

# Strengthening institutional capacity to produce learning at scale: Case studies from Jordan, Malawi, Nepal, and Uganda

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCT	coordinating center tutor
EGL	early grade learning
EGR	early grade reading
EGRA	early grade reading assessment
EGRP	Early Grade Reading Program
GOM	Government of Malawi
GON	Government of Nepal
IE	International Education
IR&D	Independent Research and Development
LARA	Learning and Retention Activity
LQAS	lot quality assurance sampling
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MERIT	Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NARI	National assessment of Reading Instruction
NEGRP	National Early Grade Reading Program
NRP	National Reading Programme
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PS&G	Policy, Systems and Governance
RAMP	Reading and Mathematics Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



# INTRODUCTION

Since 2008, the International Education Division (IE) within RTI's International Development Group has been implementing early grade programs of increasing scale. What began with 60 schools implementing Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Plus in Liberia from 2008 to 2010, grew to include programs in 15 countries, many at very large scale. IE's current portfolio includes national scale programs in Jordan, Kenya, and Malawi; large programs implemented in several districts or regions in Liberia, Nepal, Tanzania, and Uganda; and smaller regional programs that are part of a national initiative, in Cambodia and the Philippines.

Our work in education has always strived to develop the capacity of and work through government systems as the principal means through which large-scale implementation could be achieved. Our interest and our principal client's interest have never been to establish parallel systems for delivering education. To bring about improvements in learning outcomes for the vast majority of the world's children, children who now attend struggling schools, the core challenge is confronting what national education systems are, and are not, capable of doing.

If a reform effort starts with a school-level intervention that demonstrates a positive impact on learning, the challenge is how the education system can recreate on a much larger scale the conditions that led that intervention to be successful. If the starting point is formulating policy or institutional reforms at the national level, then the challenge is how to get the education system to carry out those reforms thoroughly enough to lead to changes in what happens in most schools and classrooms on a day-to-day basis. In either case, success depends on the institutional capacity of the education system.

The problem we face is that most developing country education systems have limited institutional capacity. Education systems fail at ensuring that schools assemble the necessary ingredients for good teaching and learning because, too often, they barely even try to. Most schools operate in isolation from the system, perhaps receiving some resources such as curriculum and materials, but frequently in unpredictable or poorly timed ways. Teachers may participate in professional development activities, but such training is usually divorced from classroom practice, delivered through an ineffective cascade, and devoid of the kind of ongoing support that allows teachers to apply any skills they may have learned in a workshop. Even if a well-intentioned reform leads to improvements in the reading curriculum for the initial grades of primary school, such a reform often fails to alter student outcomes because teachers receive only a smattering of poorly delivered training, may have materials delivered late if at all, and have no one to turn to for advice on how to align their daily practice to the new program of study.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning in 2015, the Policy, Systems, and Governance (PS&G) program area within IE began investing in understanding how best to take on the challenge of building education

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<sup>1</sup> For a general discussion of problems with implementing education reforms at scale see Elmore (1996). For a detailed account of the example of the implementation of the National Literacy Acceleration Program in Ghana, see RTI International (2011). For a summary of how many reform efforts have failed in Kenya, see Piper et. al. (2018)

system capacity. Our interest was not in figuring out all the education system features, operations, and policies that need to be addressed. Rather, we took the approach of trying to identify those aspects of institutional capacity that would enable a country's public education system to best support improvements where they matter most—in the day-to-day instructional practices of teachers and in the resulting learning outcomes achieved by their students.

Our principal client, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), has also shown increasing concern for addressing the challenges of achieving improved education at scale, and doing so by enhancing countries' institutional capacities. The updated Agency Education Policy (USAID, 2018) articulates two key principles that announce USAID's new attention to building education system capacity, namely "prioritizing country-focus and ownership" and "strengthening systems and developing capacity in local institutions." More recently, USAID has reoriented its overall strategy to focus on empowering host-country governments to achieve locally sustained results through, among other things, strengthening local capacities. USAID speaks of assisting countries on their respective journeys to self-reliance. No country has achieved nor can achieve this intended journey without the capacity to ensure equitable provision of quality basic education.

Our research into identifying the capacities most critical to building self-reliant education systems capable of improving learning outcomes seems pertinent now. Knowing which capacities to address, how our programs can best develop or reinforce those capacities, and being able to assess and monitor capacity development are features of our work that can inform our own project proposal development, as well as help inform and shape the kinds of goals, objectives, and strategies our USAID colleagues put into the projects they develop.

Previous research funded by Independent Research and Development (IR&D) in IE enabled us to identify the institutional capacities most directly linked to enabling an education system to improve teaching and learning at scale. The "core functions" as we have come to refer to them, include

- setting and communicating expectations for the outcomes of education,
- monitoring and holding schools accountable for meeting those expectations, and
- providing basic inputs to all schools and targeting additional support to the students and schools that are struggling.

Obviously, an education system has many more functions it needs to fulfill. And we are not devaluing all the myriad capacities an education system should have, such as ensuring preservice training and certification of teachers, hiring and deploying staff, and guaranteeing equitable financing of schools. We are contending that the three functions we indicate above are what most determine if the system can influence whether schools can get students to achieve better learning outcomes.

IE staff, particularly Ben Piper and Joe DeStefano, and others, used the core functions framework to examine the experience of Kenya Tusome in a paper published in the *Journal of Education Development* (Piper, Destefano, Kinyanjui, & Ong'ele, 2018). That paper concluded that the learning gains achieved at scale in Kenya were in part attributable to the RTI-implemented Tusome project's successfully reinforcing education system capacity in

the first two core functions. National benchmarks for reading were defined and communicated extensively through training and were embedded in the teaching materials. When asked, teachers, school directors, district and county administrative staff, and national directors could speak to the learning objectives (expectations) for early grades. In addition, regular monitoring and coaching of teachers by curriculum support officers reinforced the expectation that teachers should be using the techniques they learn in their trainings and the accompanying revised materials. Tusome was able to achieve an unprecedented degree of classroom-level monitoring and support. The combination of well-defined and -communicated expectations and regular monitoring and coaching helped reshape the normative culture of the education system—a non-trivial contributing factor in changing institutional capacity. Through the support of the Tusome project, basic inputs were assured at scale—materials in the right quantity at the right time, training, ongoing support. Something it seems petty to celebrate, but the degree of operational competence was another signal that the status quo ante (insufficient and late supply of books, low quality professional development) no longer held.

