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Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success

The purpose of this professional development series and training package is to provide GRN members with evidence-based information, guidance and resources to help them design and implement effective early grade reading (EGR) initiatives. The sessions—which have been delivered as webinars as well as during in-person workshops—are focused on key components of EGR programs, with cross-cutting issues including gender equity, inclusive education and technology referenced throughout. They are as follows:

- **Early grade reading programming: From Conception to scale**
- **Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading**
- **Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment**
- **Language considerations in early grade reading programs**
- **Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs** (includes a focus on coaching)

The content of the sessions was developed by Reading within Reach (REACH), a five-year initiative supported by USAID to collect and disseminate evidence-based practices and resources to increase the impact of primary grade reading programs. Content was developed by REACH Reading Program Specialist Alison Pflapsen and REACH technical consultants Adrienne Barnes, Marion Fesmire and Amy Pallangyo contributed.

Content and resources included in this training were reviewed by a Global Reading Network working group representing diverse roles and programs globally (see list of contributors on subsequent page). In addition to providing feedback on the content, GRN members submitted resources, examples and case studies that have been integrated throughout the training. Presentation materials, handouts and webinar recordings will be transitioned from the Global Reading Network website to USAID's Education Links website: <https://www.edu-links.org/>

We hope your engagement with the EGR Program Design and Implementation professional development package catalyzes enhancements to your work to improve early grade reading outcomes globally!

**EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION:
BEST PRACTICES AND RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS**

REACH and the Global Reading Network thank the following individuals and organizations for graciously taking time to provide input and feedback on the early grade reading training materials, as well as for sharing their program experiences and contributing resources to be included. These contributions on behalf of improving EGR programs globally are greatly appreciated. (Omission of any other contributors is strictly unintentional.)

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READING WITHIN REACH

Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation:
Best Practices and Resources for Success

Webinar series presented by Reading within Reach
(REACH) in collaboration with the Global Reading
Network

June 2019

Welcome!

- This EGR professional development series was developed by the **Reading within Reach (REACH)** initiative, which is funded by **USAID** and implemented by **University Research Co., LLC (URC)**
- REACH supports the **Global Reading Network (GRN)** to develop and share research, innovations and resources related to EGR programming
- For more information about REACH and the GRN, visit www.globalreadingnetwork.net



Webinar presenters

- Alison Pflapsen, REACH Reading Program Specialist (apflapsen@urc-chs.com)
- Amy Pallangyo, REACH Technical Advisor (aawbrey@gmail.com)
- Aristarick Lyimo, REACH Training & Curriculum Specialist: (alyimo@urc-chs.com)
- Adrienne Barnes, Florida State University (adriennebarnes76@gmail.com)

Webinar series goal, content and approach

- The purpose of this professional development webinar series is to **provide participants with evidence-based information, guidance and resources to support the design and implementation of effective EGR initiatives**
- Each session is focused on a key technical topic and includes a summary of **research, experiences and best practices to date**
- **Cross-cutting issues** such as gender equity, ICT and inclusive education are integrated throughout the different webinars
- Issues related to EGR program **monitoring, evaluation, expansion and sustainability** will be addressed as well
- **Opportunities for interaction and questions** will be provided throughout each webinar

Webinar session topics and dates

- **Webinar 1** – Early grade reading programming: From Conception to scale (June 25)
- **Webinar 2** – Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading (July 10)
- **Webinar 3** – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment (July 17)
- **Webinar 4** – Language considerations in early grade reading programs (July 24)
- **Webinar 5** – Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs (July 30)

TO REGISTER, VISIT:

www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar



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READING WITHIN REACH

Early grade reading programming: From conception to scale

June 25, 2019

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM EDT



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REACH

Reading Program Specialist



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REACH

Technical Advisor

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- It was prepared by Reading within Reach (REACH,) which is implemented by University Research Co., LLC. (URC). Contract No.AID-OAA-M-14-00001, MOBIS#: GS-10F-0182T for the Office of Education (E3/ED).

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Session objectives

By the end of this session, participants will know and be able to apply learning about:

- Importance of improving reading outcomes in the early grades
- Relationship between EGR and global efforts to improve education quality
- EGR programs and progress to date
- Cross-cutting issues (gender, equity, technology, etc.)
- Steps and considerations for developing, expanding and scaling an EGR program

To share your questions and comments

- We will provide time throughout the webinar to address your questions and comments
- Please submit them in the “Chat” window, which we will monitor throughout the presentation



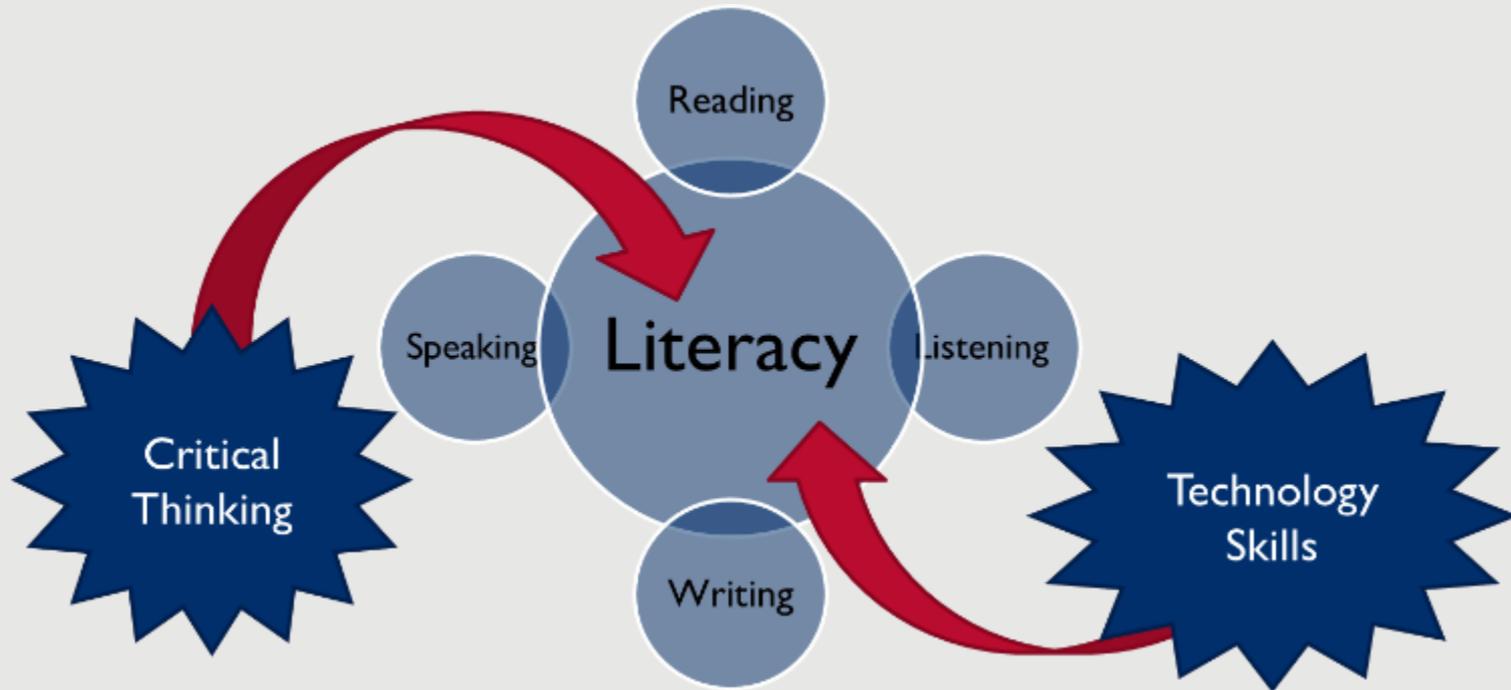
Section I: EGR program progress and gaps



READING WITHIN REACH



Relationship between reading and literacy



Literacy is the use of a set of skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, technology and critical thinking) to make sense of information received aurally (hearing) and in reading texts, and expressed orally (speaking) and in writing texts

