

# BUILDING TOMORROW

KEEP LEARNING 2021 IMPACT REPORT



IN 2021

**WE KEPT CHILDREN  
LEARNING BY:**

Reaching learners who lack literacy and numeracy skills via **Roots to Rise Community**

Providing an engaging, accessible remote learning tool to last-mile learners with **Roots to Rise Ewaka**

Creating an **inclusive learning environment** for those who have long been excluded, such as children with disabilities

Recruiting and training **Community Education Volunteers** (CEVs) to lead learning efforts, such as Roots to Rise Community and a randomized controlled trial investigating over-the-phone instruction

Recognizing the power of CEVs and scaling their reach via **Tomorrow is Now**



# KEEP CHILDREN LEARNING

**THAT WAS OUR FOCUS IN 2021**

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As schools remained closed throughout Uganda due to the COVID-19 pandemic and children in underserved areas were limited in options to learn outside the classroom, Building Tomorrow continued to address the growing education crisis with innovative programming.



## FROM OUR FOUNDERS

**In the midst of what became the world's longest school closure as a result of COVID-19, Building Tomorrow doubled down throughout 2021 to keep children learning.**

With classrooms shuttered and school-going routines forgotten, the Building Tomorrow team worked relentlessly to ensure as many learners as possible could safely gather and strengthen their foundational learning skills in preparation for an eventual return to school.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication, commitment, and resolve of an ever-growing corps of **5,500+ Community Education Volunteers (CEVs)** who not only delivered our Roots to Rise programming to more than **13,500 learners**, but were also appropriately recognized by the Government of Uganda as critical frontline workers, enabling them to be among the first to receive their COVID-19 vaccination. Now, more than ever, we believe CEVs—proximate, locally-engaged lay leaders—will play a critical role in delivering literacy and numeracy for all children, allowing them to benefit from universal access to inclusive, quality education.

**George Srour**, Co-Founder and Chief Dreamer  
**Joseph Kaliisa**, Co-Founder and Country Director



## MISSION

# LITERACY AND NUMERACY FOR ALL CHILDREN

## *Vision*

COMMUNITIES EQUIPPED  
TO SUPPORT UNIVERSAL  
ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE,  
QUALITY EDUCATION



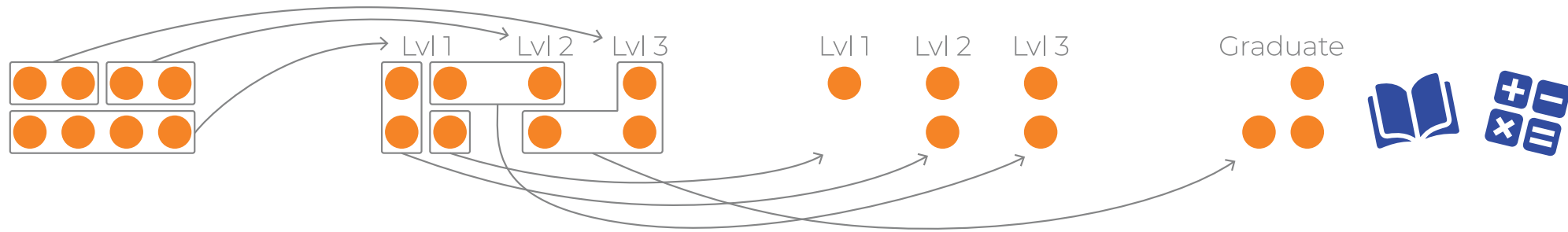


ROOTS TO RISE COMMUNITY

## DELIVERING EFFECTIVE LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRAMMING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

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In 2019, classroom-based Roots to Rise camps taught by Building Tomorrow Fellows and teachers reached 13,001 learners, and we eliminated learning poverty—the inability to read and understand a simple text by age 10—for half of them. With continued school closures, in 2021 we translated the efficacy of our model to learners outside the classroom by mobilizing Community Education Volunteers, while retaining the core methodology of reaching learners through interactive activities and by grouping them according to learning level, rather than age.



#### ASSESS

Community Education Volunteers (CEVs) and Fellows assess students using a simple test.

#### GROUP + TEACH

Children are grouped according to learning level, and CEVs and Fellows facilitate daily targeted lessons for a period of eight weeks.

#### REGROUP

Each week, students are re-assessed and re-grouped as they move up through the levels.

#### IMPROVED LEARNING OUTCOMES

After just 40 hours of lessons, students improve their ability to read simple stories and perform basic math.



#### ROOTS TO RISE COMMUNITY

WE LAUNCHED ROOTS TO RISE COMMUNITY IN MAY 2021 TO REACH CHILDREN IN PERSON, OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM. OVER 40 HOURS, CEVS AND FELLOWS DELIVER LITERACY AND NUMERACY LESSONS IN SMALL GROUPS OUTDOORS.

