

The Global Learning Crisis.

Improving Reading –

Insights from PEARL



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The issue

There is a learning crisis. Countries find it

- relatively straightforward to increase participation in primary school
- but harder to improve student outcomes, including in literacy...

In the **Pacific** very great challenges – shown by PILNA at grades 4 and 6.

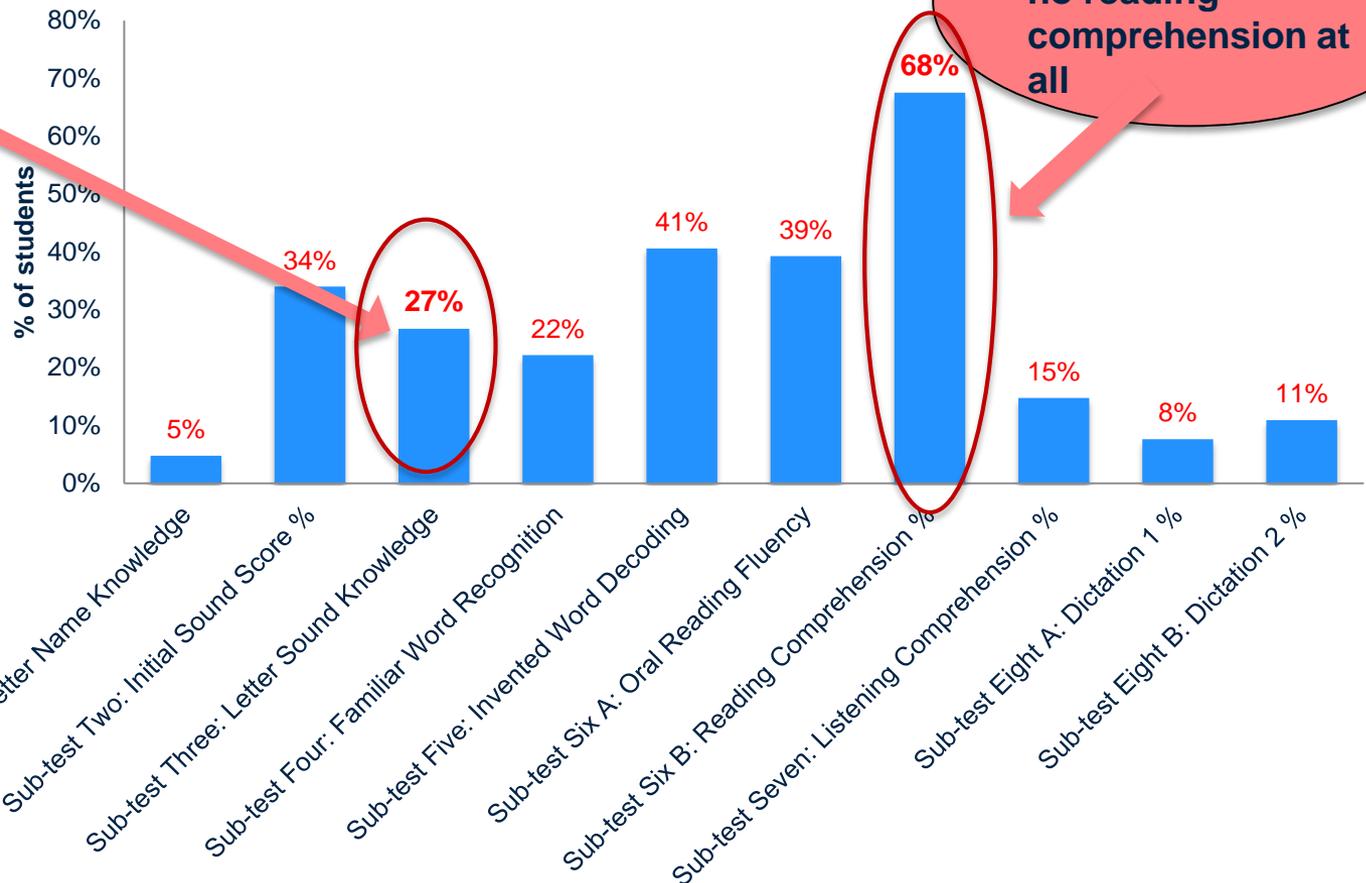
Problems start early:

- Preschool is patchy, and many children not “school ready”.
- Tonga – Only 34% of children in Grade 3 could read fluently (2009).
- EGRA results in 4 PICs showed Grade 3 students reading with comprehension scores of 25-48% correct.

