Recovering learning, with urgency and at-scale

unicef
for every child

International Symposium on Learning Losses
24 November 2022
Ratnapura, Sabaragamauwa, Sri Lanka

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Learning losses observed around the world

Substantial losses in math and reading have been documented in a number of low-, middle-, and high-income countries.

Emerging evidence from countries like Brazil, Italy, Kenya, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, and others show the stark differences in performance between current and pre-pandemic cohorts.

AFRICA
South Africa: Grade 2 students incurred learning losses equivalent to up to 70% of a year of learning

Malawi: Grade 4 students lost the equivalent to two years of learning

ASIA
Rural Karnataka, India: only 16% of grade 3 students could perform simple subtraction in 2020, compared to nearly 24% in 2018

Rural Pakistan: results for primary students in grades 1-5 declined in math and in reading in Urdu/Sindhi/Pashto

EUROPE
Netherlands: Students lost the equivalent to 20% of a school year

United Kingdom: two months of learning lost in reading, among primary and secondary students.

LATIN AMERICA
São Paulo, Brazil: students learned only 28% compared to if face-to-face classes had continued

Mexico: significant learning losses in basic numeracy and literacy

COVID Pandemic: Detrimental impact on children

669 MILLION children affected by **school closures**

24 MILLION additional students may **drop out**

17 TRILLION USD loss in future earnings

Estimated **70%** of 10 year olds **unable to read**

10 MILLION more girls at risk of **early marriage**

370 MILLION children missed **school meals**

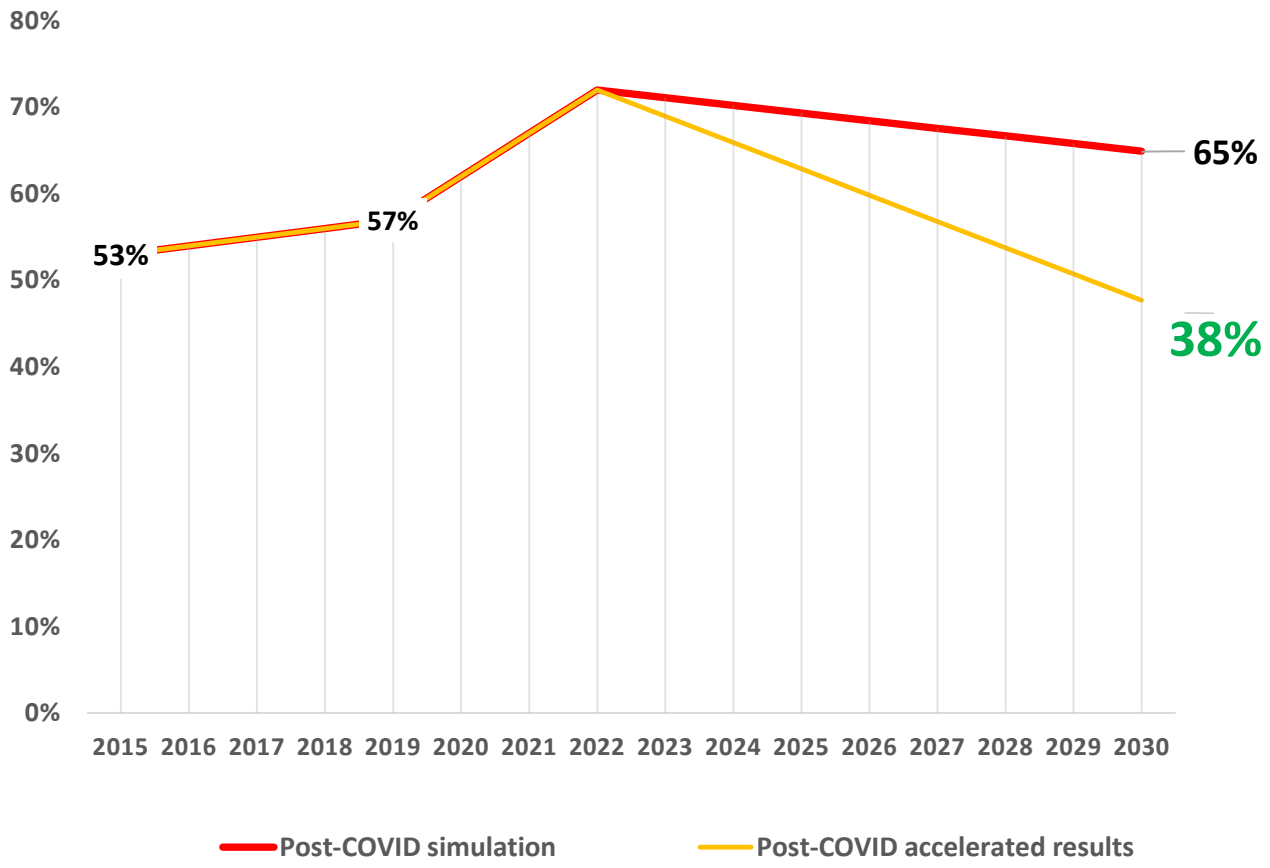
2 TRILLION hours of in-person instruction **lost**