EGR programs generally focus on improving reading, writing and listening skills

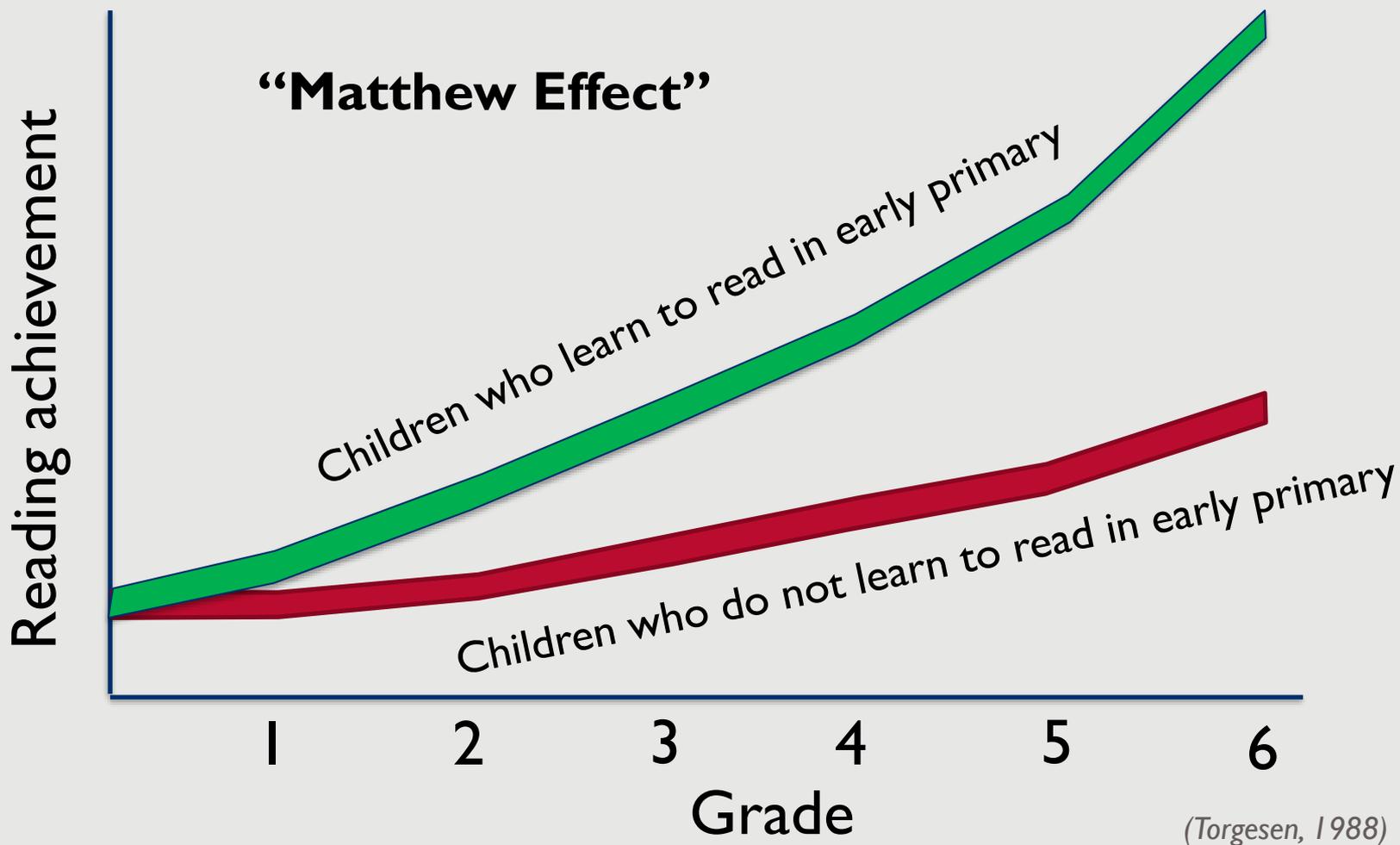
Why focus on improving early grade reading?

- Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the reading skills of children in low-income country contexts are extremely low (Gove, A. & Cvelich, P., 2011; EGRA Barometer)
- Reading is a critical skill that affects children's ability to learn other subjects, and ultimately succeed in school and beyond
- If children don't learn to read in the early grades, they fall further and further behind their peers who do learn to read early ("Matthew Effect," Torgesen, 1988)



Photo credit: RTI International, Malawi, MTPDS (USAID)

Why children need to learn to read in early primary



Early grade reading improvement: A global movement

- U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for quality education that leads to “effective learning outcomes” (United Nations, 2017)
- Since 2011, USAID has led efforts to improve education through improvements in literacy instruction and outcomes
- Other donor agencies working to improve reading include the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank and UNICEF

Infographic: Early Grade Reading: A Foundation for Development

<http://bit.ly/EGRinfographic>

Why is USAID focused on improving early grade reading?

- Need to focus on what is happening in the classroom if we are to improve learning outcomes
- We know how to effectively teach reading in the early grades (Kim et al., 2016)
- Evidence indicates that the approaches USAID is supporting in low- and middle-income countries are working, though more needs to be done (Gove, Mora & McCardle, 2017; Kelly & Graham, 2018; USAID, 2018)



*Available at the Global Reading
Network website*

The READ Act

- The Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act became law in September 2017
- The legislation builds on current U.S. efforts to:
 - Ensure access to quality education for the 263 million children and youth around the world who are still not in school (one-third of whom live in conflict- and crisis-affected areas)
 - Improve the quality of education for those already enrolled in school
 - Build sustainability and country independence

Source: *Basic Education Coalition (BEC)*



The READ Act can be found here:

<https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/congress/115th-congress/house-bill/601>

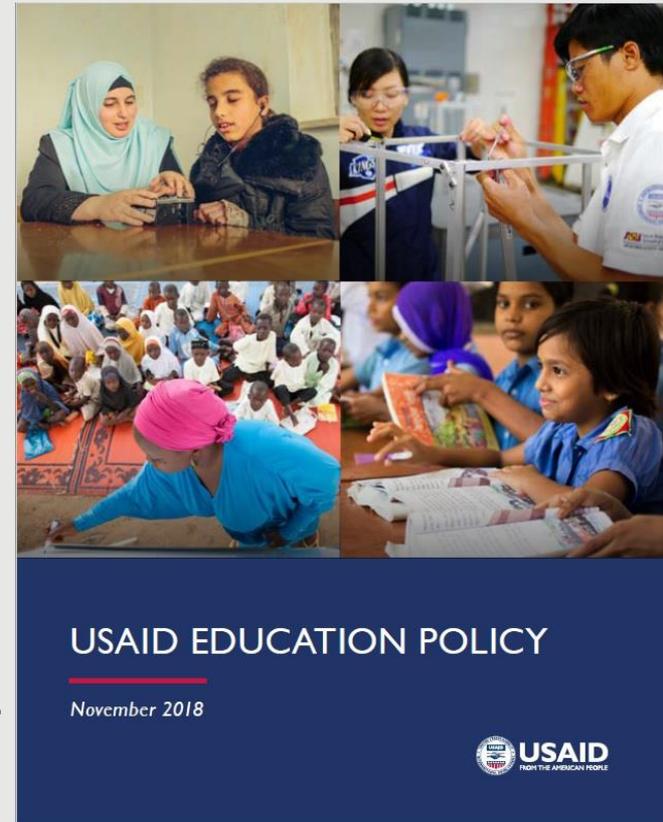
U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education

- Supports READ Act and coordinates efforts across USG
- Two main objectives:
 - Improve learning outcomes
 - Expand access to quality basic education for all, particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations



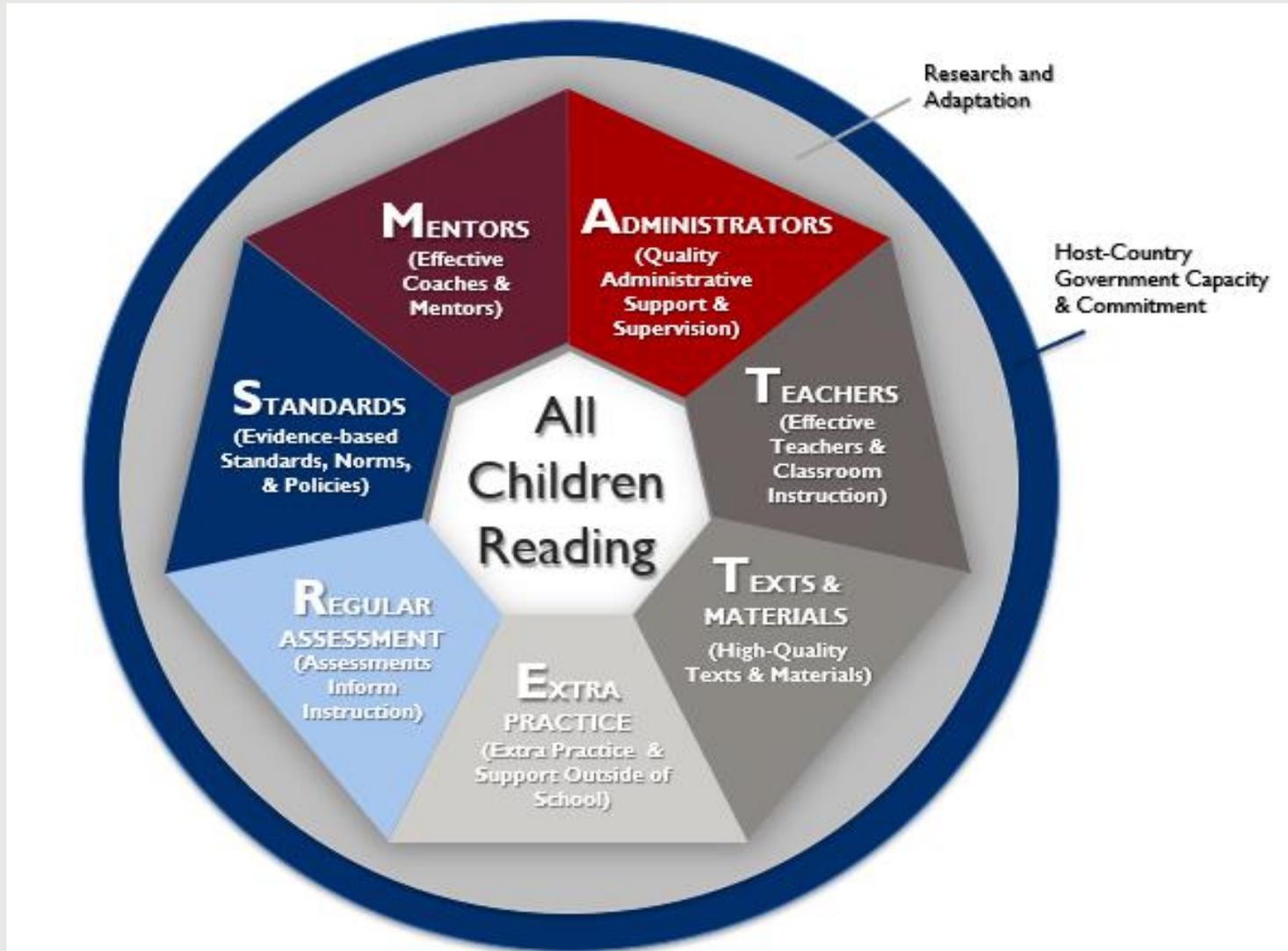
USAID Education Policy

- **Marginalized and vulnerable children and youth** have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant and promotes social well-being
- Children and youth **gain literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills** that are foundational to future learning and success
- **Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives**, gain employment and positively contribute to society
- **Higher education institutions** have the capacity to be central actors in development



A Program Cycle and
Implementation Guide
accompanies the strategy

Components of design & implementation: USAID Reading MATTERS framework



Cross-cutting issues and approach to EGR programming

- USAID's approach to EGR improvement strives to be *inclusive and equitable* by providing all children, regardless of life circumstances or ability, an opportunity to learn to read. This includes:
 - Reaching **marginalized populations**
 - Taking a **gender-equitable** approach across all aspects of programming
 - Including **children with disabilities**
 - Supporting those in **emergency, conflict or crisis** situations
- Resources related to these topics have been integrated throughout the webinars

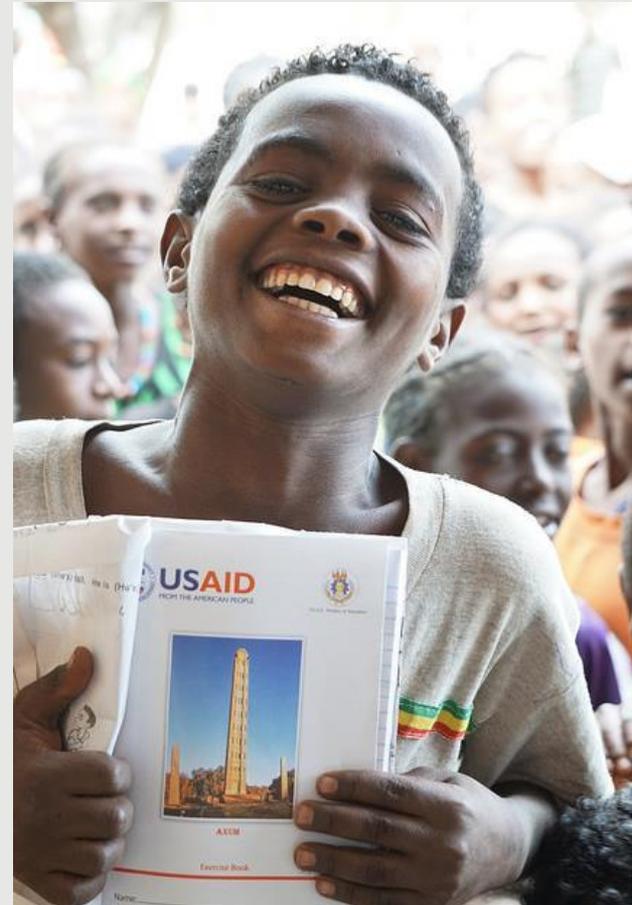
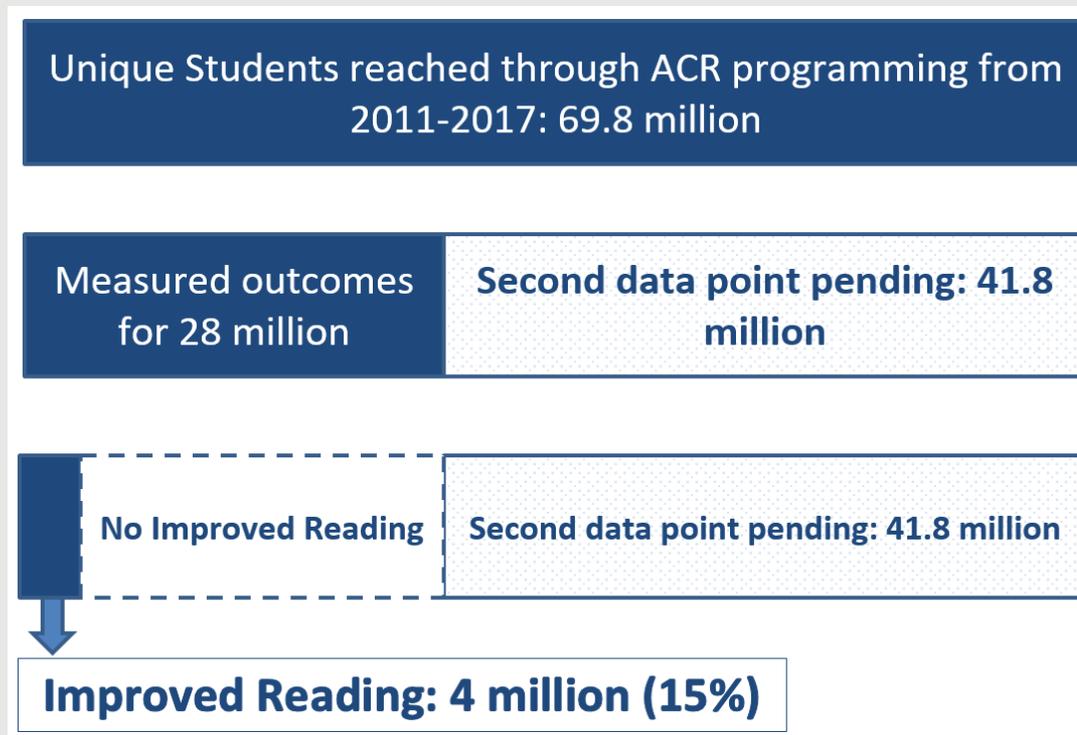


Photo credit: USAID (Ethiopia)

What have we accomplished so far?

Number of improved readers



Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2016). 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy Progress Report. Retrieved from https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2011-2015_ProgressReport_r13_Final_WEB.pdf

ACTIVITY

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

- Consider your own early grade reading work:
 - What progress are you seeing? What approaches are leading to these successes?
 - What gaps are you seeing in EGR programming? Why do these gaps exist? What ideas do you have for addressing them?

What are the gaps?

- **Design and planning**

- Activities did not always reflect context
- Lack of clear causal pathways backed by evidence

- **Instruction and skills**

- In practical terms, gains were small

- **Resources for teaching and learning**

- Delays in production

- **Continuous professional development**

- Lack of evidence of effectiveness between activities and outcomes
- Implementation and staffing challenges



What are the gaps? (continued)

- **Cross-cutting issues**
 - Found in a small number of activities; evidence largely non-existent, though interventions related to gender issues were most successful
- **Community engagement**
 - Small amount of quantitative evidence showed only minimal effects on student learning
- **Monitoring and evaluation**
 - Support for Ministry M&E systems generally unsuccessful
 - Packaged activity design did not allow for evaluation of specific components
 - **Cost-effectiveness of specific aspects of an intervention unknown**
- **Scale up and sustainability**
 - Evaluations **“showed little evidence of government ability to take over reading interventions”**

Section 2: Key steps for developing a quality EGR program



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Essential characteristics of effective programs

Leadership

Collaboration

Communication

Evidence-based
approaches

Quality
assurance

Other?



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Which of these characteristics has been critical to your program team?