Tonga. 2014 TEGRA Class 1 end of year – reading problems start early!

Many children with ZERO scores

1 in 4 children do not know the sounds of any letters



2 out of 3 have no reading comprehension at all

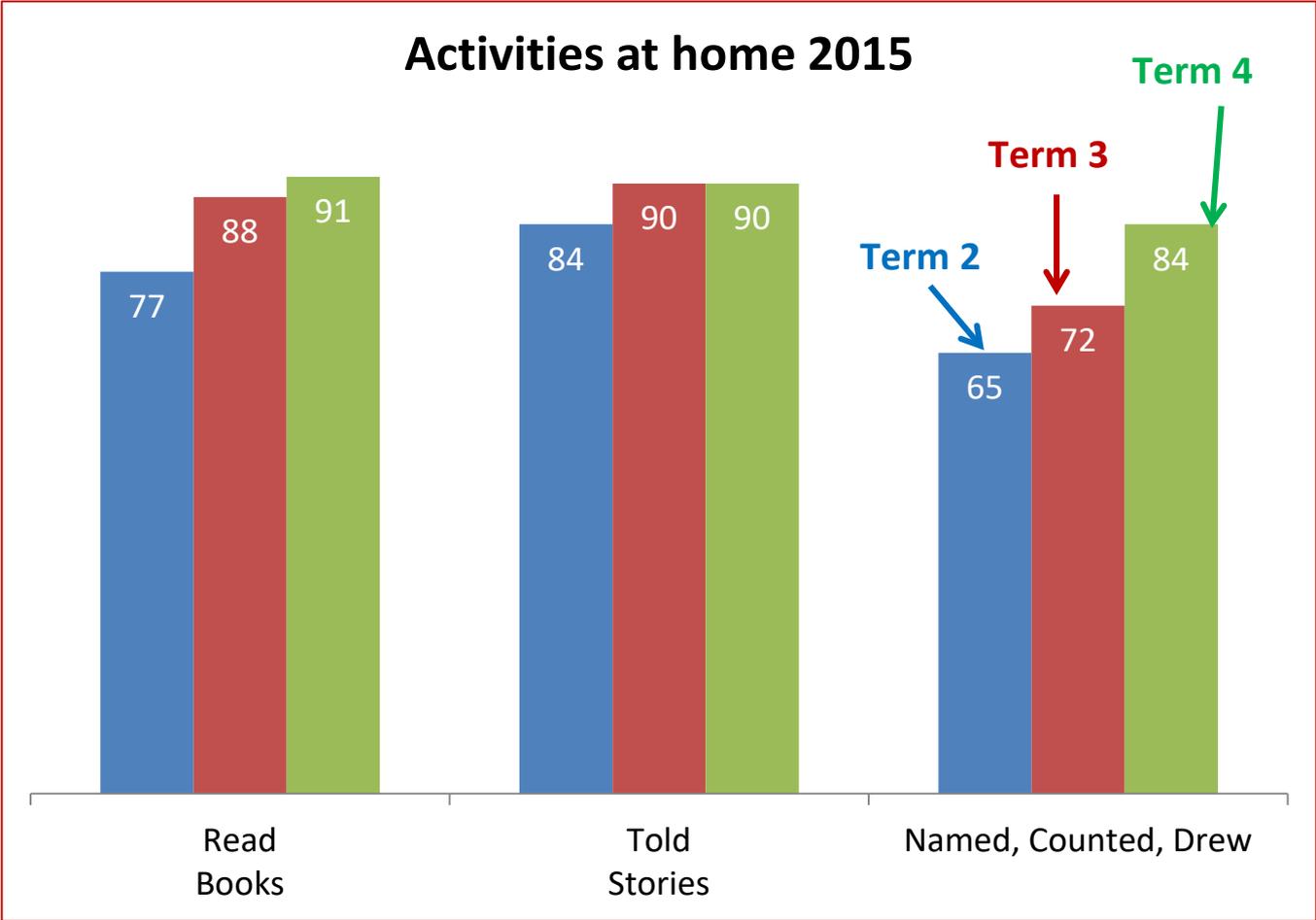
PEARL - Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning 2014-2018. Improving literacy in low resource environments.