Our previous research funded by IR&D and Strategic Investment Funds (SIF) led IE to define the three core functions as critical areas for building institutional capacity. Subsequent work enabled us to develop a framework for assessing system capacity in these areas. The research on Kenya Tusome showed that the framework provides useful insight into the factors that contribute to success at scale. The IRD-supported research in fiscal year 2019 used the core functions framework to assess additional experience in strengthening systems across a range of RTI-implemented projects in Jordan, Malawi, Nepal, and Uganda. The findings from this research will inform the further development of useable tools for assessing and monitoring the development of institutional capacity in these core function areas. We will also use the results of this research to develop proposal-ready descriptions of how such tools can be used in future programs, including clearly specified processes, activities, and budgets that our proposals should include.

## I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Scale and Sustainability research addresses the following questions:

1. What approaches and activities of early grade learning (EGL) projects have been most successful at assessing and developing institutional capacity in the three core function areas?
2. What elements of EGL programs have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations) and what system capacities (in the core functions) have been developed to support government implementation of those elements?
3. What are identifiable, measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas?
4. How suited is the RTI core functions framework and tool to assessing education system institutional capacity?

5. What should IE be including in proposals for future work to ensure that our projects address system capacity issues in ways that ensure greater success in large-scale implementation through government systems and, for USAID proposals, align to the Journey to Self-Reliance framework?

## II. METHODOLOGY

To answer the above questions, we selected countries where RTI is implementing large-scale EGL projects that were willing to collaborate on this research. The selected countries were Jordan, Malawi, Nepal, and Uganda. Selected IE PS&G staff led the research in each country, working in concert with identified local staff in that country on the following:

- Review of work done on the core functions under previous IRD funding or project funding
- Use the core functions framework to assess system capacity, as necessary
- Synthesize findings for each country case to answer the research questions and distill our understanding of the ways in which projects have supported government uptake of key elements of EGL programs

### Core Functions Capacity Assessment Tool

The study made use of the core functions institutional capacity assessment tool that was developed by the PS&G team to assess the extent to which a country's education system exhibits the core functions. The tool (see the annex to this report) consists of a series of guiding questions, scoring rubric, and worksheet centered on the three core functions. For each core function, the tool identifies five ideal characteristics or behaviors of systems that performed well on that function (see **Figure 1**) and asks the respondents about the extent to which their system exhibited that characteristic.

**Figure 1. The 15 Characteristics of a High-Capacity System**

1. **Setting and communicating expectations for the outcomes of education**
  - 1.1. Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system
  - 1.2. Curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.
  - 1.3. Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes, and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.
  - 1.4. Expectations for principals regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.
  - 1.5. School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational, and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/principals/teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.
2. **Monitoring and holding schools accountable for meeting expectations**

- 2.1. Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.
  - 2.2. Use of learning outcomes data at the school level—periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations, and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.
  - 2.3. Supervisor and/or principal monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data
  - 2.4. Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at school level—how supervisors and/or principals are supporting teachers; how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials; of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations; and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance.
  - 2.5. Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels—in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations—and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.
3. Providing basic inputs to all schools and targeting additional support to struggling schools and students
    - 3.1. Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs—materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow-up and responsive support to teachers—in terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.
    - 3.2. Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).
    - 3.3. Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes.
    - 3.4. District/sub-district levels using data on school performance to orient the provision of external support, and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help.
    - 3.5. National-level review of needs across schools/districts—with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

Based on information gleaned from interviews, focus group discussions, and document reviews, the researcher assigns a rating for each of the 15 areas based on a four-point scale, from “not achieved” to “fully achieved.” As an example, the scoring rubric for characteristic 2.1: *Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance* is shown in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Scoring Rubric for Characteristic 2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance		
Code	Question/Response	Source/Score
2.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there evidence that teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis?</li> <li>• Is there evidence that school leaders or external supervisors/support officers also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis?</li> </ul>	School records, quality assurance materials; key informant interviews
	<input type="checkbox"/> A. Evidence of periodic assessments are done using objective criteria by teachers and external observers (principals or supervisors) <input type="checkbox"/> B. Periodic assessments are done but not using objective criteria <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C. Objective assessments are done, but only by teachers	A = 3 points B = 1 point <b>C = 1 point</b> D = 0 points

Table 1. Scoring Rubric for Characteristic 2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance

Code	Question/Response			Source/Score
	<input type="checkbox"/> D. Periodic assessments are NOT done			
	<p><b>Source of evidence, comments and/or description of current status:</b></p> <p>Teachers consistently assess student learning progress using summative assessments to test for comprehension and writing skills; no other external assessments are conducted of early grade learners.</p>			
2.1	Total Score (sum 2.1.1) <u>1 point</u>		Rating:	<u>Partially Achieved</u>
Score	Evaluation	Overview	Explanation	
0	NOT ACHIEVED	Major weaknesses	There are major weaknesses which require immediate action. These have a very significant negative effect on the performance of the system.	
1	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	Some important weaknesses	There are some strengths but there are also important weaknesses that have a significant effect on the system.	
2	ACHIEVED	Strengths outweigh weaknesses	Performance is characterized by a number of strengths. There are weaknesses but these do not have a significant adverse effect on the system.	
3	FULLY ACHIEVED	Major Strengths	Performance is characterized by overall strength. There are few weaknesses, if any. Such a system could be treated as a role model as exemplary to others.	

## Country Study Procedure

The actual study procedure followed in each country was adapted to fit the needs of that country. In Malawi, the project team had undertaken a comprehensive assessment of system capacity using the core functions framework, and so this study used secondary data from that assessment and undertook a reflection exercise with staff members who were involved with the initial capacity assessment to answer the research questions. In Uganda, the project team conducted a rapid assessment of institutional capacity using the core functions framework and assessment tool. The research in Uganda included interviews with key government informants and focus group discussions with teachers and district education officials. In Nepal, researchers used a questionnaire to solicit feedback from key project staff (Senior Education Systems Coordinator and Acting Chief of Party) and reviewed key government policy documents and project documents. In Jordan, like in Malawi, the project team had already conducted a comprehensive mapping of the EGL system, aligned with the core functions process. The Jordan team used the scoring rubric to outline the status of core system capacity and used secondary data to answer the research questions. The next section reports on the findings for each of our country studies.

## II. KEY FINDINGS: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

### Jordan Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative (RAMP)

#### About the project

RAMP is a national effort designed to improve the reading and mathematics skills of students in Jordan in Kindergarten 2 to Grade 3 (K2–G3). It does this by supporting the Ministry of Education (MOE) to (1) develop and distribute improved learning materials to every K2–G3 classroom in Jordan; (2) train teachers, principals, supervisors, and Field Directorate and MOE administrators to provide more effective instruction; (3) promote community support for reading and mathematics education and to hold schools accountable; and (4) support nationwide adoption of early grade reading and mathematics policies, standards, curricula, and assessments.