I. Assemble a planning and design team

- Collaborative and comprehensive planning that involves government, technical experts and diverse stakeholders:
 - Improves the quality of programs
 - Increases the likelihood that a program will have broad stakeholder support
 - Will save time and money down the road



Photo: Nigeria RTI International, Nigeria RARA (USAID)

2. Conduct a “literacy landscape assessment” and background research

- An in-depth understanding of the context is essential to inform program design, expansion and sustainability
- Information gathering and research across a range of topics is needed



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REACH is developing a Literacy Landscape Assessment Toolkit to provide detailed guidance on this topic

ACTIVITY

Review Handout I: Research to conduct and information to gather when designing an EGR program

Respond to the following questions in the Zoom chat window:

- For which topics did you gather information? How did you gather it? How did it inform program design?
- What information didn't you gather that you wish you had collected?

3. Conduct an education system mapping and capacity assessment

- A thorough understanding of the education system and actors is necessary to inform project and procurement design
- This includes:
 - Institutional and individual roles and responsibilities vital to EGR improvement
 - Current capacity and needs of the education system



Photo: World Education, Cambodia (USDA McGovern-Dole Food For Education)

4. Develop (refine) approach and activities

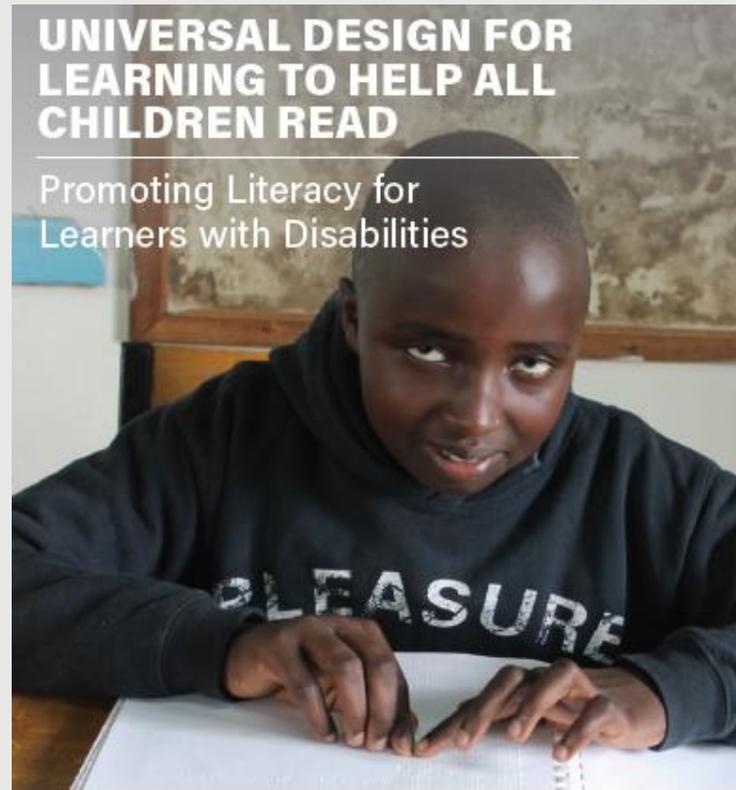
- Meaningfully engage all relevant stakeholders throughout planning process
- Identify objectives
- Develop theory of change and results framework
- Design *context-specific* approach and activities *based on relevant, evidence-based best practices*
- Align components and activities
- Consider cost
- Field test/pilot specific approaches



Design with scale up
and sustainability in
mind!

4. Develop approach and activities (continued)

- Integrate cross-cutting issues including: gender, equity and inclusion, conflict and crisis
- See resources at the end of this presentation for more information on cross-cutting issues, which will also be addressed in subsequent webinars



Consult the resource *Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Read* on the GRN website

4. Develop approach and activities (continued)

Agreement among stakeholders on these critical issues is needed to inform EGR program approach, activities and budget:

- ✓ Objectives, targets and indicators
- ✓ Languages to be used for reading instruction
- ✓ Skills to be taught and instructional approach
- ✓ Copyright and licensing of materials – *Register for GRN webinar on this topic to take place June 27 and July 18!*
- ✓ Materials to be developed and procured
- ✓ How program resources and results will be shared, and with whom
- ✓ How equity and inclusion will be integrated in the approach, activities and resources

5. Develop budget and staffing plan

- **Conduct cost analysis**

- Gather and analyze information on costs including: EGR materials (initial vs. recurring), professional development, transportation, office space, etc.
- *See USAID resources on cost analysis and reporting*

- **Develop budget in tandem with technical approach and activities**

- Consider: Geographic location of programming; number of schools, languages, teachers and students; personnel to implement program (number, profile)
- Budget for monitoring, evaluation and research

Staffing considerations

- Sufficient to *successfully* carry out the proposed work
- Possess the *required skills and knowledge*
- Provide professional development opportunities and support to staff and gov't counterparts

6. Develop monitoring, evaluation and research plan

- **Develop MER plan *at the same time as program is designed***, including all technical experts (e.g., both reading and M&E specialists) in the process
- Design reading program in such a way that the **relative impact of different components and activities** can be isolated, as appropriate and needed
- **Embed research into program plans**: e.g., field tests, longitudinal studies, small-scale qualitative research

Key considerations

- Track fidelity of implementation
- Develop metrics for government capacity, sustainability
- Assess cost-effectiveness of activities
- One size does not fit all! Different MER approaches and instruments will be needed

ACTIVITY

- Think about the Key Steps to Develop a Quality Program shared just now and reflect on your own experiences.
- **In the Zoom chat window, share a brief story of your own experience related to one of these steps.**

What steps do you feel need more attention to inform ongoing implementation and (re)design?

1. Assemble a planning and design team
2. Conduct a “literacy landscape assessment” and background research
3. Conduct an education system mapping and capacity assessment
4. Develop approach and activities
5. Develop budget and staffing plan
6. Develop monitoring, evaluation and research plan

Section 3: Planning for successful scale up and self-reliance



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Scale up and self-reliance: An overview

- **Scale up** refers to the expansion of a program or innovation, usually in terms of its size and beneficiaries
- **Self-reliance** in the context of EGR programs typically means the integration of sustainable program components into the national, government-supported education system, without external financing



Photo: Creative International, Yemen Early Grade Reading Approach (USAID)

- ✓ Scale up and self-reliance do not necessarily happen simultaneously
- ✓ A program can be scaled up without becoming self-reliant

Characteristics of effective scale up

- **Planning scale up from the outset** ensures that scale up is possible, by not implementing strategies that will not be scalable
- **Leaders and champions** legitimize and support the innovation being scaled up
- **Genuine collaboration and coordination** takes place across diverse actors
- **“Flexible adaptation”** – Approach to scale up adheres to effective core characteristics of the pilot while incorporating modifications necessary to be successful at scale
- **System capacity** exists to carry out implementation “at scale”
- Plan for scale up pays attention to **cost-effectiveness and resource planning**
- **Data and performance tracking used to build evidence and inform scale up**

Source: DeStefano, J. & Healey, H. (2016). Scale-up of Early Grade Reading Programs. RTI International. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/task-order-15-data-education-programming-asia-and-middle-east-depame-scale-early-grade>

EGR scale-up efforts

A review of efforts to scale up EGR programs in 10 countries—Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Philippines and Rwanda—provides insight into EGR scale-up efforts to date (DeStefano and Healey, 2016):

Successfully scaled-up programs were:	Challenges that constrained successful scale up included:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• context-specific• featured collaboration between funders, implementers and government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lack of government capacity to carry out implementation at scale• insufficient enabling conditions to institutionalize EGR program components into the education sector

Any others you would add?

EGR improvement framework for scale up

- The early grade reading program scale-up framework and checklist (**Handout 2**) integrates relevant aspects of existing approaches to scale up
- It takes into consideration the fact that EGR improvement efforts are usually funded by external donors, with the aim of being scaled up nationally and integrated within a country's overall education system

Handout 2: Early grade reading program scale-up framework and checklist

The framework reflects three key aspects of EGR program scale up:

- The core components of the program that will be scaled up, or **ingredients for success**
- The approach and plan for scale up, or the **roadmap for success**
- The enabling environment, or the **conditions for successful scale up**

ACTIVITY

- **Review Handout 3: Considerations and conditions for scale up and sustainability**

For each of the issues described by the presenter, reflect on your own experience and respond to the Zoom polls:

- Is it something your program has **deeply considered** and integrated into your design? (If yes, in what ways?)
- Is it something your program has **only minimally considered** and integrated?
- Is it **a big gap** in your program/plan for scale up and sustainability?