Evaluated through RCTs in Tonga



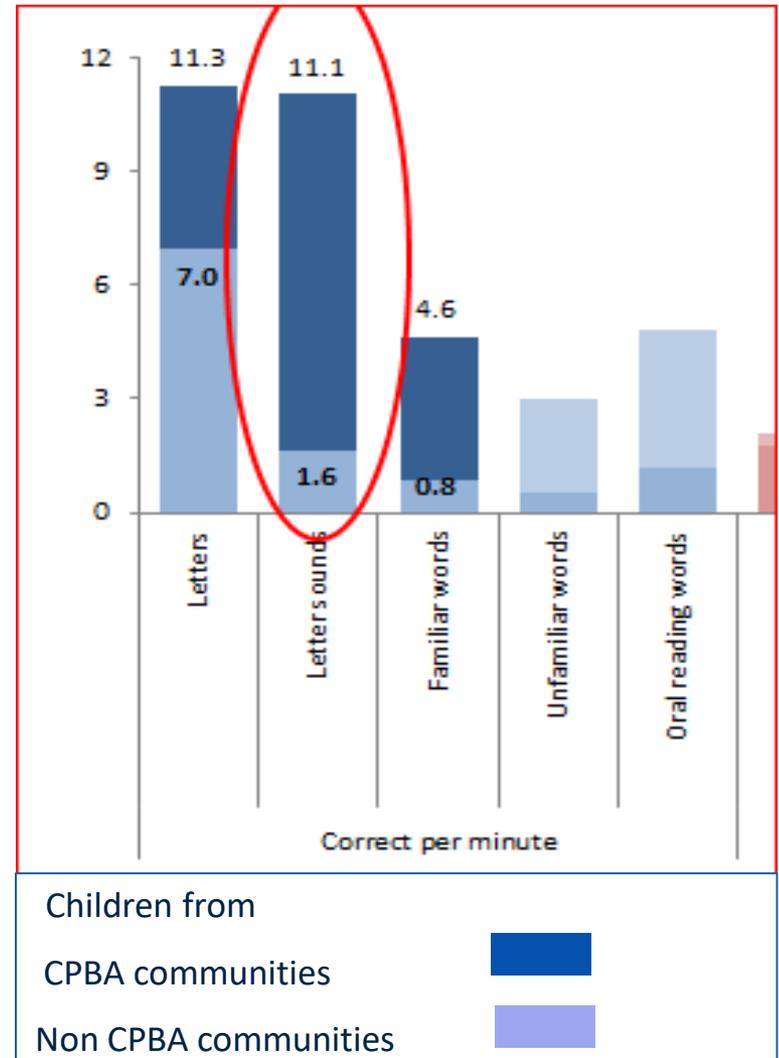
1. Playgroups - influence apparent early - parents are doing more at home



Tonga

Playgroups (CPBAs) – early results - 2016

- CPBA children are more advanced than non-CPBA children in some aspects of literacy when they start school
- CPBA children know more letters and more letter-sounds (TEGRA February 2016 results)