Roots to Rise Community differs from the standard model in that CEVs, as education extension agents, are the primary instructors of the literacy and numeracy camps. Building Tomorrow Fellows train CEVs, who then train other CEVs through a training-of-trainers approach. In doing so, Building Tomorrow can increase our investment in CEVs and their communities, and scale the model to reach even more learners across rural Uganda.





ROOTS TO RISE  
COMMUNITY

## RESULTS

Surges in COVID-19 limited  
Community camps to two  
rounds during the year

**Round 1:**  
May-June

**Round 2:**  
October-December

# TOTAL LEARNERS ENROLLED IN COMMUNITY CAMPS:

NUMERACY:  
**10,248**

LITERACY:  
**11,823**

DISTRICTS:  
**20**

*Learners are assessed and placed into one of four levels, further explained below*

## NUMERACY

- Level 1** No recognition of any single digits
- Level 2** Recognition of single digits
- Level 3** Recognition of double digits
- Graduate** Ability to perform all four basic operations (+ - x ÷)

Growth of learners who could  
at least recognize double digits

FIRST  
ASSESSMENT:  
**23.8%**



LAST  
ASSESSMENT:  
**71.8%**



**77.6% of learners assessed  
more than once improved  
at least one numeracy level**

## LITERACY

- Level 1** Complete inability to read
- Level 2** Ability to read letters and syllables
- Level 3** Ability to read words/paragraphs
- Graduate** Ability to read/comprehend stories

Growth of learners who could  
at least read words or paragraphs

FIRST  
ASSESSMENT:  
**15.9%**



LAST  
ASSESSMENT:  
**65.5%**



**78.1% of learners assessed  
more than once improved  
at least one literacy level**

EWAKA



28,069

LEARNERS  
ENROLLED

52% 20

GIRLS

DISTRICTS

LESSONS DELIVERED IN  
4 LANGUAGES



ROOTS TO RISE EWAKA

## ENGAGING LAST-MILE LEARNERS WITH AN ACCESSIBLE, INTERACTIVE, REMOTE LEARNING TOOL

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Shortly after COVID-19 suspended classes and shuttered schools worldwide, Building Tomorrow recognized that remote learning options—such as radio or internet-based programs—were not viable for students in rural communities with limited access to technology as well as low literacy and numeracy rates. To meet this need for an accessible, low-cost, low-tech, and engaging learning platform, Building Tomorrow adapted the delivery of Roots to Rise programming from the classroom to an “at-home” (“ewaka”) option.



# HOW ROOTS TO RISE EWAKA IS CONDUCTED REMOTELY

## ENROLLMENT

To enroll on the platform, learners and/or their parents dial a number and provide basic information about the learner.



Hello, would you like to enroll in Roots to Rise?

Yes!

What is your name, age, and gender?

Angela, I'm 10, and a girl.

Ok! We'll call you on Tuesday to give you a short test and your first lesson.

## LESSON DELIVERY

The platform schedules daily lessons for learners. At the scheduled time, the platform sends an SMS to the learner's household phone with instructions to initiate the lesson when ready. When the learner indicates they are ready, the platform calls the learner with a recorded lesson. Lessons are regularly supplemented with assessments, which the platform scores and uses to deliver appropriate subsequent lessons to the learner.

Hi Angela! To start, I'm going to give you a test. What is  $2+2$ ? Press the answer on your phone.

[Presses 4]

Great! Now we know your learning level. We can start with a subtraction lesson...

...and that's how you subtract. So let's practice. What is  $4 - 1$ ?

[Presses 3]

Good job! You're ready for advanced subtraction...

...Let's practice again. What is  $23 - 14$ ?

[Presses 8]

I'm sorry, that's incorrect. Let's talk about how to find the answer...

...and that is how you find  $23 - 14$ . What is  $23 - 14$ ?

[Presses 9]





## 2021

### TIMELINE OF ENROLLMENT

We deployed Roots to Rise Ewaka in May with great excitement from communities. After a brief pause in June to resolve some technical issues, the enrollment rate continued to accelerate throughout July and August. After a mid-August assessment of the platform's technical infrastructure, we decided it was insufficient to support current or future enrollment numbers and paused development as we began the search for a new technical partner.



MAY

4,372

new learners  
enrolled

JUNE

679

new learners  
enrolled

JULY

11,551

new learners  
enrolled

AUGUST

11,467

new learners  
enrolled

28,069  
CUMULATIVE  
LEARNERS  
ENROLLED



## REFINING THE PLATFORM

The most significant barrier to participation was learner readiness. Despite consistent lesson call times and SMS reminders, learners/parents often missed calls or hung up immediately because they were not ready to participate. Future iterations will require some initiation by the learner/parent to receive a lesson call.