34% increase in **depression and anxiety**

9 MILLION additional children at risk of **child labor**

Education SDGs: Learning Poverty dramatically increased

Learning Poverty rate in 2019-2022 and simulation from 2023 to 2030, low- and lower-middle income countries



COVID-19 and SDG4 (4.1 Learning outcomes)

- The Learning Poverty rate measures the share of children who cannot read a simple paragraph by age 10.
- COVID-19 increased the Learning Poverty rate in low- and lower-middle income countries from **57% to 70%** in three years.
- The Learning Poverty rate in 2030 would be reduced to 65% with historical trend (status quo, no additional action)

But if Countries' keep their commitments

- Based on their SDG4 pledges, LP would be reduced to **38% from pre-pandemic levels**.

Conflict

- Children in conflict settings are four times more likely to never attend school.

Source: Post-COVID simulation data is based on WB's estimates (confidential/unpublished), UIS data on 2030 benchmarks, and author's analysis
Note: The reduction of learning poverty is assumed to be proportional to the annualized reductions in "Will Every Child Be Able to Read by 2030? Defining Learning Poverty and Mapping the Dimensions of the Challenge", The World Bank (2021).
Note 2: The 38% line represents the average of the self-reported 2030 target (UNESCO/UIS).

“…if you can’t read and understand a story you’re not going to get a job, anywhere…”*

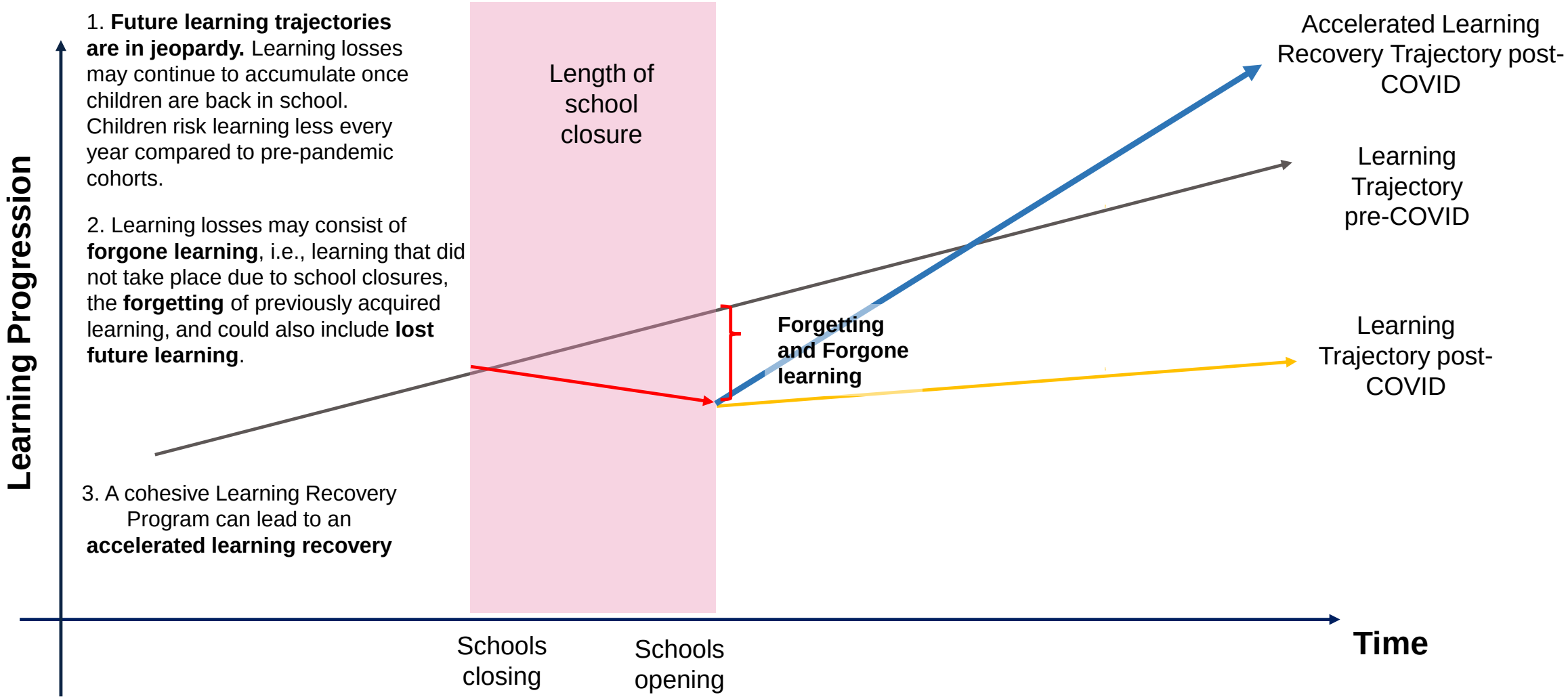
Foundational learning - literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills

- essential for future academic and life success
- develop skills which are the bases of other learning
- bolster all aspects of education and development
- knock-on effects on children’s future prospects in work and life more broadly

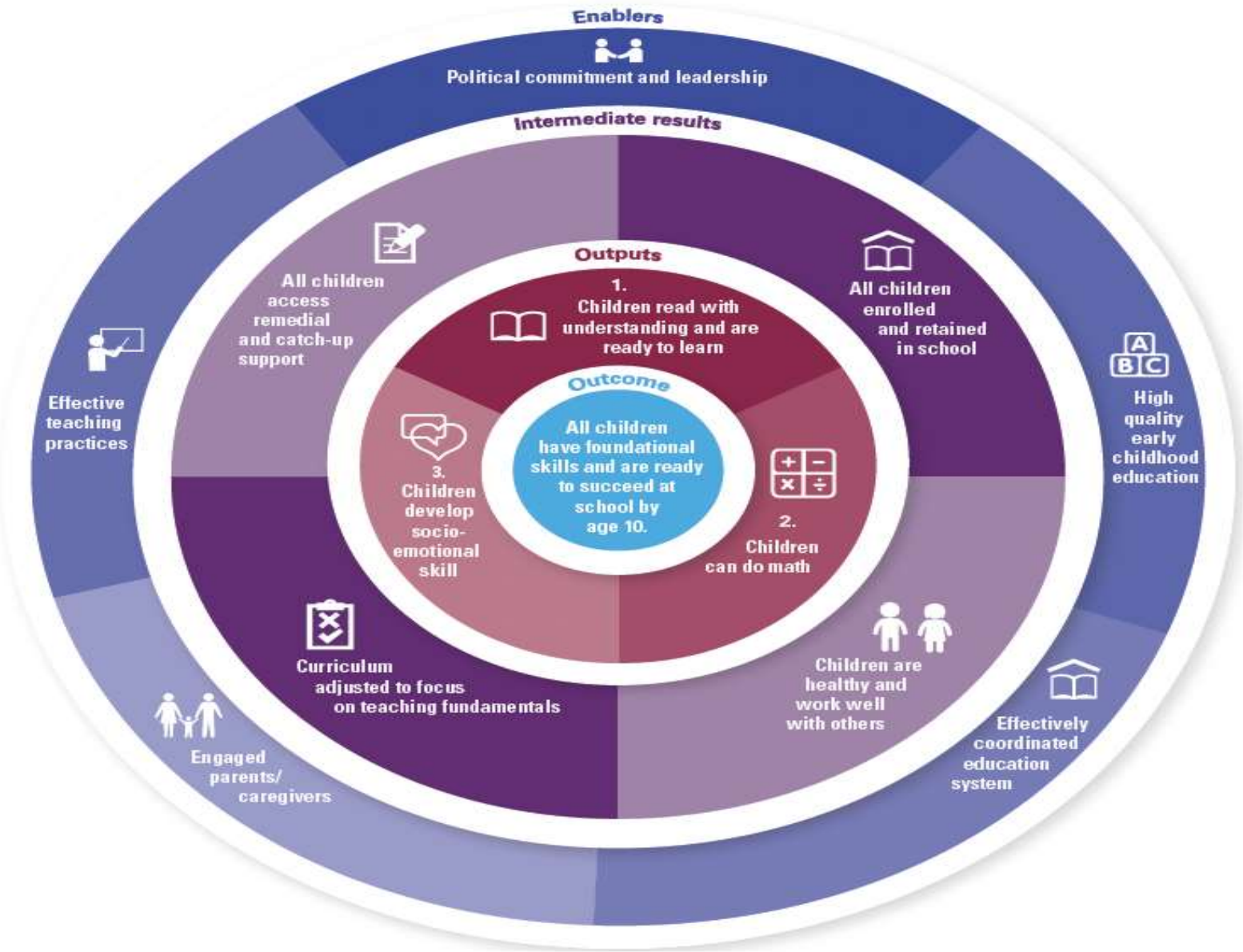
If a child does not read by grade three, he or she is four times more likely to drop out of school. This sets in motion a **life of missed opportunitie**s including the capacity to develop the higher order and job-specific skills they need to break cycles of intergenerational poverty.