Key takeaways

- ✓ Approach and activities should be a result of a **collaborative process**
- ✓ The design should be **evidence-based**
- ✓ Design should be grounded in what is likely to be **scalable and sustained**
- ✓ Activities should be **aligned and appropriate for the context**
- ✓ Cross-cutting issues should be **integrated**
- ✓ **Design and MER** should go hand-in-hand and be an **iterative process**



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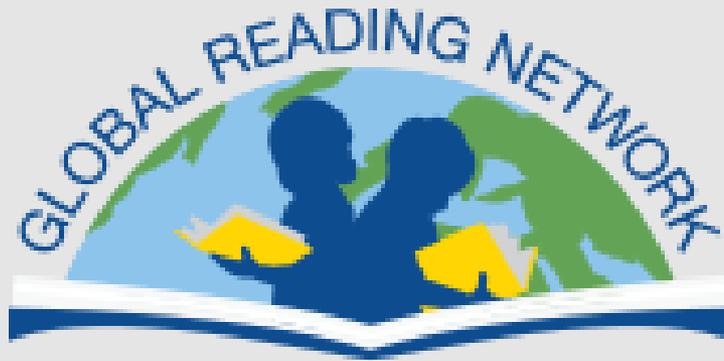
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Thank you for attending the “Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success” webinar series!

Session presentation materials and handouts may be downloaded from the “Tools and Training” category at:

www.globalreadingnetwork.net

Upcoming webinars

EGR Program Design and Implementation Series

- **July 10** – Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading
- **July 17** – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment
- **July 24** – Language considerations in early grade reading programs
- **July 30** – Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs

<https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar>



Other webinars of interest

- **June 26** – Adapting EGRA to include sign language (presented by USAID)
- **June 27 & July 18** – Open licensing of education materials (presented by REACH/GRN)

<http://bit.ly/EGRAsignlanguage>

<https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar>



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Webinar 1

Early Grade Reading Programming: From Conception to Scale

This list was compiled by Reading within REACH, in collaboration with the Global Reading Network. It accompanies the webinar delivered on June 25, 2019.

USAID and USG

- USAID. (2016). 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy Progress Report. Retrieved from https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2011-2015_ProgressReport_r13_Final_WEB.pdf
- USAID. (2018). Cost reporting guidance for USAID-funded education activities. Available at <https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/USAID%20Cost%20Reporting%20Guidance%202018%20FINAL%20%281%29.pdf>
- USAID. (2018). Annexes for Cost reporting guidance for USAID-funded education activities. Available at <http://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Annexes%20FINAL.pdf>
- USAID. (2018). Synthesis of findings and lessons learned from USAID-funded evaluations. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00T1HD.pdf
- United States Government. (2018). U.S. government strategy on basic education. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/education/usg-strategy>
- USAID. (2018). USAID Education policy. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/education/policy>
- USAID. (2018). USAID Educational Policy: Program cycle implementation and operational guidance. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/education/policy>

Program progress and effectiveness

- Early Grade Reading Barometer. This resource provides data on early grade reading assessments from around the world and includes interactive features. Available at <http://www.earlygradereadingbarometer.org/>
- Gove, A., Mora, A., & McCardle, P. (Eds.). (2017). *Progress toward a literate world: Early reading interventions in low- and middle-income countries*. Special issue of *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2017 (155). <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.2017.2017.issue-155>

- Graham, J. and Kelly, S. (2018.) How effective are early grade reading interventions? A review of the evidence. Policy Research Working Paper 8292. Education Global Practice Group. World Bank Group. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29127>
- See USAID and USG resources above

General Early Grade Reading informational resources

- Gove, A. & Cvelich, P. (2011). Early reading: Igniting education for all. A report by the early grade learning community of practice. Revised edition. Research Triangle Park, NC: Research Triangle Institute. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/early-reading-igniting-education-all>
- Kim, Y.-S. G., Boyle, H. N., Zuilkowski, S. S., & Nakamura, P. (2016). *Landscape report on early grade literacy*. Washington, DC: USAID. Retrieved from <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/publications-and-research/landscape-report-early-grade-literacy-skills>
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- Torgesen, J. (1998). Catch them before they fall. *American Educator*, 22, 1-8. [Discusses “Matthew Effect”]

Scale up and sustainability

- Banerjee, A. et al. (2016, revised in 2017). “From Proof of Concept to Scalable Policies: Challenges and Solutions, with an Application.” NBER Working Paper No. 22931. Available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22931>
- Cooley, L., & Kohl, R. (2006). Scaling up — From vision to large-scale change: A management framework for practitioners. Washington, DC: Management Systems International. Available at <http://www.msiworldwide.com/wp-content/uploads/Scaling-Up-Framework.pdf>
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Gender

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Education in Conflict and Crisis

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) offers many resources of interest to those designing and implementing early grade reading programs in conflict and crisis contexts. These include:

- INEE. (no date). INEE Toolkit. Available at http://toolkit.ineesite.org/overview_of_the_inee_toolkit. Contains a variety of practical, field-friendly tools and resources to guide educationalists, humanitarian workers and government officials working in the field of education in emergencies through to recovery.
- INEE. (2010). Guidance notes on teaching and learning. Available in multiple language at: http://toolkit.ineesite.org/guidance_notes_on_teaching_and_learning
- INEE. (2013). Guidance note on conflict sensitive education. Available in multiple languages at <http://www.ineesite.org/en/resources/inee-guidance-note-on-conflict-sensitive-education>.
- International Rescue Committee (2016). Safe Healing and Learning Spaces toolkit. Available at <http://shls.rescue.org/>. This toolkit was developed with support from USAID/OFDA and is designed to support the rapid set up, implementation and monitoring of a SHLS in an acute crisis. It includes scripted lesson plans in reading, math and social-emotional learning, training guides and project manager guides/tools.
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Inclusive education

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- See additional resources listed in the sessions on EGR Skills and Instruction and Resources to support EGR.

Equity

The Education Equity Research Initiative (<http://www.educationequity2030.org/>) is a collaborative partnership led by FHI 360 and Save the Children U.S. with the common objective of advancing research to inform policy and programming on effective ways of strengthening equity in and through education systems. Resources to consult include:

- Measuring equity in education: Review of the global and programmatic data landscape
- Practical recommendations for equity analysis in education
- Structured questions for equity analysis
- Mainstreaming equity in education



Early Grade Reading: A Foundation for Development

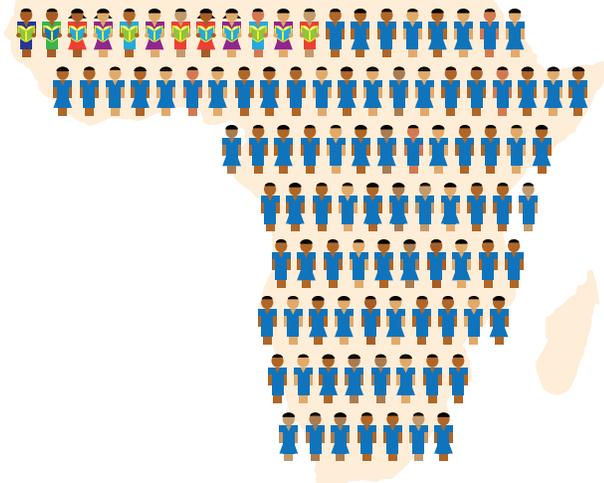
The Problem: *The Global Learning Crisis*

Hundreds of millions of children around the world are unable to read, write or do basic math. Most have attended school for years. Many belong to the world's most vulnerable populations.

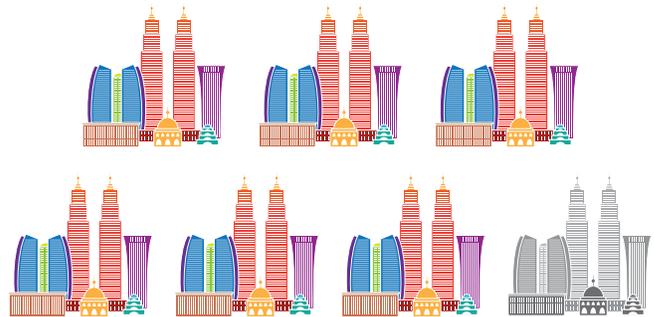
- **387 million:** Number of primary school-age children unable to read proficiently; 2/3 are already in school.¹



- **88:** Percentage of children aged 6–14 in sub-Saharan Africa who are not gaining minimum proficiency levels in reading.²



- **6 out of 7:** The number of top growing economic sectors in Asia that list reading comprehension as a skill in high demand.³



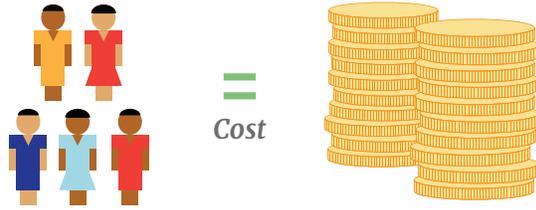
The Importance of Reading: *Poverty Reduction and Economic Growth*

USAID invests in early grade reading because literacy is a driver for the reduction of poverty and accelerates economic growth.