### REMOVING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

*Language of instruction was another major indicator of participation. Lessons translated into the local languages of Luganda, Lusoga, and Runkyankore experienced 81%, 393%, and 213% greater completion rates, respectively, than those originally recorded in English.*

**Building Tomorrow continuously learned from and adapted Ewaka throughout development and deployment of the platform.**



## 2,800

### LEARNERS PARTICIPATING WITH A GUARDIAN

Children and parents are willing to learn over the phone for extended periods. The average length of a completed lesson call was 14 minutes, and 2,800 learners participated in at least one lesson with a parent or guardian.





# THE FUTURE OF ROOTS TO RISE EWAKA

After demonstrating a proof of concept in 2021, we are exploring public-private partnerships to invest in and build the capacity of the platform. We are focused on securing partnerships with:

**01** Regional technology firms to develop the underlying platform infrastructure

**02** Regional telecommunications companies to provide no-cost resources so Ewaka can remain free for all learners

**03** Relevant government ministries to assist in curriculum development and provide communications expertise





## ROOTS TO RISE INCLUSION

200

children with disabilities  
enrolled in Roots to Rise  
Community camps

In both numeracy and literacy  
camps, 85% of CWDs improved  
at least one learning level

149

children with  
disabilities enrolled in  
Roots to Rise Ewaka



## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

# EDUCATIONAL SOLUTIONS INCLUSIVE OF ALL CHILDREN

Building Tomorrow believes all children have the right to an education, and we're ensuring those who have typically struggled to access the same learning opportunities as their peers—such as children with physical and intellectual disabilities, refugees, and teen mothers—are included in educational spaces.

*Seven-year-old Asha (right) enrolled in school in 2021, with the support of a Fellow and local CEV. Asha's parents were hesitant to send her and her sister to school because they worried the girls would be teased for their albinism. The Fellow and CEV convinced the parents these girls could become doctors and lawyers in the future, and deserve an education like everyone else.*



# TECHNIQUES FOR AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Through the concept of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**, Building Tomorrow creates learning environments that meet the needs of all children and empower children to advocate for their own learning needs. The following four UDL techniques are implemented by teachers in their classrooms and by CEVs in Roots to Rise camps, while Fellows evaluate learners' response and academic performance after implementation.

Reading  
1. Mother is cooking  
2. We are going to  
School

**Belonging** encourages learners to give strong messages to others and to themselves about their abilities and their right to be included in learning environments.

**Partner Reading** groups two to three learners—often those with differing abilities—to read aloud together and answer questions about what they read.

**Group Learning** randomly places learners into small groups to accomplish tasks as a team, while designating a specific role for each member to increase their confidence in participating.

**Functions of Fidgeting** focuses learner attention and mitigates barriers that lead to fidgeting by incorporating songs, goal setting, and leadership roles into learning activities.





# COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Learning is not just for children in the classroom, but also for teachers and other implementers, such as CEVs. Building Tomorrow implements the **Communities of Practice** model to provide a structured space for peer learning among teachers, volunteers, and school leaders. In each school, through Communities of Practice:

**01 A Building Tomorrow Fellow and a designated teacher receive training in Inclusive Education concepts and UDL techniques.**

**02 The Fellow works with the trained teacher to train all other teachers in the school and CEVs on a UDL technique, which is implemented for one month.**

**03 After the month of implementation, Fellows facilitate a reflection with teachers, CEVs, and some children on their experience, learnings, challenges, and recommendations to create a culture of peer learning and support for inclusive education.**



# EMPOWERING YOUTH TO BE INCLUSIVE

98

Junior Kennedy  
Fellows recruited  
and trained



Similar to CEVs being a powerful conduit for change in their communities, children can be impactful in fostering inclusivity in their learning environments.

**The Junior Kennedy Fellows initiative** taps youth—many with disabilities—to advocate to end the stigma around learners with disability in their communities. These Junior Kennedy Fellows help enroll and retain out-of-school children with disabilities (CWDs), create inclusive learning environments through UDL practices, attend community meetings to provide updates on educational progress of CWDs, and work with Building Tomorrow Fellows to create opportunities for CWDs to engage in activities with other children. Junior Kennedy Fellows have been instrumental in amplifying a sense of empathy and inclusion for CWDs in learning.



# CEVs

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

# 5,532

LOCAL LEADERS RECRUITED  
AND TRAINED AS CEVS

## Age Range of CEVs

Based on CEVs who shared their age

Under 18: <1%

18-24: 12%

25-29: 19%

30-34: 22%

35-39: 17%

40 and older: 30%

43%

WOMEN

21

DISTRICTS




## CEV-LED LEARNING

# LEARNING POWERED BY COMMUNITY EDUCATION VOLUNTEERS

During pandemic lockdowns that kept learners out of school and limited Building Tomorrow's direct engagement, proximate leaders—acting as CEVs—mobilized their communities to ensure children kept learning. Community Education Volunteers are resident members of their communities who donate their time to support education. Building Tomorrow trains CEVs who have attained an O-level education to deliver Roots to Rise literacy and numeracy camps; other CEVs volunteer their time supporting school leadership or extracurricular activities. CEVs come from various backgrounds and professions, including parents, retired professionals, and motorcycle drivers, to name a few.