Without action, future learning is at risk

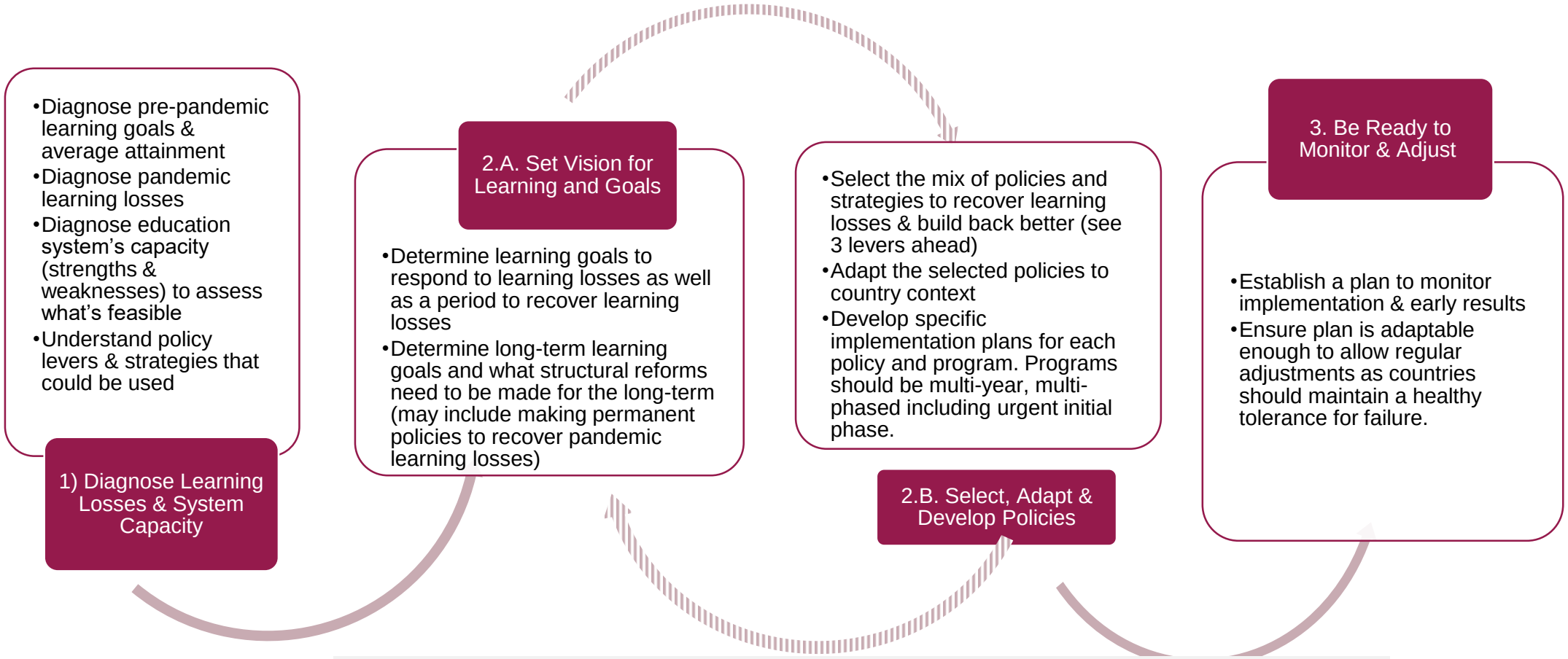
Learning trajectories pre and post covid