- **171 million:** The number of people who could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills.⁴



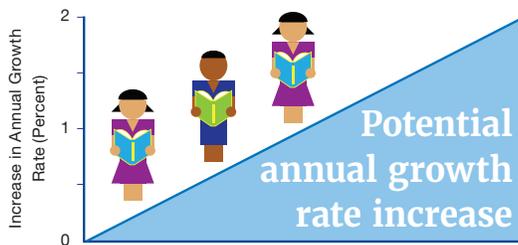
- **\$129 billion:** The cost of 250 million children worldwide not learning basic skills; this represents 10% of global spending on primary education.⁵



250 million children not learning basic skills

\$129 billion

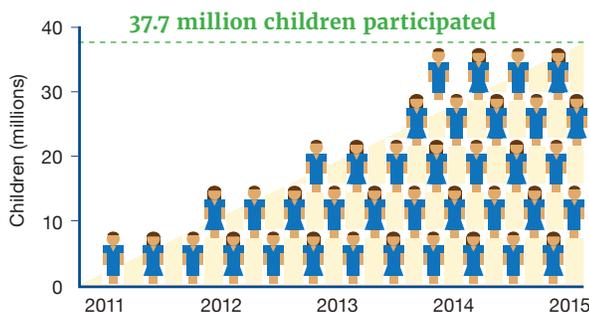
- **Up to 2%:** The increase in a nation's annual growth rate that may result from increased student reading performance.⁶



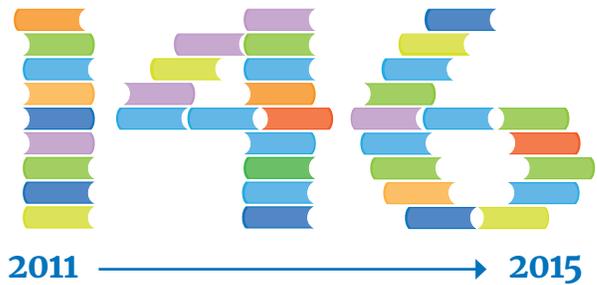
USAID's Global Efforts to End Childhood Illiteracy

USAID finances early grade reading initiatives and assessment in more than 40 countries, in both stable and crisis-affected environments, with a clear emphasis on measurably improving students' academic outcomes. USAID-supported programs combine evidence-based instruction, rigorous evaluation, active family engagement, and system-wide improvements to accelerate students' mastery of this essential skill.

- **37.7 million:** Number of children that participated in USAID-supported early grade reading programs from 2011-2015.⁷



- **146 million:** The number of books and other educational materials provided during the implementation of USAID's Education Strategy (2011-2015).⁸

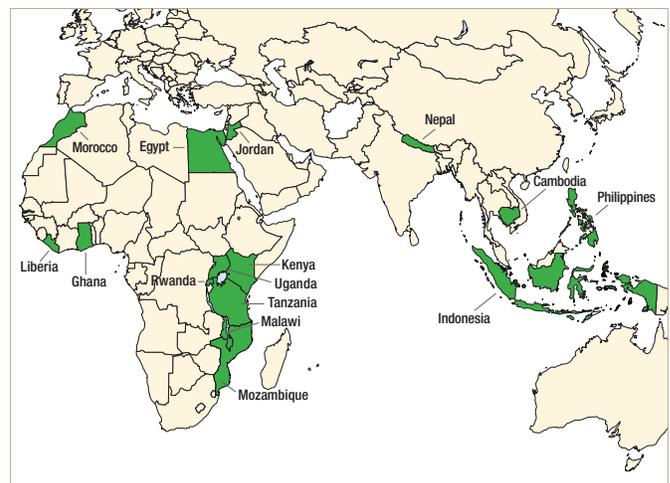


Reading by the Numbers at USAID

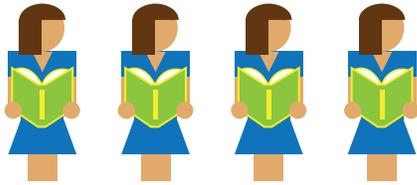
USAID works closely with Ministries of Education worldwide to build the capacity of national education systems to deliver high-quality reading instruction.

USAID is also working with other donor, private sector and NGO partners to improve education through teacher training, more and better books, and the promotion of reading assessments so that partner governments can improve their national reading programs.

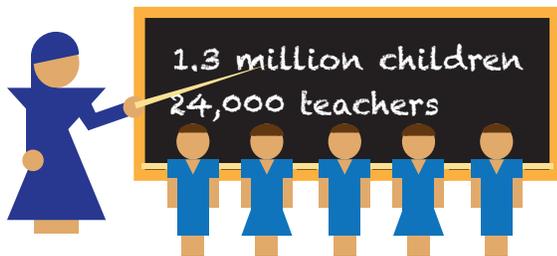
- **15:** The number of countries where governments are working to take USAID-launched early grade reading programs to scale.⁹



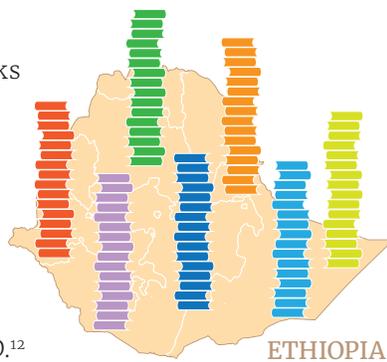
- **4 million:** The number of learners that benefitted when Egypt expanded the reading component of the USAID-funded Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) program nationwide.¹⁰



- **1.3 million:** The number of students projected to benefit from the USAID-supported Pakistan Reading Project, along with nearly 24,000 teachers.¹¹



- **2.5 million:** The number of books in 7 mother tongue languages printed and distributed through the READ TA program in Ethiopia, which is supported by USAID.¹²

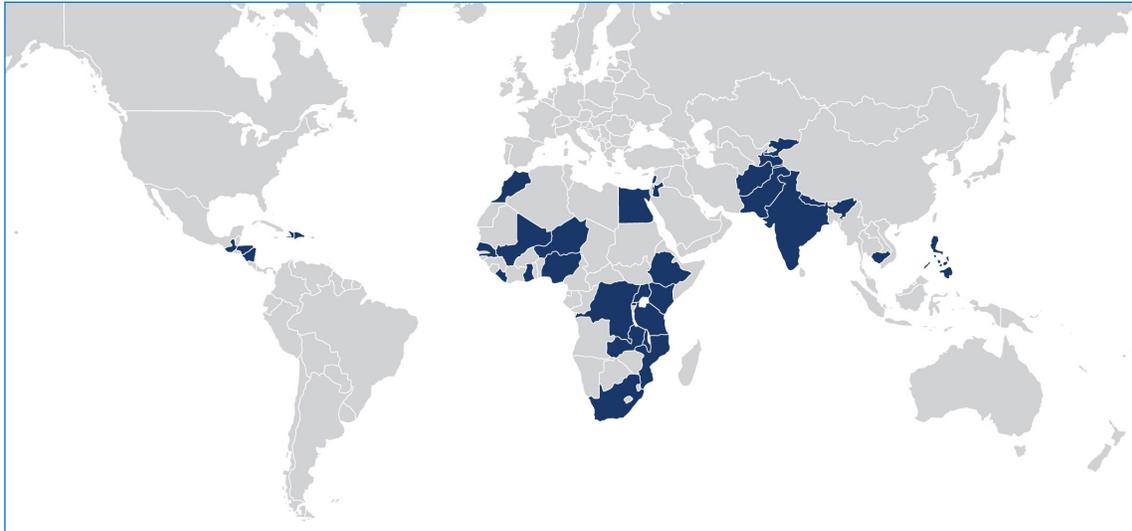


- **4,000+:** The number of books for early grade readers written in underserved national languages for children in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal, Haiti and Nigeria by local authors, thanks to the **Enabling Writers initiative** supported by the **All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development partners**, (USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), as well as **Reading within Reach** and the **Global Reading Network**.¹³

