

# Scaling quality pre-primary education: 15 reasons why components of Fursa Kwa Watoto (FkW) should be adopted

Quality pre-primary education plays a critical role in laying the foundation for improved school readiness and learning. Investing in quality early childhood education is impactful and cost effective, improving academic and other life outcomes over the lifespan.<sup>1,2</sup>

Tanzania is the first country in the region to mandate that pre-primary education be free and a compulsory part of basic education, and to have a pre-primary policy and curriculum. Nevertheless, the provision of quality pre-primary is challenging given that Tanzania suffers from an extreme teacher and classroom shortage, overcrowded and congested classes, and insufficient resources earmarked for early childhood education.

Despite these serious challenges, the Tanzanian government must provide pre-primary education to more than 7 million children (1 in 5 Tanzanians) over the next five years. Given this obligation, and based on encouraging results from the evaluation of Fursa kwa Watoto (FkW), we describe 15 reasons why we urge policymakers to adopt key components of the FkW model to progressively achieve quality pre-primary education. The first five reasons are based FkW's alignment with the goals and plans of the Tanzania education sector. The remaining ten reasons are based on lessons learned during implementation:

## Alignment with the Tanzanian Education Sector

1. The **Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP) 2016/17–2020/21** identifies strategies to meet key performance indicators (KPIs) for pre-primary. The FkW training package provides guidance to achieve the KPIs including *specifically how to*: a) strengthen pre-primary teachers' professional development; b) transform classrooms into cognitively stimulating environments with locally sourced

learning materials; c) stimulate community engagement to improve pre-primary; d) further develop quality pre-primary standards; and e) initiate collaborations between SMCs, head teachers and communities to generate resources and fill financial gaps.

### FkW Model

FkW is an evidence-based pre-primary model designed to be low-cost, effective, sustainable, and scalable in resource constrained conditions.

FkW involves training and mentoring for teachers to acquire improved instructional skills and practices. The model also requires head teachers, school management committees, and education officers at the ward, district, and regional levels to collaborate to improve pre-primary.

### Evidence based instructional components include:

- Hands-on training and mentoring on writing, using, and reflecting on lesson plans
- Training and mentoring on using student assessments, reflective practices, time management
- Trainers model how to create an interactive, child-centered participatory classroom
- Classrooms transformed into stimulating learning environments
- Use of daily routines and learning corners
- Use of locally sourced teaching and learning materials that complement lessons
- Partnerships with all stakeholders to support pre-primary

2. Key components of the FkW package are aligned with- and based on- Tanzania's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) **Pre-Primary Education National Curriculum and Syllabus 2016 (PPE NCS)**. The FkW approach helps operationalize the curriculum and syllabus so teachers progress from concept to actionable instruction, ultimately improving student learning.

3. FkW and the Tanzanian Institute of Education's **Teacher's Guide for Pre-Primary Education (TIE GPPE) 2016** are also aligned. FkW training components provide concrete examples, modeling *how to* effectively implement competency based pre-primary education, create an inclusive class, and use age appropriate methods including daily routines and learning corners. The FkW package builds teachers' skills, motivation, and competency in using instructional and learning materials, completing schemes of work, and conducting regular assessments. FkW trained teachers can demonstrate to peers how to create an environment that fosters child development, enabling students to acquire pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, and social relationships skills.

4. The PPE NCS and the TIE GPPE articulate goals and competencies for quality pre-primary. FkW training and mentoring helps teachers arrange class time to incorporate these competencies and methodologies. Time on learning is a major challenge in congested classrooms, particularly in schools without feeding programs. However, FkW trained teachers can model the use of daily routines and learning corners so students have child-centered, hands-on learning and time to practice social skills.

5. FkW is aligned with the **National Framework for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) 2017** and provides a training and mentoring approach that focuses on knowledge, content, skills, and attitudes for pre-primary teachers. Members of the MoEST and President's Office for Regional and Local Government (PO-RALG), Regional, District, and Ward Education (WEO) and Quality Assurance Officers (QAO), and head teachers can fulfill CPD responsibilities using tested components of the FkW model which can be implemented at the district, ward, and school levels.