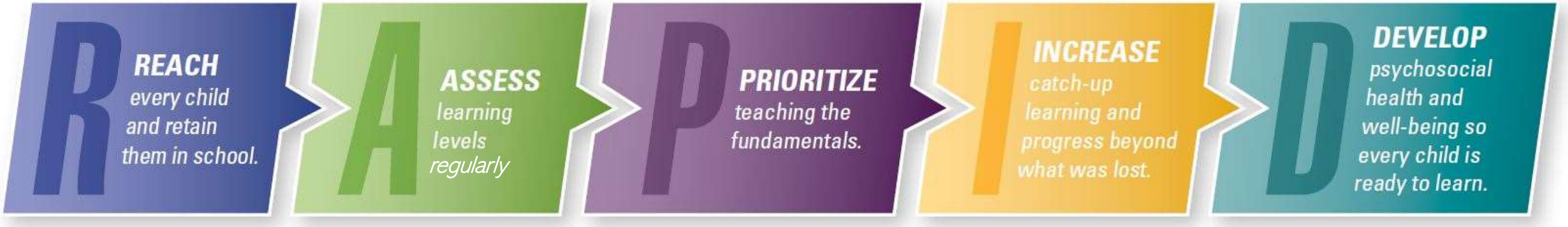
UNICEF's Model for Foundational Learning



Framework for multi-year plans for recovering learning



Steps 2.A. and 2.B. are iterative: As one selects, adapts and develops policies it may be necessary to go back and readjust learning goals.



Reopen schools safely and keep them open

Promote re-enrollment through back-to-school campaigns

Provide cash transfers to poor families

Use early warning systems to identify at-risk students

Assess learning losses at national/sub-national level

Provide teachers with tools for classroom level measurement

Adjust curriculum across and within subjects

Prioritize numeracy, literacy, socioemotional skills

Focus instruction on closing the gaps between desired and actual student learning in specific subjects

Urgently scale up remedial programmes to address learning needs

Support teachers continuously: build practical pedagogical and digital skills

Use approaches that align instruction with learning needs: targeted instruction; structured pedagogy

Enhance learning with technology

Provide support to children to help identify and address their protection, nutrition, health, mental health and psychosocial support, and wellbeing needs.

Build teachers' capacities to support their students' wellbeing and identify students in need of specialized services

Support teacher wellbeing and resilience

Encourage, monitor and support re-enrollment

Ensure all children return and stay in school

1. Reopen and keep all schools open
2. Early warning systems and re-enrollment campaigns
3. Support (scholarships, cash transfer etc)

Reopening schools and keeping schools open is a pre-requisite for learning recovery. During school closures, remote learning was not as effective as in-person schooling, even in high-income countries.

Early warning systems to identify students at risk of dropping out, like the one developed in Chile, can help improve student retention. Drop-out is multi-causal, which is why in addition to attendance and student achievement, it is important to consider how outside-school factors like financial constraints, family situation, peers and lack of community support may affect a student's risk of dropping out. Within school, access to services, supportive teaching practices, safety (especially for girls) and ensuring schools are using language children use and understand.

Re-enrollment communication campaigns, both general and targeted to at-risk students, can help increase re-enrollment rates. It is important to communicate to parents that it is safe to send children back to school, as parental concerns about health risks may prevent children from returning, as well as the value of schooling and learning.

Another strategy to boost reenrollment include cash transfers. Some programs tie cash support to families to school enrollment, which proved effective in Mexico and Brazil.

For additional information, explore the following external resource: COVID-19 Response: Re-Enrollment. UNESCO. 2020.

What are key steps for determining learning levels?

Conduct assessment without delay to understand current learning levels

1. Conduct classroom-based formative assessments to understand where children are and support their learning.
2. Review both intended learning outcomes and pre-pandemic attained outcomes
3. **Identify essential content by subject and grade which students "cannot miss"**
4. Quantify learning loss both as a share of a school year and as a set of specific content deficits or content insufficiently learned
5. Consider both average learning losses and changes to the distribution (range), as shares below proficiency
6. **Identify the key "losses" (specific content deficits) that are essential to recover and what fraction of a school year they comprise.**
7. Measure learning levels regularly – it is necessary for evaluating the effectiveness of instruction and informing future actions

The Challenge:

- The pandemic shock represents a crucial opportunity to conduct much-needed adjustment to better **align curricula with pressing needs**.
- As COVID-related education disruptions have pushed students behind their grade-appropriate learning levels, **adhering inflexibly to the curriculum risks presenting students with material they are not prepared to learn.**
- If they move through the curriculum without first mastering the key foundational concepts they need, their ability to progress on to more complex topics with adequate understanding will be jeopardized.
- Countries should adjust teaching plans to prioritize teaching the fundamentals in the time they have available.

Teaching plans should prioritize foundational skills and conceptual pre-requisites

What skills/knowledge are antecedents/pre-requisites for later learning topics in the trajectory?

