

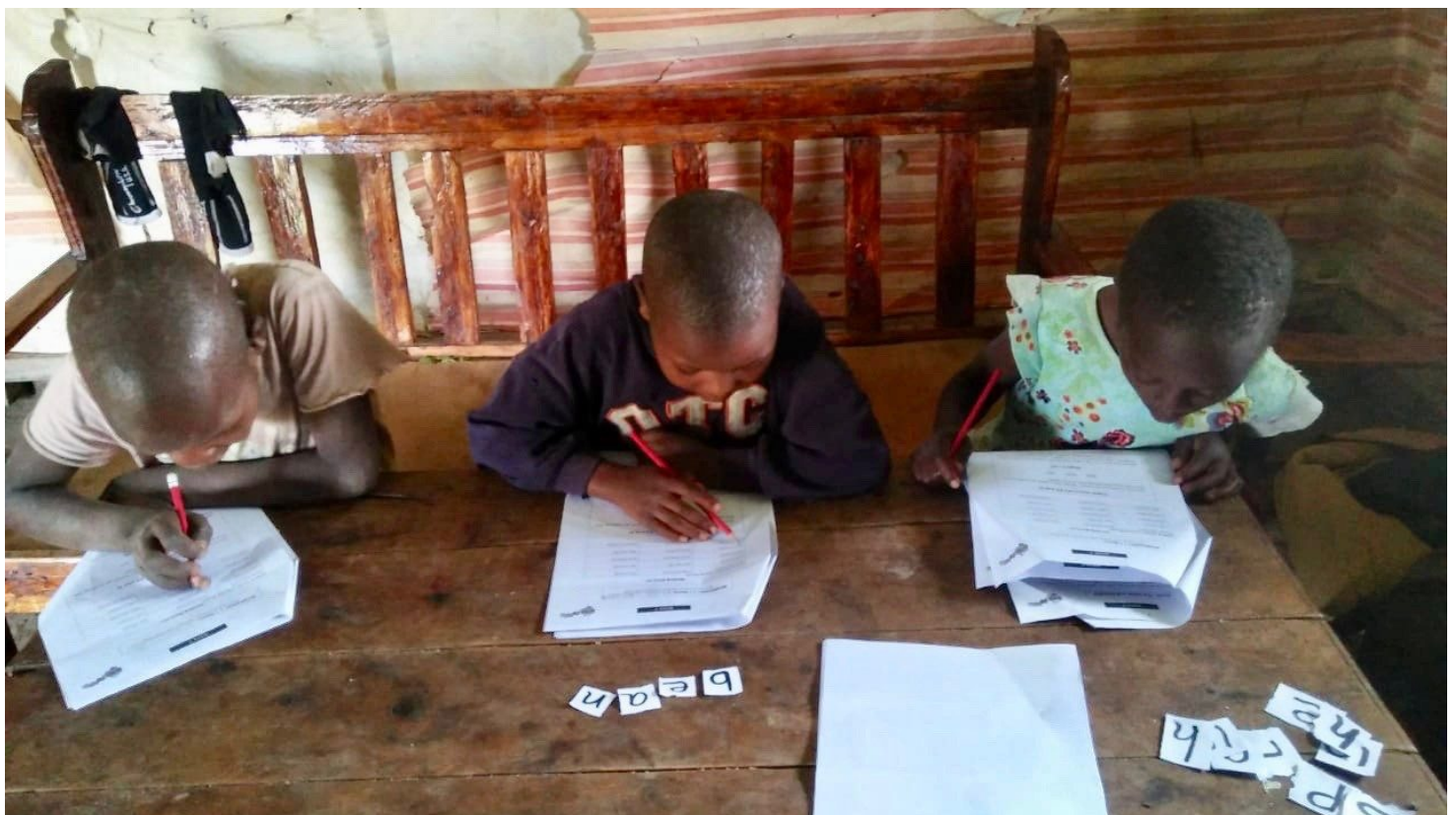
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Concordia helps adapt literacy programming to the reality of COVID-19 school closures in Kenya

ABRA@Home trains teachers to bring lessons to the homes of young learners and their families

August 7, 2020 | By [Vannina Maestracci](#)



A world-renowned literacy tool developed by Concordia researchers is helping children to continue learning in the Trans Mara region of Kenya while schools are closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the past five years, the [Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance \(CSLP\)](#), World Vision Canada, World Vision Kenya and the Aga Khan Academies have collaborated on a literacy project in a remote part of Narok County called Kirindon. The community is in one of World Vision's "area projects" that are established in vulnerable regions where educational and health services are most needed.

To improve early primary students' literacy, the collaborating partners had been using [ABRACADABRA](#), an interactive instructional software that teaches foundational literacy skills, and [READS](#), an organized catalogue of free digital stories. Both are part of Concordia's Learning Toolkit (LTK+) software, which received the [UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize](#) in 2017.

But with students unable to attend classes while schools are closed and the constraints linked to the remoteness of the region, the partners, along with literacy experts from Wilfrid Laurier University, have embarked on an innovative pilot project called ABRA@Home. The goal: to transform the digital literacy approach so students and parents can use it at home.

"Given the lack of computers and connectivity in the homes, we had to think of a different way of reaching these children," explains Anne Wade, LTK+ global manager.