Years 4 (2018) and 5 (2019) were dedicated to implementing an options module to focus on integrating and institutionalizing elements of the RAMP early grade reading (EGR) model into the MOE at national, district (Field Directorate), and local levels, and to improve learning outcomes. RAMP is scheduled to end December 31, 2019, but RTI is in negotiations with USAID for a two-year extension to deepen this focus on sustainability and continued improvement of outcomes.

#### Approaches to assessing and developing institutional capacity in support of the core functions

RAMP employed a three-step approach to assessing institutional capacity in the core functions. These are: (1) mapping the existing EGL system to understand how the system works versus how it was supposed to work, (2) developing a sustainability plan to transform the existing EGL system into a core functions EGL system, and (3) supporting the implementation of the sustainability plan. RAMP worked closely with MOE officials on all three tasks. Key informant interviews were held with central ministry departments, the MOE Working Group, Field Directorates, and external stakeholders. In addition, RAMP conducted a thorough review of the K2–G3 curricula to inform curriculum revision and develop guidelines and materials. The overall mapping process assessed professional development, coaching, and student assessment functions.

RAMP provided technical assistance to the MOE in areas related to professional development of teachers, curriculum and materials development, standards development, and assessment. Providing technical assistance to the ministry was a key approach to institutional capacity development, but not the only one. The project also provided direct training to education officials including teachers, supervisors, head teachers, and district education officers. RAMP organized joint monitoring visits with key MOE officials to deepen their understanding of how policies are implemented in the classrooms and provided onsite coaching support to supervisors as they piloted new coaching tools. RAMP also leveraged technology such as SMS, WhatsApp, and the internet to provide information and resources to teachers, senior teachers, and supervisors.

## **Elements of EGL programs that have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations)**

Several elements of RAMP have been integrated into MOE plans, policies, operations, and, to a lesser extent, budget. Some of the key elements are highlighted below.

### **Core Function I**

- Documentation of learner and teacher competencies is in the national curriculum, and these standards are available for download.
- The project contributed to the development of materials such as workbooks and learner's books, which are being used as part of the official curriculum.
- With support from RAMP, expectations for Field Directorate Supervisors have evolved from an inspectorate role toward a coaching function. RAMP contributed to the revision of job descriptions.

### **Core Function II**

- MOE supervisors spend more of their time coaching and providing support to teachers using tools and protocols developed by RAMP.
- Revised job descriptions of MOE officials align with provision of coaching support to teachers.
- Reading and mathematics assessment using lot quality assurance sampling (LQAS) was conducted by MOE officials.
- Work is underway to integrate RAMP coaching and LQAS data systems into the MOE's data systems structure.
- A Senior Teacher Program, which provides school-based coaching support, was approved for expansion by the MOE.
- The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team of the MOE follows the standard operating procedures developed by RAMP.

### **Core Function III**

- A RAMP accreditation assessment was developed, and teachers who successfully pass the assessment receive professional development credit in line with the MOE's new Teacher Career Path.
- MOE's revised Early Grade Teacher Induction Program includes 65 credit hours from the RAMP teacher training. This means that all new teachers are trained on the RAMP reading and math pedagogy.

In summary, RAMP developed the foundation for the MOE to take on the delivery of EGR services. But, so far these appear to have been adopted piece-meal rather than through a fully comprehensive uptake. RAMP-2 will continue this work to ensure full ownership of the EGL program by the government. The new program will focus on four key areas: (1) to ensure daily use of RAMP materials in all classrooms; (2) to design and deliver a coherent teacher professional development program that combines needs-based training and school-

based coaching; (3) to institutionalize EGL assessment processes; and (4) to ensure vertical alignment of EGL efforts from the center to the school, and ensure that RAMP activities are incorporated into sector plans, strategies, and budgets.

### **Identifiable, measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas**

Due to the nature of the capacity development activities in the core functions area, capacity development milestones were measured in terms of standards developed and approved, policies developed, assessment conducted, materials distributed to schools, etc.

In terms of training provided to teachers, head teachers, and supervisors, the project tracks milestones such as the percentage of teachers who pass the accreditation assessment or the amount of coaching received per teacher, which are evidence of knowledge being increased and skills being developed, respectively.

The RAMP performance monitoring plan (PMP) also tracks progress on indicators that are related to some elements of capacity development, but these are mainly output measures: number of policy, programming, and/or education reform-based activities endorsed by the MOE from the RAMP Sustainability Plan; number of policy changes that contribute to improved quality of education; and number of primary school educators who complete professional development activities on implementing evidence-based reading and math instruction.

There is now a cadre of district officials who can conduct early grade reading and mathematics assessment and LQAS assessments with data analysis support. Field Directorate supervisors use tablets for data collection, and there is evidence that schools are being visited.

## **MERIT: The Malawi Early Grade Reading Improvement Activity**

### **About the project**

MERIT is a five-year activity designed to assist the Government of Malawi's (GOM) efforts to improve the reading skills of Malawian students in Standards 1–4 nationwide. MERIT's objectives include (1) improving reading instruction for primary grade reading outcomes in Standards 1–4, (2) increasing parental and community engagement in supporting student reading, (3) creating safer learning environments for reading, and (4) instituting pathways for sustainability.

MERIT is one of four USAID-funded activities that is supporting the Malawi Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) in the implementation of its National Reading Programme (NRP). The objective that centers on instituting pathways for sustainability is working to develop the institutional capacity of MOEST and other local education agencies to eventually be able to maintain the delivery of EGR with their own technical and financial resources.

## **Approaches to assessing and developing institutional capacity in the core functions**

### *Institutional Capacity Assessment*

MERIT used the core functions framework to assess the institutional capacity of the education system of Malawi and developed a report that highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the system. The assessment was conducted by MERIT staff, under the leadership of the Capacity Development Taskforce, which is made up of heads of various MOEST departments. The research team held interviews with key informants at the MOEST, both at the center and district levels. In addition, the team held focus group discussions with education officials from the district (district education managers, coordinating primary education advisors, district education management information system officers), zone (primary education advisors), and school (head teachers, teachers, section heads) levels.

The results of the assessment were disseminated via workshops with district officials, and MERIT worked with district teams to develop action plans for supporting EGR service delivery in their districts. MERIT also instituted quarterly meetings with district education managers and other district-level officers to increase their capacity to oversee, implement, and plan their support to EGR services. In the final year, MERIT will support district staff to include funding for EGR into their budgets.