- E.g.: Learners need to understand subtraction and how to subtract in order to learn long division

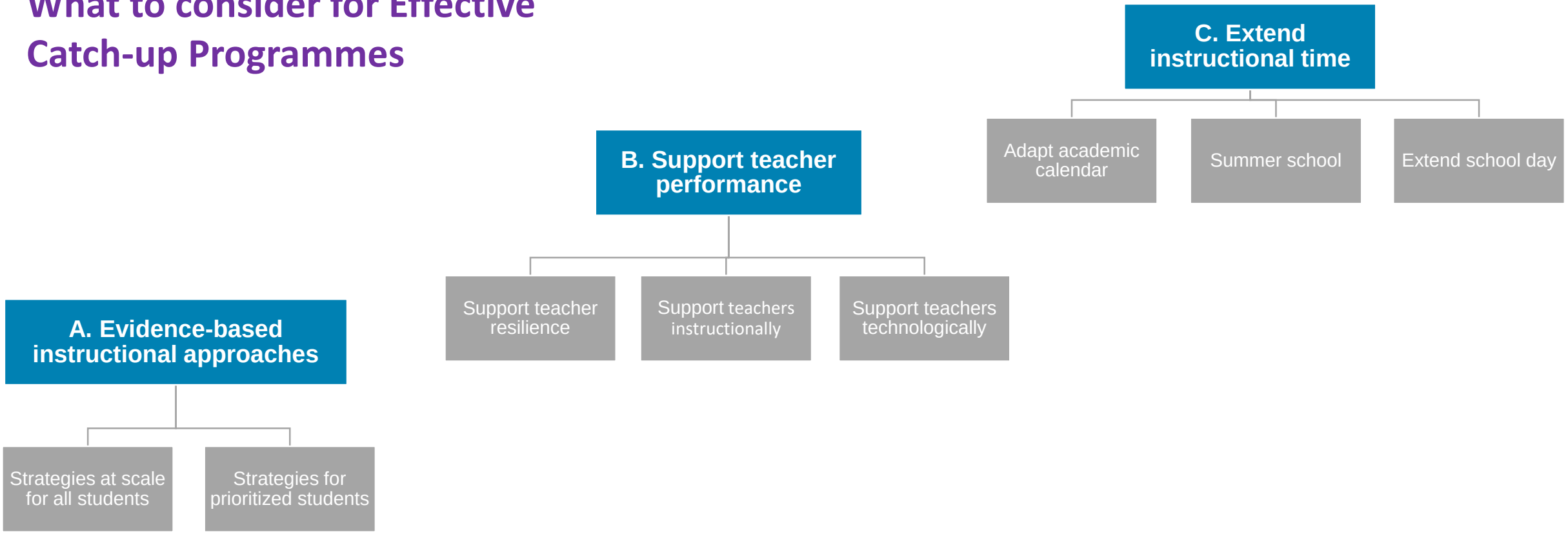
What skills/knowledge can be used across subject areas?

- E.g.: understanding informational texts, creating graphs and interpreting data, may help in a subject like social studies

What skills/knowledge are most critical for graduates' daily life?

- E.g.: Reading comprehension, mathematics, critical thinking

What to consider for Effective Catch-up Programmes



Evidence-based instructional practices

Targeted instruction and Structured Pedagogy *consistently proven effective - individually and together.*