# CEVs LED LEARNING IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS.

IN 2021, CEVS  
VOLUNTEERED  
**116,574** HOURS,  
INCLUDING:

**Facilitating** Roots to Rise  
Community camps  
independently and  
alongside Fellows

**Enrolling and assisting**  
learners in Roots to Rise  
Ewaka lessons

**Integrating** inclusive  
education techniques into  
Roots to Rise and  
sensitizing communities  
towards inclusivity of  
children with disabilities

**Leading** phone-based  
lesson treatments as part  
of a randomized controlled  
trial with Youth Impact





## THE CEV RCT

In partnership with Youth Impact—a Botswana-based, evidence-driven non-governmental organization—Building Tomorrow began a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to investigate the effectiveness of low-technology interventions in stemming learning loss. The RCT consisted of learners receiving one of two interventions—weekly SMS-based numeracy lessons or a combination of weekly SMS-based lessons and live phone call reviews of the lessons with Building Tomorrow-trained CEVs—along with a control group.

### OUR GOAL

*To determine if CEV-led learning compares with that of more formalized, well-trained, professional facilitators, and if there is an evidence base for greater levels of investment in the CEV program nationwide in Uganda*

## Randomized Controlled Trial with Youth Impact

### TREATMENT TIMELINE

**October 2021–  
February 2022**

**180**

**CEVS LEADING  
LESSON TREATMENTS**

**2,138**

**LEARNERS  
PARTICIPATING**

**\*Full results from the RCT will  
be released in late 2022**





Ten **Cohort 1 Fellows**—dynamic, recent Ugandan university graduates—originally recognized the need for support from local volunteers in 2015, and six years later, Community Education Volunteers are still recruited and trained by Fellows.

100 **Cohort 6 Fellows**—61 of whom are women—were trained and deployed in January 2021 and, with the help of CEVs, are actively supporting 398 schools.

In addition to recruiting and training CEVs and assisting them in the volunteer roles outlined previously, Cohort 6 Fellows led public health efforts to deter the spread of COVID-19 and to meet the unique needs of the community during pandemic travel restrictions.



**RECRUITED  
AND TRAINED  
BY FELLOWS**





## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

ADRINNE, KASSANDA DISTRICT

“I saw this volunteer position as a way to play a role in ensuring that children in my community could have the opportunity to learn. I want the children and women in my village to have an education because when you’re educated, there’s no limit to what you can accomplish, no limit to what you can do for others.”







# SCALING THE CEV MODEL

Community Education Volunteers are powerful conduits of change in their communities, and Building Tomorrow worked with local governments to implement the CEV model at the Sub-County level. Through our **Tomorrow is Now** program, in partnership with Mastercard Foundation, Building Tomorrow strengthened the government's capacity to bridge the access and quality gaps in education by placing Building Tomorrow Fellows Alumni as Technical Advisors in Sub-County administrative offices.

These Technical Advisors (TAs) worked with Sub-County leaders to:

- 01 Recruit, train, and manage a corps of CEVs throughout the Sub-County.**
- 02 Bring children at government-supported and universal primary education schools up to grade-level literacy and numeracy through Roots to Rise.**
- 03 Increase capacity for collecting and managing school enrollment and achievement data to inform planning and strategy.**



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

PATRICIA, 18, KIRYANDONGO DISTRICT

“I give back to my community because I love education so much. I believe that with mentorship, young people can change the world. I hope for these young children to become doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers, and pilots.”





# EVIDENCE OF SCALE

## 62

Sub-County governments adopted and formalized CEV recruitment, training, and deployment programs

## 4,074

CEVs deployed by local governments through the Tomorrow is Now program

## 3 of 5

Districts (the level of government directly above Sub-County) budgeted to support CEV programs





## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

HENRY, 22, NAKASEKE DISTRICT

“It is the community from which I was born, it is where I grew from. I give back to my community because it is my passion. Education is the key for all things.”





THE TOMORROW TEAM

# BUILDING TOMORROW LEADERSHIP

## George Srou

Co-Founder and Chief Dreamer

## Joseph Kaliisa

Co-Founder and Country Director

## Jyl Strong

Director of Strategic Partnerships

## Robert Sekadde

Director of Thriving Schools

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# WE ARE SO GRATEFUL



**SOLSO FAMILY FOUNDATION, THE JOHN F. AND  
MARY A. GEISSE FOUNDATION, ANONYMOUS**



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BUILDINGTOMORROW.ORG



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