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- ⁶ Hanushek, E., & L. Woessmann (2009). Do Better Schools Lead to More Growth? Cognitive Skills, Economic Outcomes, and Causation. Working Paper 14633. National Bureau of Economic Research. Available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14633>
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- ⁸ USAID (2016). 2011–2015 USAID Education Strategy Progress Report. Available at https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2011-2015_ProgressReport_r13_Final_WEB.pdf
- ⁹ DeStefano, J. & Healey, F. H. (2016). Scale-Up of Early Grade Reading Programs. EdData II Technical and Managerial Assistance, Task Number 15. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/task-order-15-data-education-programming-asia-and-middle-east-depame-scale-early-grade>
- ¹⁰ Gove, A., Brombacher, A., & Ward-Brent, M. (2017). Sparking a reading revolution: Results of early literacy interventions in Egypt and Jordan. In A. Gove, A. Mora, & P. McCardle (Eds.), *Progress toward a literate world: Early reading interventions in low-income countries, New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 155, 97–115. Available at <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-1119407397.html>
- ¹¹ Global Reading Network. Webinar spotlights Pakistan Reading Project. Available at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/blog/webinar-spotlights-pakistan-reading-project>
- ¹² SIL LEAD (2017). SIL LEAD: The First Five Years. Available at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51afb275e4b06f81432164f0/t/585b2e513e00be2582b3a565/1482370692973/Final+-+2016+Five+Year+Report+online+updated.pdf>
- ¹³ URC (2017). Reading within Reach (REACH) Quarterly Report, April 1, 2017 to June 30, 2017

Countries With USAID–Supported Reading Programs



Afghanistan

Barbados and Eastern
Southern Caribbean
(OECS countries:
Dominica, Grenada,
Montserrat, Saint Lucia,
Saint Vincent and the
Grenadines, Anguila)

Cambodia

DRC

Dominican
Republic

Egypt

Ethiopia

Ghana

Guatemala

Haiti

Honduras

India

Jordan

Kyrgyzstan

Kenya

Lebanon

Liberia

Malawi

Mali

Morocco

Mozambique

Nepal

Nicaragua

Niger

Nigeria

Pakistan

Philippines

Rwanda

Senegal

South Africa

Tajikistan

Tanzania

Uganda

West Bank Gaza

Zambia



Global Reading Network

5404 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 800

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

www.globalreadingnetwork.net

The Global Reading Network (GRN) is an interactive hub and resource repository that connects and mobilizes a global community of stakeholders working to improve literacy outcomes for children in the early grades, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The GRN is supported through Reading within Reach (REACH), a five-year initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed by University Research Co., LLC (URC).

Webinar 1: Handout 1

Research to conduct and information to gather when designing an EGR program

During the program conception and design phase, the planning team should review and conduct research relevant to the different components of an EGR improvement initiative. The purpose of this background research is to identify needs and gaps that will inform the design of the program. This research will also help to better understand the capacity of the government and other institutions in country to implement an early grade reading initiative.

1. Current learning outcomes, and the general “state of education”

It’s important to understand the quality of education in the country in which the program will be implemented. Find out: What are current learning outcomes, as measured by various assessments, such as country-specific exams or large-scale assessments, such as TIMSS? What are the rates of student repetition and drop-out? Do all students have equitable access to education, or are spaces limited and/or “reserved” depending on various characteristics? Review the curriculum, learning materials and other education system products to get a sense of the overall quality of teaching and learning in the country. Find out how much time is currently allocated in the school day for teaching reading and language.

2. Children’s literacy and other skills

EGR program design and implementation must be informed by an understanding of children’s literacy and other skills. These include pre-reading skills (such as oral language proficiency), reading skills (such as oral reading fluency) and other skills and characteristics of the population that might be relevant to the context or program (such as safety, social and emotional well-being). Results from pre-reading or reading assessments like EGRA, ASER, PIRLS or Pre-PIRLS provide information regarding children’s current literacy skills and what a program may need to focus on.

Information about children’s literacy and other skills and individual and environmental characteristics can help to (a) identify geographic areas that may be in particular need of intervention (if a program is not designed to be nation-wide initially), and (b) to better understand the scope and size of needs (e.g., what percentage of children are in need of improvement, and in which skills). One resource to consult is the Early Grade Reading Assessment Barometer, which provides data that can help inform EGR program planning and benchmarking <http://www.earlygradereadingbarometer.org/> It’s important to disaggregate children’s literacy skills by sex, language, geographic area, socio-economic status, and other characteristic relevant that would indicate any disparities.

3. Teacher workforce characteristics

When planning (or expanding) an early grade reading improvement program, it’s important to know as much information about the teacher workforce. This includes:

- a. Teacher recruitment and deployment policies and practice
- b. Number of teachers by grade, subject and other pertinent characteristics
- c. Student-teacher ratio
- d. Teacher attendance
- e. Teacher mobility
- f. Teacher attrition

Such data will provide helpful information in terms of understanding the size of the teacher workforce (that will need to be trained), how frequently teachers move from one school to another (which can affect training), ability of teachers to teach children based on language, how many teachers may need to be trained each year, whether teacher attendance (or absenteeism) is a significant problem that will need to be addressed within the scope of the EGR program; and how many teachers trained in EGR may move from school to school, or leave the system annually.

4. Teacher knowledge, instructional practices and language skills

Information on teachers' current pedagogical knowledge, instructional practices, and language skills is critical in shedding light on a variety of issues that EGR programs need to take into consideration during the design phase. Information gathered from teacher classroom observations and surveys about their knowledge and beliefs about early grade reading instruction can provide information on what reading or language instruction is currently taking place (or not taking place) in classrooms; teachers' current strengths and weaknesses; teacher instructional practices that an EGR program can incorporate or modify in a program to build on what teachers are already doing; teacher language skills; and teacher needs vis-à-vis teaching and learning materials.

This information may be available from program reports, and it can also be gathered by conducting surveys and classroom observations. Such surveys and observations can include a targeted sample of schools and teachers based on specific criteria relevant to the context and anticipated program. Classroom observations should also capture information about how much time is spent teaching reading—in comparison to how much time is allocated. Survey and observation instruments specific to the purpose should also be designed. Care should be taken when developing and administering assessments of teacher language skills. See the webinar in this series on **Teacher professional development** for additional ideas on background research to conduct to inform program design.

5. School, enrollment and attendance information

Data on the number and placement of schools, as well as the number of students enrolled, is essential in designing an early grade reading program. This data will be a significant determinant of the size, scale, design and cost of the program. Information on different types of schools (e.g., traditional government primary schools, accelerated learning programs, “nomad” schools, religious government schools, etc.) is useful in that it may help identify which types of schools to include in the program. Attendance data, if available, is also useful in understanding the context and needs for resources and teachers. The reliability and accuracy of school and enrollment data should be reviewed; a school verification exercise will likely be needed prior to program roll-out. (If data are several years old or were collected in an ad-hoc manner, an investment of time and resources to gather up-to-date information may be useful during the design phase.)

6. Teaching and learning materials (TLMs) availability, content and quality.

Information on the current availability and content of early grade reading TLMs is critical at the design stage, as it will be an important factor in terms of a program's scope, timeline and cost. Information about the availability of TLMs can sometimes be found in existing school and classroom surveys, from government documents or surveys, or from past or previous programs. It's important to review all the data that exist and to pay attention to how the data were gathered to know what information is the most reliable. In some cases, it may be necessary to conduct a materials availability study as part of the program design stage. Information regarding the content and quality of the materials is equally important to ascertain what materials may already be appropriate to an

early grade reading program, what materials may need to be adapted, and what materials may need to be developed “from scratch.”

The webinar in this series about **Resources for teaching and learning EGR** contains detailed information on how to review existing early grade reading TLMs, and other background research to conduct to prepare for materials development. The Survey of Children’s Reading Materials in African Languages in Eleven Countries (RTI, 2016) also provides information on materials availability in countries implementing early grade reading programs.

7. Language-related information and data

Information about the languages that students, teachers and school-communities speak and understand is vital. Such information can help to facilitate alignment between the language(s) children are taught to read in which regions and schools; the languages with which children speak and understand best (and which should therefore be used for EGR instruction); the languages teachers speak, read and write; and the materials that are delivered to schools. In some contexts, information on languages can be found through various sources, including in student assessment data (both the language in which children were assessed and their home language are usually gathered); census data (which may collect information on languages or ethnic background); and through a materials review study. A “language mapping” exercise will usually need to be conducted during the program design phase to obtain accurate information needed to appropriately plan a program.

In tandem with information on children’s language abilities, information on teachers’ language abilities is also critical. Such information can provide information on how well teachers can read, write and speak the languages in which they may need to provide instruction. This information will further inform the design of materials that teachers use and teacher professional development opportunities. Finally, information about the languages to be used for reading instruction needs to be gathered as well. This includes whether the language has a standardized orthography (writing system). It also includes understanding how the specific properties of the language will affect instruction. More information about language-related information to gather can be found in the webinar in this series on **Language considerations in EGR programs**.