MERIT also conducted a participatory local capacity assessment of civil society organizations that were contracted to support community mobilization activities in support of the NRP. A participatory local capacity assessment tool developed by the RTI home office was adapted for use in Malawi. MERIT worked with the various organizations and used the tool to assess their organizational capacities in 10 core functional areas such as governance, management, and financial management. The findings of the assessment were to be used as a tool for prioritizing MERIT's capacity development of these organizations. Unfortunately, the subcontracts were terminated prematurely because of funding delays.

### *Institutional Capacity Development*

Since MERIT supports the NRP, our approach has been to work through local systems rather than direct implementation. Through this approach, we have been able to build technical capacity at the MOEST and other education agencies such as the Malawi Institute of Education in areas such as teacher training for reading instruction, development of teaching and learning materials, and conducting EGRAs.

The main approach to capacity development employed by MERIT is in providing technical skills to local education staff from the MOEST to the school level. MERIT trained over 55,000 teachers on reading instruction and over 11,000 section heads on coaching and providing support to their peer teachers. It also trained primary education advisors, lecturers from teacher training colleges, and other officials from the MOEST on delivering teacher training through a cascade model. MERIT had a technical team embedded at the Malawi Institute of Education, and they provided ongoing support and training to Institute staff on the development of teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, supplementary readers, and teacher guides.

Another approach to capacity development included working with the MOEST to develop policies and processes to support EGR. Through policy engagement and dialogue, the MOEST developed at least two circulars for schools and districts around their expectations for schools in terms of supporting reading. Two of the most important policies included lengthening the school day and increasing the amount of curricular time spent on reading.

MERIT also improved institutional capacity by strengthening relationships between the MOEST and the private sector. After direct advocacy from MERIT, MOEST identified a focal person for coordinating public-private partnerships, and the MOEST has assumed responsibility for managing the partnerships, with coaching support from MERIT.

### **Elements of EGL programs that have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations)**

Several elements of MERIT and the predecessor project, Malawi Early Grade Reading Activity, have been taken up by the MOEST in its plans and policies, and to a much lesser extent in budgets and operations. The MOEST, with USAID support, developed a National Reading Strategy, which contains several elements of the Early Grade Reading Activity. In addition, Activity staff were consulted in the drafting of the Malawi Education Sector Improvement Plan, which has more of a focus on early grade reading and numeracy than previous plans.

All materials developed under MERIT (teacher's guides, learner's books, etc.) are part of the official curriculum materials that all schools must use. These materials, aligned with the curriculum, set out expectations for what teachers are supposed to do and what learners are supposed to learn.

The NRP is led by an advisory committee that is chaired by the secretary of education and that includes all directors of the MOEST. Because of this, decisions that are made are official decisions, and we have been able to get many policies instituted. Again, the MOEST has developed and distributed two EGR-related circulars that outlined expectations for schools regarding changes in policies and practices to support the NRP. These included extended hours in the timetable for reading instruction, expectations for the use of learner's books, and requiring that all teachers use the teacher's guides developed under NRP/MERIT.

During the final year of the Activity, MERIT will be working with the district education offices to ensure that their annual budgets make provision for EGR.

### **System capacities (in the core functions) have been developed to support government implementation of those elements**

The system capacities developed by MERIT centered around the instructional core: standards, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Standards for teaching and learning were included in the curriculum and teacher's guides, and all teachers were trained on them. To develop these materials, MERIT had a technical team embedded at the Malawi Institute of Education, who trained, mentored, and coached Institute staff in the development of these materials. MERIT also funded the purchase of relevant equipment for Institute staff.

MERIT supported the MOEST to provide related training for all teachers, based on the curriculum materials developed. The trainings were done via a cascade model that involved

master trainers (lecturers of teacher training colleges) and teacher trainers (primary education advisors and key teachers). These officials involved in the cascade training received multiple rounds of training.

Training was also provided to section heads and primary education advisors on how to provide coaching support to teachers. They were also provided with the tools for recording coaching observations. Finally, a cadre of MOEST officials were trained on conducting EGRAs and teacher observation using structured protocol. Overall, MERIT's focus was mainly on providing technical skills to individual players within the system in the areas of reading instruction, curriculum and materials development, coaching, and EGRAs. In the final year of the Activity there will be more of a focus on how district systems can take on the planning, organization, and financing of some of these functions.

### **Identifiable, measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas**

MERIT conducts regular monitoring of its activities and reports quarterly on progress. In addition, MERIT conducts biannually the National Assessment of Reading Instruction (NARI) and the National Assessment of Safe and Inclusive Schools. The assessments are usually conducted in a nationally representative sample of 86 schools. These monitoring and assessment activities provide measurable milestones of capacity development in some of the core function areas.

#### *Setting expectations*

1. Policy change to support the NRP—such as setting the expected curriculum hours for reading and extending the length of the school day to incorporate this increased time. NARI provides evidence that these policies are largely in place in schools.
2. Evidence of teacher's guides being used by teachers in classrooms, which include expectations of student learning.
3. NARI provides an audit of available texts and data on the percentage of learners with learner's books at the start of class.

#### *Monitoring against expectations*

1. Evidence of section heads coaching using tools and guidelines provided to them. NARI reports on the percentage of teachers who have been coached within a set period and checks for written observations of those coaching. In addition, since tablets record coaching visits, MERIT has real-time evidence of primary education advisors' visits to schools and records of their coaching.
2. Provide basic inputs for all and targeted supported for struggling schools and learners:
  - Local systems and mechanisms exist for providing training to all teachers.
  - MERIT conducts an annual audit of learner's books that are still available in the school and reports on learner's books received as a percentage of total student enrollment.
  - Through Assess the Learners and MERIT, continuous assessment and remediation is happening in school by teachers. Evidence of assessment being conducted is captured as part of the NARI.

## **Nepal Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP)**

### **About the project**

NEPAL EGRP is a USAID-funded program with two broad goals: (1) to improve the reading skills of children in Grades 1–3 in 16 targeted districts, and (2) to strengthen the education delivery systems of the Government of Nepal (GON). Under the second goal EGRP is to support the GON in implementing its National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP), which would take to scale the EGR model designed and demonstrated by Nepal EGRP. The major objectives of the project are to provide technical assistance to different levels of the education system to improve EGR instruction and improve national and district EGR service delivery. EGRP is implemented directly in 16 of 75 districts, while designing an EGR package that the GON can feasibly replicate and scale nationally.