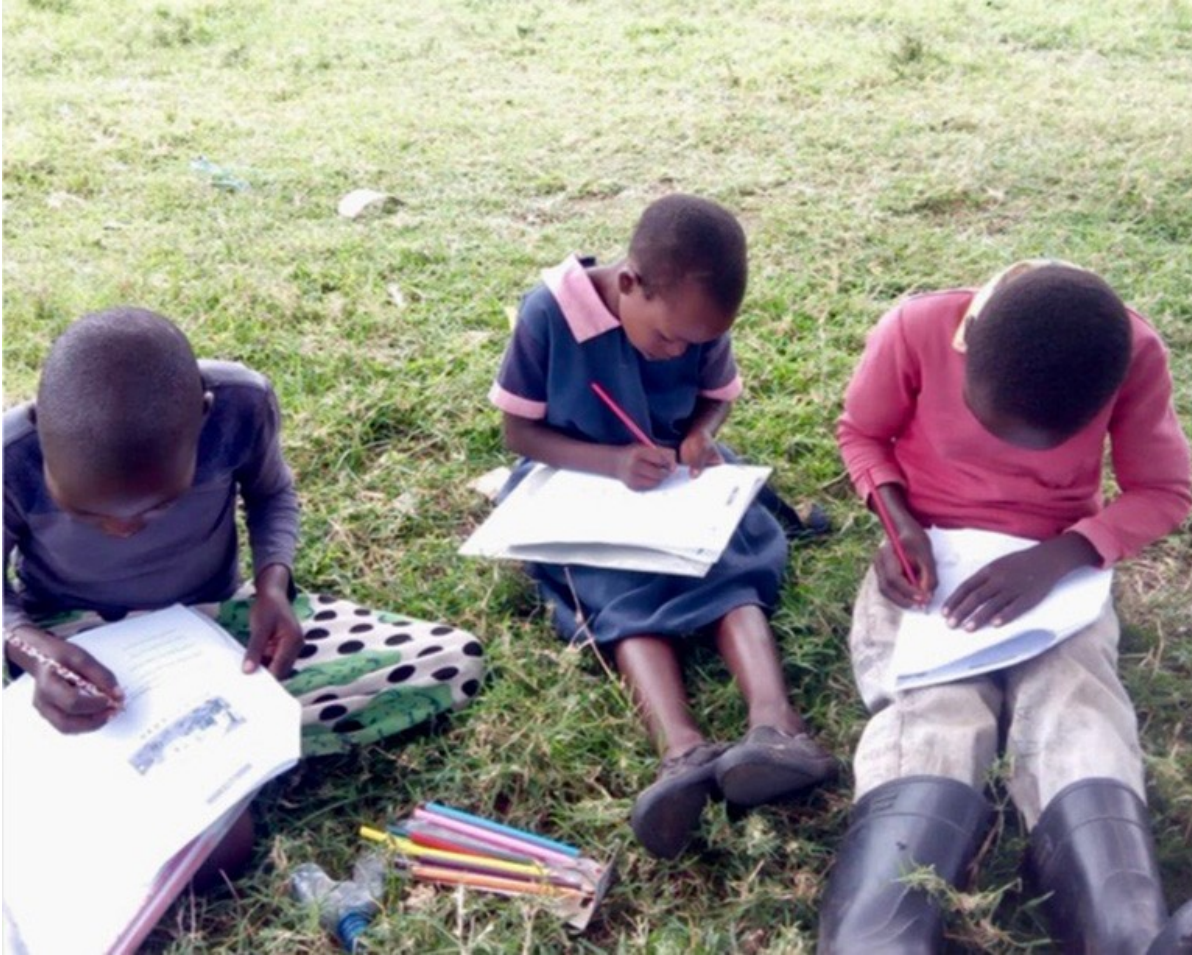
Reuniting teachers and students

In its three-week pilot phase, the project trained 10 teachers in Kirindon to use a print-based version of ABRACADABRA and visit households to help children learn. In all, they reached more than 100 students.

Educators and students alike were eager to get back to lessons after months of not being in the classroom. The students used items within their household, like bottle caps and pebbles, to help them form words and complete the daily lessons.

Word of the project quickly spread throughout the villages and other students also expressed their thirst to learn.

Given that the ABRACADABRA program targets primarily learners in grades one to three, roles were quickly established for older siblings so they could support younger students as they completed their homework. Higher-level printed books from READS were also included in teachers' packages to allow all children in the homes to benefit from this literacy instruction.



Anne Wade: "Given the lack of computers and connectivity in the homes, we had to think of a different way of reaching these children."

"The ABRA@Home project has reunited teachers and students who want nothing else but to teach and learn. This project will ensure that learning is not lost, that new literacy skills are built and that the professional capacity of teachers is continuously developed," says Nancy Del Col, education specialist at World Vision Canada.

"Even parents, who may have low literacy themselves, have a role to play in the learning. They provide safe spaces for the teachers and students where they can physically distance and encourage a love of reading by engaging in simple activities with their children."

The project has expanded to additional households in Kirindon, and another 10 teachers were trained in a second World Vision Area Project, Matete in Kakamega County, to teach students there.

The success of the project has energized teachers, parents and students. With the recent news that Kenyan schools aren't slated to open until January 2021, the 12-week ABRA@Home project is likely to be expanded two months past the original August 31 end date.

The program will have an impact on about 300 early primary students and their older siblings.