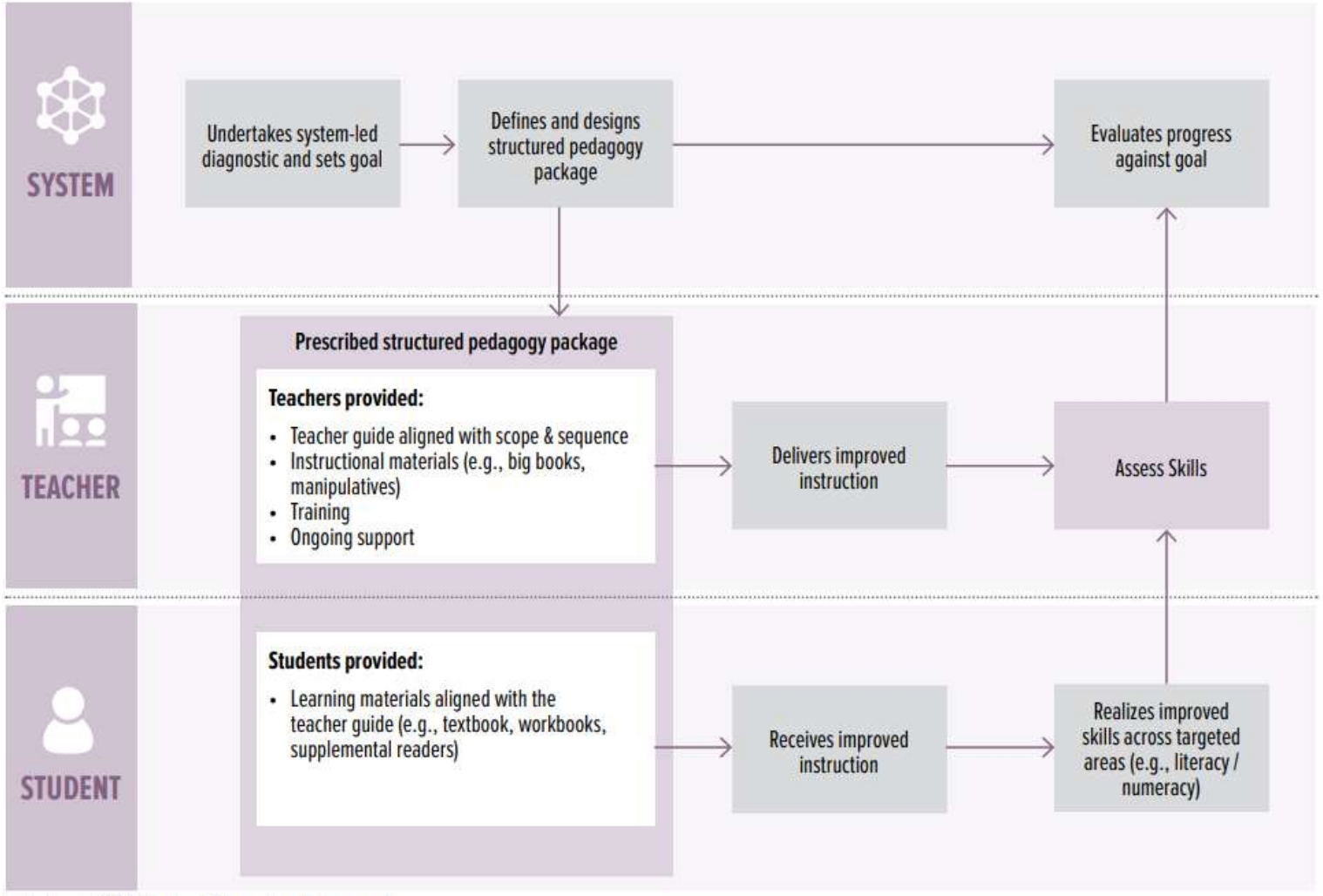
Evidence reviews:

- *Angrist et al (2020) of 150 interventions, 2 of 3 most cost effective were targeted instruction and structured lessons*

- *Snilstveit et al. (2015) review of 420 papers on 238 studies found structured pedagogy programmes have the largest and most consistent positive effects on learning outcomes.*

Consistently recommended by global experts including *Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP) Reports (2020 and 2021)*

Components of structured pedagogy and what makes the difference



Better Purpose (2020). Structured Pedagogy Roundtable pre-read.

What ingredients/components have the largest impacts on student learning?

A study of the PRIMR project in Kenya, researchers found that adding textbooks to teacher training and coaching improved learning, but the biggest additional impact came from adding teacher guides with lesson plans (Piper et al., 2018).

In an RCT in Mongolia, a study found that providing books or providing training (separately) did not provide meaningful impacts, but in **combination** have substantial impacts (Fuje and Tandon 2018).

Good model: Tusome in Kenya. See Lessons from Kenya's Tusome national literacy program (Piper et al.)

More Information on SP see *Structured Pedagogy: For real-time equitable improvements in learning outcomes (UNICEF)*

Targeted Instruction – what and why

What is targeted instruction?

An evidence-based approach to improving students' foundational skills by providing instruction that is appropriate to the learning levels of each child.

Three steps process: assessing student learning levels, grouping them by their level of proficiency, and teach at the group level.

Why align instruction children's current learning levels?

A. Human learning is cumulative – builds on prior knowledge

B. Right level (Zone of Proximal Development) - learn best when presented with instruction that is suitably demanding: not too difficult and not too easy but extending students' capabilities

C. Asking students to complete a learning task for which they lack sufficient prior learning is ineffective. Three things may happen:

- Do not complete the task
- Complete task superficially, learn new content inaccurately
- Complete superficially, learn nothing

One example of targeted instruction is the Teaching at the Right Level methodology, pictured here in Gujarat, India