### **Approaches to assessing and developing institutional capacity**

While EGRP has not attempted a full-scale assessment of government capacity using the core functions framework, it has conducted a needs assessment workshop that looked at the capacity development needs across a gamut of education service delivery activities from materials development to empowering local education units. Through this activity the officials from the MOEST and other related agencies derived a list of areas for capacity development, which ranged from budgeting skills for local government to strengthening M&E capacity of the Education Review Office.

EGRP takes a multifaceted approach to developing institutional capacity. The main strand is through of face-to-face trainings and workshops, but it also provides embedded technical assistance by co-locating EGRP staff at MOEST and partner education agencies. Embedded technical staff can provide ongoing coaching and support to key government officials in policy design and implementation. The EGRP has representatives in the Education Working Group, and through them the project can support government education officials in improving their policies, systems, and operations. Another capacity building approach is to provide information on best-practices and access to research on EGR-related areas.

EGRP Nepal is progressively strengthening the policy reform process by supporting the GON in setting and communicating expectations. The Education Act, the National Curriculum Framework, NEGRP, and the School Sector Development Plan reflect the results of the efforts. Continuous learner assessment is incorporated into teacher training and support provided under EGR.

### **Elements of EGL programs that have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations)**

Because the EGRP is structured to provide technical assistance to the GON in implementing the NEGRP nationwide, the EGRP has been successful in getting elements of the program taken up by the MOEST. Some of these achievements include the following:

- Supported GON planning for NEGRP by supporting the revision of the NEGRP strategy document.
- Finalized a costed EGR “minimum package,” which consists of key elements required of

all EGR programs in Nepal such as teaching and learning materials, teacher training, student assessment, M&E, and community mobilization, each with minimum standards that must be met. This forms the foundation of the EGR model that could be taken to scale as part of the NEGRP.

- Supported the GON to develop student reading benchmarks, NEGRP standardization and harmonization guidelines, and work on the development of teacher performance standards for EGR, which will be linked to the overall teacher competency framework.
- The GON is currently using funds from its budget (some of its budget support from USAID) to fund some aspects of the NEGRP (and EGRP), including teacher training.
- The GON has already started implementing EGR activities in districts other than the 16 that EGRP is directly working on using materials, processes, and operations demonstrated by EGRP.
- The GON used funds that it budgeted for the rollout of the NEGRP minimum package to conduct the 2019 classroom-based EGRA in the EGRP districts. The classroom-based EGRA is one of the major contributions of EGRP that has become institutionalized within the government system.
- The EGRP is also providing technical support to the GON in the development of National Assessment of Reading and Numeracy, which will serve as the basis for measuring future progress in reading and numeracy. Again, the GON has allocated a budget for the purpose.
- The Integrated Education Management Information System data capture the information on textbook distribution, teacher training, and school visit times. but the system does not secure data on teaching and learning or supplementary reading materials distribution , print-rich environment, and follow-up support to teachers. The data, managed by EGRP, can also be obtained from schools and districts. Similarly, monitoring reports and quarterly and annual reports reflect the information on the inputs.

These are only some of the ways in which key elements of the EGRP has been taken up by the GON. The key elements of an evidence-based EGR model are there in the EGR minimum package. What is remaining in Year 5 is to ensure that funding for the replication and scaleup of the model is included in the GON budget and medium-term expenditure framework.

### **System capacities (in the core functions) that have been developed to support government implementation of those elements**

In the districts where EGRP is implemented directly, capacity development activities center on developing teaching and learning materials, developing teacher training manuals and delivering training, providing orientation for head teachers, conducting EGRAs and other ongoing formative classroom assessments, strengthening the MOEST's Integrated Education Management Information System, strengthening education development and coordination units at the district level, supporting local education units at the municipal level to effectively manage school-based EGR activities in schools, and sensitizing and mobilizing

families and communities to support EGR activities in schools and communities. In terms of strengthening institutional capacity, the EGRP has provided technical support to key education agencies of the GON including the MOEST on overall policy support, the Education Review Office on assessments, the Curriculum Development Center on development of curriculum and resource materials, and the Center for Education and Human Resources Development on teacher professional development.

The EGRP focused on the following top five capacity development activities that have been successful in building capacity in the core functions:

1. Support to clarify the concept and materials development (Nepali second language and mother-tongue materials) (Core functions 1 and 2)
2. Support to update NEGRP policy guidelines (including assessment guidelines) and teacher professional development training packages (Core function 1)
3. Capacity development on policy formulation and budgeting for local governments (Core functions 1 and 3)
4. Teacher follow-up support mechanism—development and implementation (Core function 2)
5. Capacity development on planning, monitoring, and reporting to local education unit personnel (Core functions 2 and 3)

### **Identifiable, measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas**

Key EGRP activities that have been most identifiable and measurable center on those activities that have been completed by various government agencies as a result of technical assistance from the EGRP: teaching and learning materials developed; teacher training manuals developed and used in trainings; head teachers oriented on EGRP; classroom-based EGRA and other ongoing formative classroom assessments conducted, etc.

Other types of activities such as strengthening the MOEST's Integrated Education Management Information System; strengthening district administration offices and education development and coordination units, both at the district level; and supporting local education units at the municipal level to effectively manage school-based EGR activities in schools are harder to measure. How and whether the system is benefiting from these activities is not being tracked.

The EGRP team has developed an online dashboard that tracks data from school monitoring visits. The dashboard tracks indicators around the number of visits per district, percentage of teachers using EGR pedagogy, percentage of teachers using materials, and percentage of teachers receiving support. These indicators give an insight into the extent of behavior change (outcome of capacity development) of key education actors.

The EGR PMP has a couple of indicators that measure aspects of capacity development. These are “number of education administrators and government officials who complete professional development activities with U.S. Government assistance” and “numbers of policies/regulations/administrative procedures in various stages of development”). Both are standard U.S. Government indicators, which are more output-focused.

## **Uganda Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity (LARA)**

### **About the project**

LARA works to improve the reading skills of 1.3 million primary school students across 38 districts and 3,542 schools in Uganda. While not a national project, it reaches over 25% of districts in Uganda. It centers around two main results: (1) to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) to deliver EGR services through training of teachers and instructional leaders, providing textbooks, providing coaching support for teachers, and conducting EGRAs; and (2) to improve retention in the primary grades by promoting positive and supportive school environments that are free of gender-based violence. LARA was scheduled to end in 2020 but has recently been extended for one year.