### Implementation lessons learned

6. FkW was developed in a participatory, trial and error process in Tanzanian schools—drawing on input from teachers, administrators, community stakeholders and education officials—with monitoring and evaluation activities that informed adjustments at every stage.
7. FkW has been supported and improved with head teacher, WEO, QAO, SMC, DEO and DAO involvement.
8. The final FkW package is teacher tested. Teachers rated FkW training and mentoring highly and describe improved instruction due to FkW participation. Head teachers agree that teachers were highly motivated by FkW approaches.
9. Teachers are eager for training and mentoring that enables them to better meet students' needs and competency based education in the context of high enrolment, a teacher shortage, and limited resources.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the FkW model's close alignment with Tanzania's ESDP, pre-primary curriculum and syllabus, the TIE teacher guide, and CPD, we urge policymakers and education officials to adopt components of the FkW pre-primary model. Next steps could include the following:

1. Require that pre-primary teachers participate in a competency based training prior to classroom teaching. Teachers should practice key skills, receive feedback, and be assigned a mentor.
2. Allocate and earmark funding specifically for CPD for all pre-primary teachers. Prioritize training for any untrained teachers, particularly if reassigned from upper grades.
3. Draw on "high performing FkW-trained" teachers, head teachers, WEOs, QAOs, and district officials for peer-based CPD across districts. Empower these leaders to utilize FkW training materials to fulfill their CPD responsibilities at the school, ward, and district levels.
4. Use FkW tested methodologies for CPD on classroom management skills, arranging classroom space, implementing daily routines and child-led activities, and utilizing learning corners. Also consider adopting FkW modalities to teach instructional practices including lesson

10. The FkW training and mentoring approach has yielded **demonstrable impacts on instructional practices, classroom management, and the implementation of daily routines**. Many of the instructional improvements have been sustained over a three year period.
11. Key components are scalable as evidenced by District Officials, who—both enthused by observed impacts and acting on national directives—were motivated to scale up FkW approaches in all primary schools in their districts.
12. Champion teachers—who have undergone training and have implemented key components of FkW—are able to train other teachers for school based CPD.
13. Data confirm that once trained and with mentorship, paraprofessionals can be mobilized to assist teachers and ease the teacher shortage.
14. The FkW approach relies heavily on local resources for learning materials. Once trained, teachers maximize the use of local resources to implement interactive lessons and age-appropriate instructional practices.
15. Schools, parents, and SMCs have demonstrated that once sensitized to the needs of pre-primary learners, they are able to work together to improve the classroom and learning environment, identify paraprofessionals as classroom assistants, start and sustain feeding programs, and support teachers with teaching and learning materials.

- development, use of teaching and learning materials, formative checks and assessment, and time management.
5. Empower teachers to join 'communities of learning' and prioritize CPD to advance teachers' instructional skills, problem solve on teaching in challenging contexts, and renew motivation to teach.
  6. Encourage schools to identify paraprofessionals who can be trained as classroom assistants in pre-primary and support teachers in severely overcrowded classrooms.

### Key messages

- A comprehensive evaluation provides evidence that FkW had a powerful and measurable impact on the provision of quality pre-primary education in Tanzanian public primary schools despite the challenging context.
- Tanzanian teachers and education officials can implement key FkW components, producing sustainable improvements in instructional practices at a low cost
- The FkW approach is based on Tanzanian Frameworks, Curriculum, Syllabus, and the Education Sector Development Plan. The FkW approach provides a road map to operationalize and implement key tenets of these guiding education plans to move from concept to action. FkW can help education officials meet their CPD requirements.

<sup>1</sup> The Lancet. "Advancing Early childhood development: from science to scale." October 4, 2016. <https://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016>

<sup>2</sup> Heckman, J. "Early childhood education: Quality and access pay off." The Heckman Equation. <https://heckmanequation.org>