

By Robert Adiga

Delightful sounds filled the air at Arua Public Primary School on Monday morning. The children in Primary One classroom passed around a paperboard box containing pieces of cardboard, each bearing a letter, while singing the tune: *'the box of sound games is passing around, is passing around, is passing around. The box of sound games is passing around, pick and sound it.'*

Singing along with over 100 children in one of the Primary One streams, Ketty Driciru, a teacher, moved around the classroom, her eyes following the box as it went from one pupil to another.

She cocked her ears to hear the sounds children produced as they picked letters out of the box and named the sounds they represent.

Driciru teaches learners how to read and write by helping them understand the sound each letter represents. She teaches the children through songs, which she says help learners grasp her lessons and enjoy learning.

"Sounds are represented by alphabetical letters. I write lower case letters and put them in a box and pass it around," she says.

Driciru also uses the bottle lines blend game, which involves moving around the classroom cardboard pieces bearing alphabetical letters attached to plastic bottles to help learners understand the syllables in words.

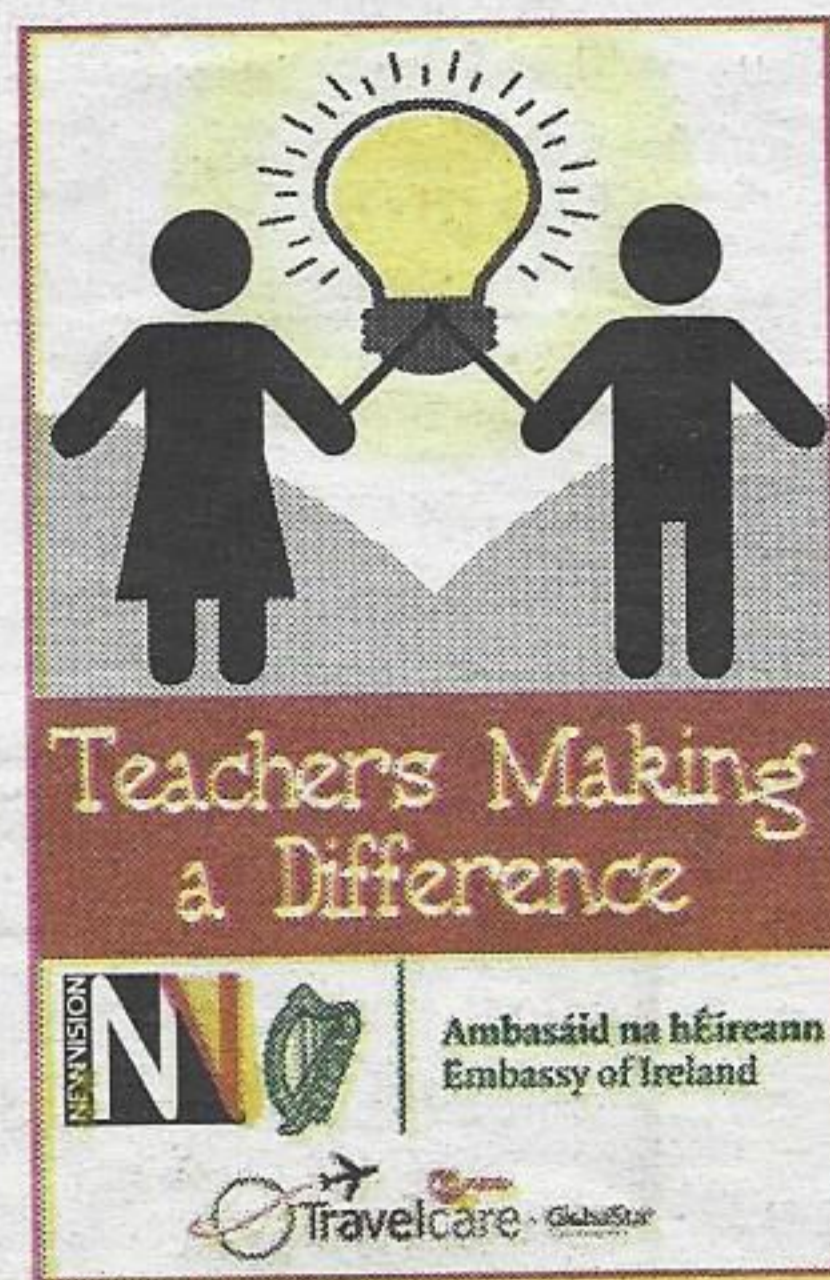
For instance, she writes syllables found in a word "man" on different cardboard pieces.

"We form words using the syllables on the bottles by forming a line with the bottles. I put emphasis on sounds because people use sounds to read rather than names of letters," she adds. Children introduced to sounds early have no problem reading and forming sentences and spellings" she says.

Driciru explains that part of the reason why children drop out of school is the failure to read and comprehend meanings of words, but using sounds to teach helps reduce the dropout cases as it makes learning joyful.

Another technique Driciru deploys involves using agricultural seeds to help the children create letters. If she wants learners to understand letter S better, for example, she lays out the maize grains on a paper in the shape of this letter.

"This is a multisensory approach that allows children to see the letter and feel it by touch," she says.



LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

These learner-centred teaching approaches, Driciru says, enable her to help what she calls the three categories of learners — below average, average and above average — progress together.

"If you do not pay special attention to the below average category, you leave them behind. If you are not careful, the above average learners hijack the class. All children have to learn,"

Driciru, who also uses balls made from banana fibre to teach, says her teaching techniques have earned her teacher training opportunities. In July, she trained early childhood development and primary school teachers in using sounds to teach and developing learning materials. She has severally conducted similar training workshops for teachers in various refugee settlements in West Nile.

EARLY GRADE READING CHAMPION

In 2013, Driciru was declared "a teaching champion" and awarded a certificate of excellence by the Arua municipality education department after an assessment showed that her learners were the best in literacy and numeracy across the

GOLDEN TIPS

- Be organised
- Work hard and do everything well
- Prepare your child for success
- Children belong to the community
- It is our responsibility to raise responsible people
- Teaching is a noble job