### **Approaches to assessing and developing institutional capacity**

While LARA does work to develop institutional capacity of the education system, it did not conduct a comprehensive institutional capacity assessment using the core functions framework as part of its operation. Therefore, it used the core functions tool to conduct a rapid assessment as part of this research study. However, the project did conduct targeted assessments in specific areas. For example, it recently carried out a regional coaching study to learn more about effective coaching and mentoring strategies, which is related to Core function 2. In addition, the project conducted a “micro-experiment” on teacher absenteeism, wherein LARA used a collaborative inquiry with key education actors at the district and school levels to better understand the absenteeism problem. The inquiry led to a better understanding of deeply held attitudes and behaviors to more effectively address systemic challenges that hinder education outcomes.

In terms of approaches to developing institutional capacity in the core functions, LARA conducted face-to-face trainings to improve skills and knowledge of teachers in reading instruction; district education officers, college tutors, and principals on teacher training; and Coordinating Center Tutors (CCT) on coaching and teacher supervision.

Other types of capacity development approach employed by the project included study tours for MOES officials, action research at the district level, training and coaching of sub-grantees, and hosting of symposiums on school-related gender-based violence.

### **Elements of EGL programs that have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations)**

As the LARA project draws to a close, certain elements of the program are beginning to be taken up by the MOES in its plans, budgets, and system operations. The 2020 Education Sector Strategic Plan, which is currently being developed, will include EGR as a priority. The Plan is the document that guides all actions in the education sector and that donors use to guide their funding allocation, so this is a good step.

While the district budget does not yet adequately fund the full scope of EGL activities, some districts have begun to allocate resources toward elements of EGL programs. For example, some districts share the cost of teacher professional development by paying transportation costs of their teachers. Others are using their own funds to conduct a monitoring exercise that includes the development of M&E tools and conducting learner checks to monitor

reading progress. Yet other districts are using funds from their projects to purchase local-language materials. At the central level, MOES has included 2 billion Uganda shillings in the fiscal year 2019–2020 budget for the replenishment of EGR materials and books.

EGR content and teaching methodologies were integrated into the preservice training of teachers, which means that new teachers will graduate with the skills and knowledge to teach. Through the Global Partnership for Education, with support from other EGR projects, preservice tutors were trained in EGR methodology.

Finally, teacher’s guides and all texts developed by LARA are part of the national curriculum, and classroom monitoring tools developed by LARA are being used by district officials CCTs but not consistently.

### **System capacities (in the core functions) have been developed to support government implementation of those elements**

The LARA project has developed technical capacities in the areas of reading instruction, teacher professional development (including reading), materials development, and school supervision. The main areas of capacity development are as follows:

- Competency-based materials development
- Support system of coaching and mentoring of teachers by reviewing and revising job descriptions and expectations for various actors in the system including the CCTs, head teachers, and inspectors of schools. The aim is to orient the system toward one that provides instructional support for teachers rather than perform a compliance monitoring or inspectorate role.
- Assessment of learner and teacher competencies
- The systems and human capacities to use school-level and district-aggregated data to identify district gaps in EGR performance, identify schools most in need, and plan to improve and fill these gaps
- Teachers’ and head teachers’ capacity to deliver and supervise EGR instruction, respectively, is there
- Strengthened and standardized the primary supervision system in targeted districts. The project collaborated with targeted districts to conduct district-led support supervision, district progress review meetings, periodic planning meetings, and zonal head teacher meetings.
- Trained all primary teacher college tutors on teaching EGR approaches rather than the conventional language approach

### **Identifiable, measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas**

The LARA PMP has some measurable milestones of capacity development that focus on inputs: number of policies laws, regulations developed or modified to improve EGR; and behavior change: proportion of teachers receiving at least one coaching or support visit; and the proportion (percentage) of observed teachers who demonstrate adequate uptake of

instructional methods on which they were trained (project custom indicator). In addition to these PMP indicators, the project also tracks indicators such as the number of people trained and works with districts to develop customized indicators for assessing learning in the district.

### III. SUMMARY DISCUSSION

From the individual case studies above, we summarize some of the patterns and discontinuities in this section. Despite the varying contexts of the different projects they all have at least two common objectives: to increase the learning outcomes (reading and/or mathematics) of children in the early grades and to develop the capacity (technical, financial, etc.) of governments to provide these EGL services to all children. We focus on the latter objective and start by looking at the extent to which countries demonstrate the 15 characteristics of a highly capable EGL-producing country.

**Table 2** provides a summary of ratings of country education systems for each of the 15 characteristics across the three core functions. The colors of the cells represent the ratings, with red meaning *not achieved*; yellow, *partially achieved*, light green, *achieved*; and dark green, *fully achieved*. The table shows variation across the countries in areas in which there are strengths and weaknesses. The only area in which all countries are rated as *achieved* or *fully achieved* is in having a competency-based curriculum (Item 1.2): they all have curricula that provide specific expectations for learners. Otherwise, the findings are mixed. The education system in Jordan appears to exhibit the highest number of core functions behavior that have been *achieved* or *fully achieved* (12 of 15), followed by Nepal, Malawi, and Jordan. However, caution must be taken in comparing the different countries as the tool was not developed for that purpose, and the differences might be due to inconsistencies in the ratings among different raters.

Table 2. Summary of Ratings of Education System Capacity in the Core Functions				
ITEM	Nepal	Uganda	Jordan	Malawi
<b>1. Setting and communicating expectations</b>				
1.1 Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes	Light Green	Red	Light Green	Yellow
1.2 Curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do	Light Green	Light Green	Dark Green	Light Green
1.3 Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve	Dark Green	Yellow	Light Green	Light Green
1.4 Expectations for principals regarding their instructional support roles	Dark Green	Red	Dark Green	Yellow
1.5 School support personnel at each level of the system who can state how they are expected to support schools	Light Green	Light Green	Yellow	Light Green
<b>2. Monitoring and holding schools accountable</b>				
2.1 Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance	Light Green	Yellow	Dark Green	Yellow
2.2 Use of learning outcomes data at the school	Dark Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

2.3 Monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at the school level, and evidence of teacher performance data				
2.4 Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at the school level				
2.5 Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels				
<b>3. Provide basic inputs and targeted support to schools</b>				
3.1 Evidence regarding the provision of basic instructional inputs				
3.2 Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind				
3.3 Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize teachers/students/schools that are performing well				
3.4 District levels using data on school performance to orient the provision of external support and evidence that targeted support is given				
3.5 National-level review of needs across schools/districts—with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support				
COLOR CODE	FULLY ACHIEVED	ACHIEVED	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	NOT ACHIEVED

### Approaches and activities of EGL projects that have been most successful at assessing and developing institutional capacity in the three core function areas

All EGL projects conduct assessments of institutional capacity in one or all the core function areas. Malawi and Jordan used the core functions framework to conduct comprehensive institutional capacity assessment. Jordan has done a better job of following up on that analysis with a sustainability plan, and dedicated funding to implementing the plan. Nepal and Uganda conducted assessments of specific aspects of education service delivery but did not use the core functions framework. Uganda LARA conducted a rapid assessment of institutional capacity, but because this was happening toward the end of the project, the findings will only be useful for future projects.

