. Limited availability of textbooks and structured learning aids remained a constraint across most schools.

4. Learner participation and progress

Learner engagement was one of the strongest positive findings across all three cycles. In most classrooms, learners were active, willing to respond to questions and participated in reading and group activities. A total of 10,745 learners were observed across all cycles, with nearly equal participation of boys and girls. This reflects strong school attendance and inclusion.

Progress in foundational skills was visible, especially in literacy and numeracy. Many learners demonstrated improved ability to read simple sentences, construct basic sentences and solve basic arithmetic problems.

However, challenges remained in independent reading, spelling, comprehension and problem-solving among weaker learners, particularly in lower classes.

5. Feedback from teachers

Teachers consistently reported several successes across the three cycles. They highlighted improved learner engagement, especially where interactive methods and TaRL activities were used. Many noted that learners were more confident, participatory, and interested in lessons compared to previous years.

Teachers also observed gradual improvement in literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in reading fluency and basic arithmetic.



However, they also reported significant challenges. Large class sizes remained the most critical constraint, making it difficult to provide individual attention. Inadequate learning materials, weak literacy foundations among learners and limited training on TaRL were also frequently mentioned.

Some teachers further noted difficulties in managing mixed-gender seating arrangements and maintaining consistent learner attention, especially in overcrowded classrooms.

6. Feedback from learners

Learners consistently described lessons as interesting and enjoyable, particularly when teachers used games, group work and practical examples. Many expressed that they understood lessons better when teaching aids were used.

However, learners also highlighted several challenges. Hunger, lack of desks and overcrowded classrooms affected their concentration. Some learners also expressed discomfort with mixed seating arrangements, while others struggled to fully understand lessons when teachers moved too quickly or gave limited examples.

7. Key challenges across all cycles

Across the three observation periods, several persistent challenges were identified:

Classrooms remain overcrowded in many schools, limiting interaction and teacher support.

Teaching and learning materials are still inadequate in most classrooms with many teachers relying on minimal resources.

The inconsistent use of TaRL and student-centered methodologies continues to affect learning quality.

Weak foundational literacy skills among learners remain a major concern, especially in reading, spelling, and comprehension.

Gender-responsive teaching is improving but remains inconsistently applied.

Infrastructure challenges, including lack of desks and poor classroom conditions, continue to affect learning environments.

Learner absenteeism, especially during seasonal activities, also disrupts learning continuity.

8. Areas for improvement

To strengthen foundational learning outcomes, the following areas require focused attention:

Teachers need consistent support to strengthen lesson planning and adherence. TaRL approaches should be fully integrated into daily teaching practices.



Greater use of interactive and learner-centered methodologies is required to improve engagement. Gender-responsive teaching must be intentionally embedded in lesson delivery and classroom organization.

There is also a need to improve literacy and numeracy remediation for struggling learners, enhance classroom organization and infrastructure, and increase the availability and use of low-cost teaching aids.

Stronger supervision and mentorship systems are also needed to ensure consistency in implementation across schools.

9. Recommendations

Improving teacher capacity remains central. Regular refresher training on TaRL, gender-responsive pedagogy and learner-centered teaching should be prioritized. Teachers should also receive continuous support in lesson planning and classroom management.

Classroom practice should shift further toward interactive learning, reducing reliance on lecture-based teaching. Schools should promote group work, peer learning, and practical activities that engage all learners.

Learning environments require improvement through provision of desks, better classroom organization and reduced overcrowding where possible. Schools should also be supported to develop and use locally made teaching aids.

Gender inclusion should be strengthened through intentional participation strategies, mixed seating arrangements, and equitable questioning techniques.

Finally, stronger monitoring and supportive supervision systems should be established to ensure consistent implementation of recommended practices across all schools.

10. Conclusion

The three rounds of classroom observations conducted between April 2025 and March 2026 show clear evidence of progress in foundational learning delivery across participating schools. Learner engagement has improved, teacher confidence has grown, and interactive teaching practices are increasingly being adopted.

However, systemic challenges such as overcrowding, limited learning materials, inconsistent use of TaRL, and uneven classroom practices continue to affect learning outcomes. Addressing these gaps will require sustained investment in teacher development, classroom resources, and strengthened supervision systems.

With continued support, the foundational learning program has strong potential to significantly improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all learners across the targeted districts.