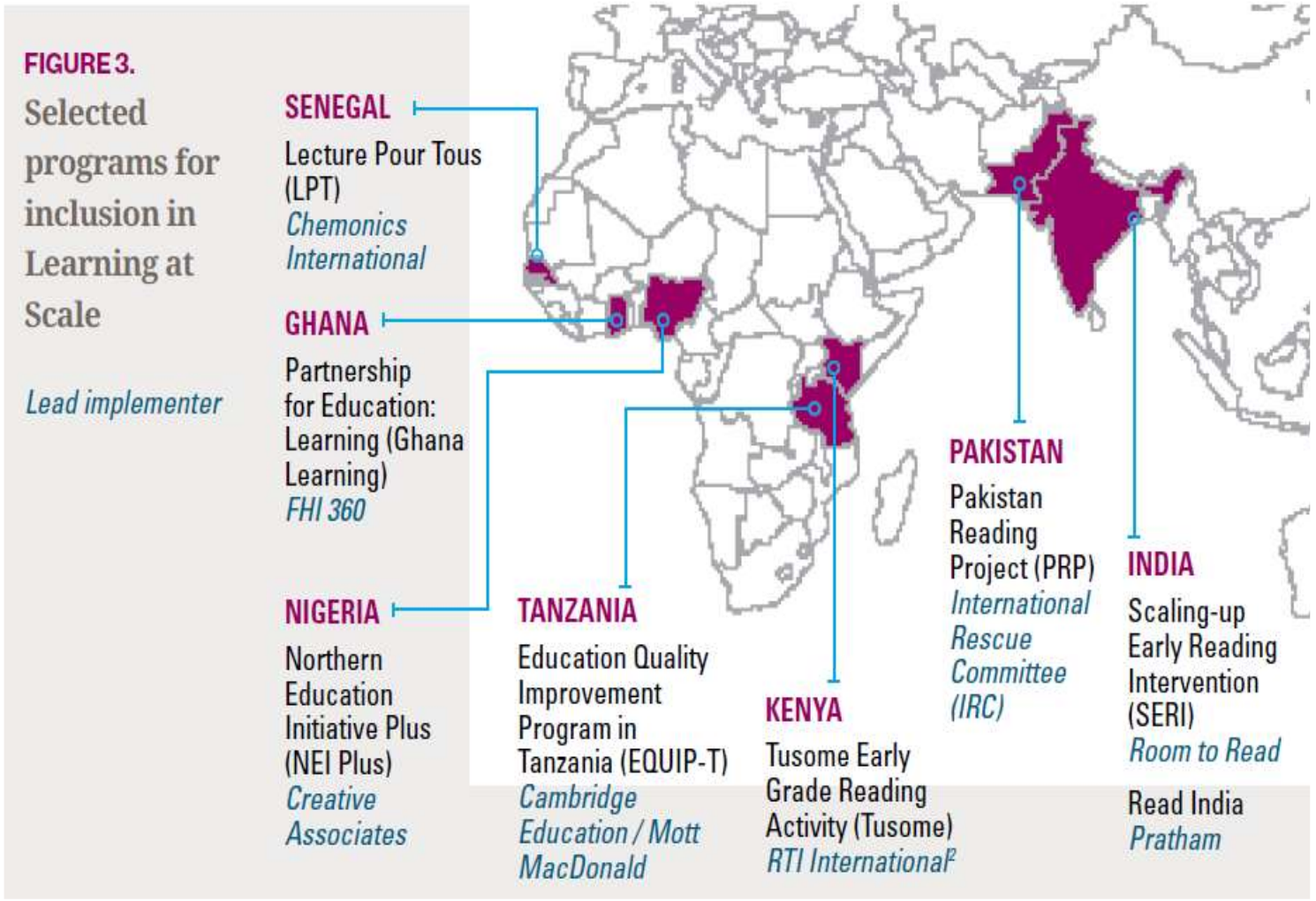
Ghana's recovery plan includes *a targeted instruction intervention in over 10,000 basic (kindergarten, primary and lower secondary) schools across the country.* It dedicates 3 days a week (2 hours a day) across English and Math to targeted instruction.

New assessment instruments and materials which differentiated by learning groups (beginners, intermediate and proficient).

More info see Teaching at the Right Level toolkit (FLN Hub): About TaRL; Classroom Methodology; Mentoring & Review

Lessons from ‘Learning at Scale’ Study

- Implement through government systems – as much as possible.
- Build on existing structures and mechanisms
- Focus on effective trainings
- Support teachers through the change process
- Tight coupling of teacher training, teacher guides, coaching of teachers, structured tools and formative assessment



Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning

1. **Halve the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text** by age 10, by 2030

2. Take urgent action (such as those in the **RAPID framework)**

3. **Close the education resource gap** to advance foundational learning

THANK YOU

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