Regardless of when or how these assessments are conducted, EGL projects all have activities aimed at developing institutional capacity in one or more of the core function areas. The most common area of institutional support is in Core function 1, setting expectations for learning. All EGL projects provided technical assistance in the development of curricula and curricular materials that set expectations for what learners should know and do and how teachers should teach.

In Core function 2, EGL projects work in strengthening the capacity of the system to monitor learners and collect data on learning and to set up a teacher support or supervision model that collects data on teaching practices so as to provide needs-based coaching support to teachers. The system of teacher support differs by country, from school-based support to having actors external to the school provide coaching support. There is much less work on

the use of data collected in holding various education actors accountable for their performance.

In Core function 3, EGL projects have all focused on ensuring schools have a teacher who is trained on instruction and that schools are provided with the basic teaching and learning materials to support instruction. All projects include a teacher training component that provides teachers and other education actors (who participate in the training cascade) with the skills and knowledge to teach reading and/or mathematics. In addition, all projects provide curricular materials (learner's books, teacher's guides, etc.) to support schools and teachers. All projects support the technical capacity of local agencies within the system to develop these materials, but not all support the ministries of education in the operational and managerial functions to ensure that they can get books to every student on time. In Malawi, for example, that task was done by the project and funder, outside of ministry systems.

In terms of developing capacities in Core function 3, all projects have provided technical assistance (training, policy dialogue, coaching) in the development of curriculum and corresponding resources (teacher's guides, learner's books, etc.). Some projects (Nepal, Jordan) have also worked extensively with the MOE to integrate learning assessments into their core work. In Malawi, a cadre of education officials were trained in EGRA data collection, but the system does not yet have the technical capacity to manage the assessment from design to analysis.

Institutional support in the area of providing targeted support to struggling schools and students is still emerging. And this is partly because, as explained earlier, the capacity to use the data collected is still limited. Jordan provides an example of a country where data have been used to classify schools and to use a differentiated support schedule so that weaker schools get more school visits. In Malawi, USAID is funding a second project, Assess the Learners (known as YESA), that is focused on continuous assessment and remediation. Finally, almost all countries still rely on project funding to provide these basic inputs and targeted supports.

### **Elements of EGL programs that have been taken up by ministries of education (in plans, budgets, and system operations) and system capacities that have been developed to support government implementation of those elements**

Building on work done on the instructional core, the curriculum and materials developed by EGL projects have largely been incorporated into the national curriculum and taken up by MOEs. Even in countries where the EGL project is not working at scale (such as Uganda and Nepal), elements of the instructional core are expected to be scaled up. All countries have EGL/EGR as areas of priorities in plans and policies, although not all have the resources to fund them.

Other elements that have been taken up by MOEs include the move from an inspectorate function to a teacher support function. All country systems are working toward having education support professionals whose main role is to support teachers, whether those

professionals are school-based or district-based. Projects are supporting this move by working on job descriptions, developing tools and protocols, and training personnel.

While the above two elements are common across countries, individual countries have gone further in integrating EGL elements: Jordan has developed an EGL teacher training certification assessment. Teachers who go through training receive professional credit from the MOE, which counts toward their career path; Jordan and Uganda have integrated EGL content and pedagogy into preservice training; work is underway in Nepal and Jordan to integrate EGL outcomes data into government data systems. And key EGL elements are beginning to be integrated into country budgets, but in a nascent way. In this regard, Uganda has included funding for book replenishments in the education budget; Nepal is already using government-to-government budget to fund the rollout of EGL programs into districts not supported by EGRP.

### **Measurable milestones of capacity development in each of the core function areas**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) outlines a framework for measurement of capacity that is results based and focuses on three levels of measurement: (1) impact, (2) outcomes, and (3) outputs (UNDP, 2010). Impact refers to changes in the well-being of people; outcomes to change in institutional performance, stability, and adaptability; and outputs to products or services delivered.

For EGL programs, the impact measurement is usually the learning outcomes of children, which all countries measure. USAID requires all EGR programs to measure the percentage of children who can read with comprehension by the end of Grade 2, but EGL projects measure learning outcomes across targeted grades.

Outcome measures are usually linked to changes in performance of organization, and EGL projects typically use indicators such as percentage of teachers who teach using EGL pedagogies, percentages of teachers who receive coaching support, and percentages of teachers using the teacher's guides and other teaching and learning materials.

Output measures include policies or standards that have been completed and approved, training programs that have been completed, establishment of job descriptions, curriculum standards, and so on. Most of the milestones being measured in our EGL projects fall under this area.

### **Suitability of RTI core functions framework and tool to assessing education system institutional capacity**

During this research study, all country teams had the opportunity to use the capacity assessment framework and tools and reflect on its utility for assessing educational system institutional capacity. In general, countries found the framework and tool useful in terms of framing and simplifying our capacity development work.

Nevertheless, respondents also identified ways in which the assessment tool could be improved to respond to the varying needs of projects. These are highlighted below.

- **Clarify and consolidate questions under each core function.** Some questions are

repeated across core functions while others are not closely aligned with the core functions under review. For example, questions about data use for accountability span both Core functions 2 and 3. The recommendation is to make questions more precise, avoid repetition, and match the responses directly to research questions.

- **More guidance about how the results of the assessment would be used and what further information is needed.** The findings from assessments usually highlight many gaps in core function capacities, and teams would appreciate some further guidance on how the findings would be used. Projects would need to be able to adapt to address some of these gaps. One recommendation is that the findings be used to build consensus and prioritization for capacity development, similar to what was done in Jordan with the development of the sustainability plan.
- **Include attention to issues of gender equity, inclusion, and community engagement.** Gender equity, inclusion, and community engagement are integrated into almost all EGL projects funded by USAID. However, the capacity assessment tool is silent on these issues. The recommendation is to find ways to include these themes or to provide guidance to country teams on how they can adapt the tool and scoring rubric to integrate these.
- **Improvements in the scoring rubric.** The scoring rubric and rating were not consistent across questions and core function area. For example, in some questions a score of 3 would be rated as “**partially achieved**,” while in others it would be “**achieved**.” This is partly because the total score that can be earned in each of the 15 core characteristics was different. Furthermore, the distinction between **partially achieved** and **achieved** was not clear. The team recommends a consistent scoring system for each question and a three-point system: **not achieved, partially achieved, and achieved**.
- **Influence of external support in the rating.** Finally, the team had some questions about whether we can say that the system demonstrates an ideal characteristic, if it only exhibits that ideal characteristic in areas where there is current external support from donors. For example, all schools have basic inputs in reading as a result of support from USAID, but absent of this support that would not be the case, as demonstrated by the fact that schools lack basic inputs in other subject areas where there is no project support. Further guidance is needed in how to score the system in these cases.