8. Equity issues

Equity—or the presence of inequity—in the education system is a critical issue, as illustrated by its prominence as Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals and by the commitments of many international donors, implementing organizations and national governments. As such, it’s important that any early grade reading program be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with equity in mind. This includes issues related to gender equity, equity for people with disabilities, and other contextually-specific issues, such as ethnicity or religion, that may be relevant to where the program is being implemented. During the conception and design phase, the planning team should educate itself about inequities that may exist in the context and in the education sector. Then, the team should identify how a program may be designed in such a way that it does not exacerbate them, but instead addresses them. To do so, the planning team should gather information and data on equity-related issues and review existing research and information (outlined above) through an equity lens. For example, this may include identifying whether inequities exist vis-à-vis education access and learning/reading outcomes based on gender, geographic area, ethnicity or language. This can include comparing EGRA results for girls and boys, for different geographic regions, and in terms

of home language. For more information and resources related to equity issues in education, see the Resources and References section of this session.

9. Issues related to inclusive education and children with disabilities

Increasingly, attention is being paid to screening and assessing students for disabilities, in particular vision and hearing impairments. Understanding the needs of children with disabilities is important to informing instructional strategies, materials development as well as policies and practices around EGR. Several resources related to developing an inclusive approach to EGR instruction are included in the Resources and References section of this webinar, as well as the webinar on Instruction and Skills.

Webinar 1: Handout 2

Early grade reading program scale-up framework and checklist

EGR program design and implementation teams are encouraged to review and discuss this framework beginning during the conception phase, since decisions made at this point can greatly affect the likelihood of success for scale-up. Teams should review the checklists to verify whether they have considered and accounted for these factors in their plan for scale-up (e.g., their implementation plan for expansion). If particular factors have not been accounted for, or certain conditions are not present to enable successful scale-up, the team should discuss what actions need to be taken.

Early grade reading program: Scale-up checklist & steps for success		
Core components (ingredients for success)	Design and planning (roadmap for success)	Enabling environment (conditions for success)
<p>Are the following components included in the scale-up plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Content and instruction: Appropriate EGR skills and evidence-based approaches to teaching reading, including classroom-based assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher and educator professional development: Initial training and ongoing support (coaching) focused on reading instruction and effective teaching; PD for school leaders and others <input type="checkbox"/> Resources: Appropriate teaching and learning texts and materials <input type="checkbox"/> Enabling policies and standards: Learning standards, language policies, teacher incentives, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Equity and inclusivity: Approach and activities designed to reach all learners, including girls, learners with disabilities and other marginalized groups 	<p>Is the approach/plan to be scaled up...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Based on evidence demonstrating improved instruction and student outcomes? <input type="checkbox"/> Aligned across activities? <input type="checkbox"/> Responsive to local needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate for the context and adapted for scale-up? <input type="checkbox"/> Achievable within the intended timeframe? (e.g., does not try to do too much too quickly) <input type="checkbox"/> Compatible with existing norms, values and arrangements? (e.g., does not require a complete reorganization of the education system) <input type="checkbox"/> Feasible for teachers and education authorities to take up in a timely manner? <input type="checkbox"/> Cost-effective, or provides a relative cost-advantage over the status quo? <input type="checkbox"/> Acceptable to recognized leaders? 	<p>Are the following conditions present?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Education sector leadership committed to EGR improvement <input type="checkbox"/> Demand exists among all stakeholders required for scale-up (education leaders, teachers and parents, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Government capacity for scale-up exists, or appropriate external technical support will be provided as a program goes to scale <input type="checkbox"/> Scale-up plan has been developed in collaboration with stakeholders, concrete activities have been specified, activities are well-coordinated among stakeholders, and the plan has been widely communicated <input type="checkbox"/> Financial support for scale-up has been secured; resources and inputs will be available on time <input type="checkbox"/> Plan for monitoring and evaluating outcomes “at scale” has been developed, with key actors aware of and able to carry out their responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Expectations are clear and have been communicated (stakeholders know their roles and responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms are in place)

Steps in the scale-up and sustainability process

Note: These steps are not necessarily chronological and should be revisited throughout the scale-up planning and implementation process.

- 1. Form a leadership team to support scale-up.** Who is needed to champion EGR scale-up and to implement it successfully? These people should form a core team that will collaborate to design and implement the program.
- 2. Determine the goal of scale-up.** What does the country aim to accomplish? The answer to this question will help to identify what will be scaled up, by when, and how.
- 3. Identify what will be scaled up and assess scalability.** What components of an EGR program (ideally one that has been piloted) are necessary, relevant and feasible for scale-up to be successful in your context? Review the “ingredients for success” and “roadmap for success” checklists in the columns above to help answer these questions. Fill in any information gaps regarding what will be scaled up. Remember that not all components of a pilot may need to be scaled up for the goal of scale-up to be accomplished.
- 4. Review and address “conditions for success.”** What conditions are currently present and which are not? For the ones that are not present, what actions need to be taken, and by whom, for them to be present? Pay particular attention to the level of capacity among key institutions and stakeholders—is it sufficient or will efforts need to be built into the scale-up plan to increase capacity?
- 5. Clarify timeframe, roles and responsibilities for scale-up.** Who will do what, when? Remember that scale-up can occur in stages. Those responsible for specific activities will need to have the time, mandate and skills to do so. Plan for capacity development as needed. Clarify how who will coordinate activities.
- 6. Prepare scale-up plan.** Draft an implementation plan for roll-out. Review and revise it as needed once scale-up is underway.
- 7. Communicate with and motivate stakeholders.** What do stakeholders need to know about scale-up? Develop and launch a communications campaign to keep everyone informed. Communications should be diverse and targeted towards specific audiences (e.g., education officials will need different information via different modes than parents and teachers). Identify ways to motivate stakeholders during what may be a busy time filled with change to avoid burnout.
- 8. Prepare for scale-up.** What changes need to be made to existing structures, institutions, job responsibilities, etc. for scale-up to be successful? What “vested interests” in the status quo will need to be addressed for scale up to be successful? Address these during a “pre-scale-up” phase and integrate necessary activities into the scale-up plan.
- 9. Develop M&E plan for scale-up.** What will be measured to assess scale-up progress and success? Identify specific indicators, benchmarks and data collection methods. In relation to M&E, establish accountability and incentive mechanisms for various aspects of scale-up.
- 10. Implement, monitor and evaluate scale-up efforts.** Track implementation and adjust as necessary.

Webinar 1: Handout 3

Considerations and conditions for scale up and sustainability

1. Demand for improvement is essential

- No program will be scaled up or sustained if there is not demand for it across diverse stakeholder groups (both at the “top” and at the “bottom”)
- Leaders, champions and “change agents” need to be identified and mobilized early on to support EGL improvement, and a path to scale-up and sustainability
 - My program has deeply considered and integrated this into design**
 - My program has only minimally considered and integrated this issue**
 - This a big gap in my program’s plan for scale up and sustainability**

2. Plan for scale-up, and plan with scale-up in mind

- Projects do not spontaneously scale up—a clear plan is needed to do so
- Decisions about a program’s design have a significant impact on scale-up and sustainability
- Consider the technical, human and financial resources needed at scale
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3. Consider cost and cost-effectiveness

- During the design phase, programs need to consider costs of the respective components
- Costs should still be reasonable—e.g., they should not be significantly more expensive than current expenditures for things like teacher training and materials
- During pilot implementation, the cost-effectiveness of the program components should be assessed
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4. Resource allocation and distribution are important

- Resources need to be accounted for in national and sub-national budgets and their timely distribution needs to be assured if activities are to be sustained (and successful)
- External funding may be critical during the initial stages of scale-up, before a country’s government is fully able to reorient its budget and assume all costs
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5. Assess and strengthen the capacity of the education system

- The capacity of the system as a whole, and individuals within it, is a crucial factor
- Need to assess and build leadership, technical *and* managerial capacity
- Systems strengthening efforts need to be integrated and well-planned
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6. Address disruptions in the status quo

- The introduction of a new way of “doing business”—namely teaching and learning reading—will likely require changes to “business as usual”
- It’s important to anticipate what disruptions will lead to push-back, try to avoid them, and identify how to confront challenges that arise
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7. Create and support effective partnerships

- Partnerships are required among multiple government agencies, donor institutions, implementing organizations, and other in-country stakeholders (public and private organizations, teachers’ unions, parent and community groups, etc.)
- Addressing capacity needs among diverse stakeholders early on during the design phase can help to empower and enable them to be engaged
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8. Policies, regulations and protocols need to support EGR

- Integrating and sustaining EGR improvement efforts into an education system usually requires changes to, or the development of, supportive policies, regulations protocols and practices
- Identify what policies and regulations related to key aspects of EGR improvement (e.g., curriculum or teacher PD) are needed
- Pilot efforts can be useful in gaining support for changes to policy, protocol or practices
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9. Identify incentives and accountability measures

- Incentives are external measures that are designed to influence behaviors towards achieving expected outcomes
 - Accountability measures serve to motivate actors to focus on the desired outcomes, in this case early grade reading improvement
 - Well-designed and well-implemented incentives and accountability measures can be helpful in scaling and sustaining an early grade reading program [Source: RTI (2014.) Incentives and Accountability in Education: A Review]
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