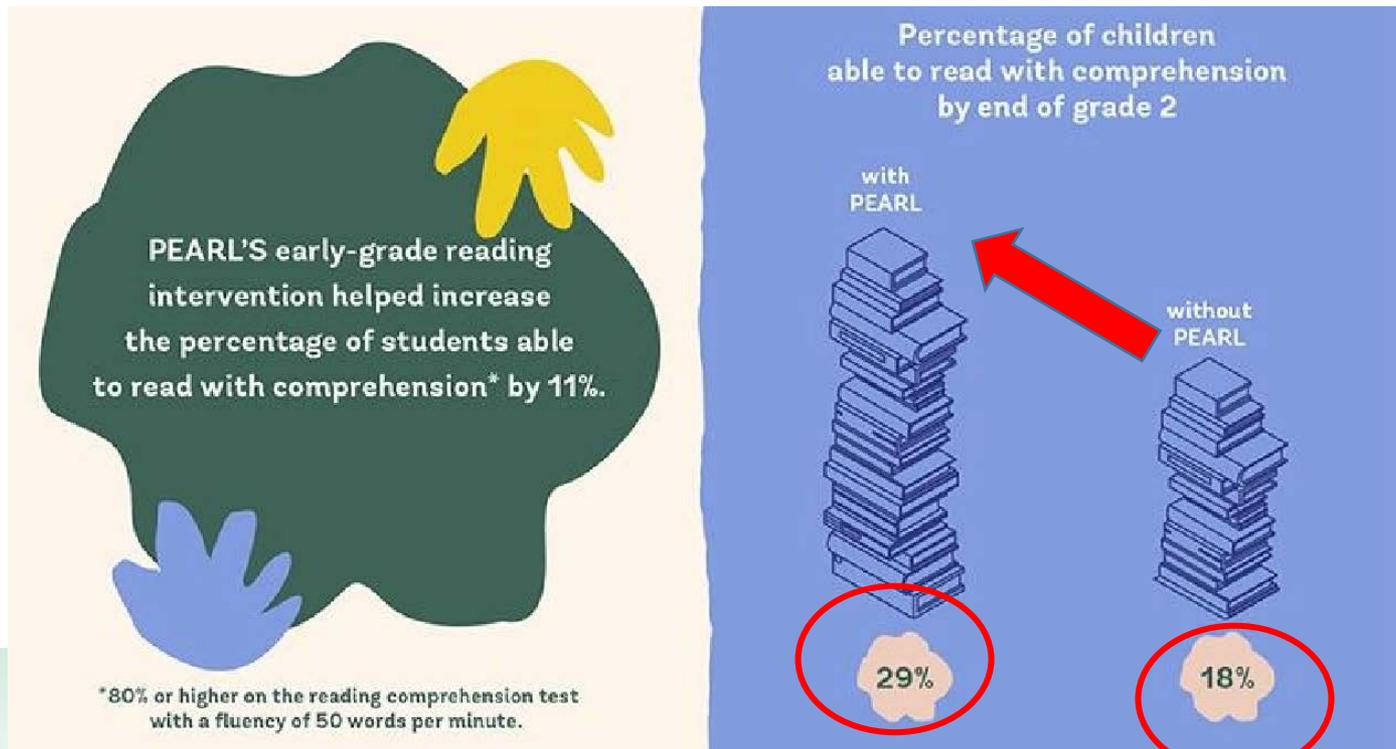
PEARL playgroups - impact on school readiness

Playgroups in Tonga – after 2 years:

- Improved pre-numeracy and pre-literacy, particularly of disadvantaged children (24% increase over one year normal gain)
 - Note: RCT results underestimated impact on children
- Effects arose from low doses – 2-4 hours a week for children and parents that attended.
- **Inexpensive** (annual cost \$12.62 US per child). Drew on volunteers and strong communities.

2. Early Grade Reading - Tonga

- Scripted lesson plans, coaching.
- Teachers implemented new teaching method and resources (93% fully implemented it in 2016)
- RCT - Students improved reading comprehension
- Annual cost \$62 US per child



What did I learn - myth busting?

- It is possible to get significant improvements in literacy in **short** periods of time. It takes a lot of planning, analysis and stakeholder engagement but *it doesn't take years to get results...*
- It doesn't have to **cost** a lot...
- Playgroups with volunteer facilitators and limited resources were just as **cost effective** as the teaching program, and generated significant community and political support.
- **Teachers** will change teaching practices with the right support, training and materials. They are quite comfortable with **highly structured** lessons - in fact many appreciate having it worked out by others. Regular coaching though is essential.
- The biggest **resistance** to the evidence has come from outside experts.....(anecdotal!)

What should we do differently?

- a. Invest more in ECD and **Preschools!**
- b. Review the **experts** we are using.
- c. Always measure **student learning**.
 - Act on the results - if it doesn't improve – change what we are doing.
- d. For political support
 - design investments and support to deliver **quick wins**.
 - emphasise **links** to other agendas – eg skills acquisition, labour mobility, infrastructure, workforce participation. For ECE interventions emphasise role in supporting culture.
- e. Literacy requires active effort **beyond schools and education ministries**. Support governments to engage across ministries and with parents, business and community.
- f. Better **graphics** and communication

References

Macdonald et al 2018. *Intervening at Home and Then at School A Randomized Evaluation of Two Approaches to Improve Early Educational Outcomes in Tonga*. World bank working paper 8682.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/749601545227173514/pdf/Intervening-at-Home-and-Then-at-School-A-Randomized-Evaluation-of-Two-Approaches-to-Improve-Early-Educational-Outcomes-in-Tonga.pdf>

Vu et al 2019. Implementing and Evaluating Interventions to Improve School Readiness and Early Literacy : Experience from the Pacific Early Age Readiness and Learning Program : Operational Guide

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/981801563250242375/Operational-Guide>