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# ANNEX

## Guiding Questions for Policy/Document Review and Key Informant Interviews

### 1. Setting and communicating expectations for the outcomes of education

1.1. Goals of the system expressed in terms of measurable improvements in learning outcomes and those goals being known by actors throughout the system (i.e., when asked, people can say what the learning improvement goals of the system are).

- Are there any clear and specific indicators and targets relating to learner fluency or comprehension found in any of the documents or high-level goal statements?
- Do district (subnational) documents localize or contextualize the goals or targets for their jurisdiction?
- Can the respondents cite the indicators or targets or tell you where they could find them?

1.2. Curriculum that provides specific expectations mapped out in terms of what children should know and be able to do at specific points—i.e., each term, each grade. Lacking this kind of precision in the curriculum documents, then the existence of some other statements of learning outcomes standards. And actors throughout the system who can say what those expectations are or at least say where the expectations are stated.

- Does the curriculum contain specific language on student competencies, proficiency levels?
- Does the teacher's guide or textbooks contain specific language?
- Are there any other policy or curricular documents that contain competency or proficiency level descriptors?
- Are teachers, school heads, and district support officers aware of the learner literacy competencies or proficiency levels, or how to find them? Can they cite or reference them?
- Are parents/community stakeholders able to reference them or know how to find out what they are?

1.3. Expectations for teachers in terms of what they need to do instructionally to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (teacher standards focused on teacher instructional practice and behaviors, not on teacher characteristics) and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- Are there standards or policies for teachers that emphasize either appropriate instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?
- Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize instructional behaviors or learning outcomes?
- Are teachers, school heads, and district support officers aware of the instructional

standards, behaviors expected out of teachers? Can they cite or reference the standards?

- Are district supervisors and support officers aware of teacher standards and expectations? Can they cite or reference the standards?

1.4. Expectations for principals regarding their instructional support roles and actors throughout the system who can state what those core expectations are.

- Are there standards or policies for school principals or deputy principals that emphasize either appropriate instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?
- Do performance evaluation criteria or job descriptions emphasize instructional support behaviors or learning outcomes?
- Are school leaders and teachers aware of the standards or expectations?
- Are district supervisors and support officers aware of teacher standards and expectations?

1.5. School support personnel at each level of the system (cluster, subnational, and national) who can state how they are expected to support schools/principals/teachers in achieving the desired outcomes.

- Are there policies, guidelines, job descriptions in place that describe levels and types of external support to be provided to schools and teachers by supervisors or school support personnel?
- Do these documents specify distinctions between support and supervisory roles?
- Do these documents specify expectations for frequency and type of school visits support?
- Do these documents provide tools or guidelines for conducting the school support visit?
- Are school leaders and teachers aware of the standards or expectations?
- Are district supervisors and support officers aware of external support standards and expectations?

## **2. Monitoring and holding schools accountable for meeting expectations**

2.1. Periodic assessment of learning outcomes at the classroom and school levels using objective criteria of performance (i.e., not just teacher subjective judgments about student performance) and evidence of the outcomes of those assessments.

- Is there evidence that teachers objectively assess learners in the classroom on a routine and predictable basis?
- Is there evidence that school leaders or external supervisors/support officers also routinely assess learners on a predictable basis?

2.2. Use of learning outcomes data at the school level —periodic discussion of how students are doing, about which students are/are not meeting expectations, and evidence of the data made available for those discussions.

- Is there any evidence that teachers provide feedback to parents on student progress in EGL subject areas?
-

- Is there evidence that school leaders, supervisors, or support officers provide feedback to teachers on student progress?
- If discussions or feedback is given, is there evidence that objective assessment of learners serves as the basis for this feedback?

2.3. Supervisor and/or principal monitoring of teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at the school level regarding their progress through the curriculum and their use of specific instructional practices, and evidence of teacher performance data (e.g., filled in observations, documented teacher evaluations).

- Is there any evidence that classroom observations are conducted on a routine basis by supervisors, support officers, or school leaders?
- If so, do the observations reflect outcome-oriented behaviors in relation to EGL instruction (literacy and numeracy)?
- Do the observation instruments reflect objective criteria for assessing instructional practice for EGL subjects?

2.4. Use of data on teacher performance and availability and use of teaching and learning materials at school level—how supervisors and/or principals are supporting teachers; how teachers are applying instructional practices, using instructional materials; of student outcomes in relation to curricular expectations; and examples of reports that document each of these areas of performance.

- Is there any evidence that school leaders and supervisors discuss the quality of teaching, particularly for EGL subjects with classroom teachers?
- If so, is there evidence that demonstrates how results from classroom observations are serving as the basis for these discussions?

2.5. Aggregation of teacher and learner performance data at the subnational and national levels—in terms of what percentage of students/teachers/schools are or are not meeting expectations—and examples of reports that capture these kinds of aggregated data.

- Are data on teaching and learning outcomes reported upward systematically to district and national levels?
- Are these data captured electronically in a centralized database at district or national levels?
- Are school-, sub-district, and/or district reports produced on a routine, predictable basis?
- Are schools or sub-districts using and acting on these reports?

### **3. Providing basic inputs to all schools and targeting additional support to struggling schools and students**

3.1. Evidence regarding provision of basic instructional inputs—materials for teachers and students, training for teachers, ongoing follow-up and responsive support to teachers (when they have questions or need additional help to apply training/use materials)—in

terms of data showing the percentage of schools that received materials, percentage of teachers who participated in training, etc.

- What are the current EGL inputs delivered to schools?
  - Are teachers getting training in early grade literacy/numeracy?
  - Are teachers getting the necessary follow-up support?
  - Are classrooms getting the necessary materials?
- Are these inputs aligned and coordinated so that they complement and reinforce each other? Or is there a clear disconnect between the curricula, training, materials, and support teachers get?
- Are there school-by-school data on the basic inputs received by the schools?
  - Does the education management information system have these data?
  - If not, are the data found elsewhere in the system (e.g., inspection or monitoring reports)?

3.2. Additional opportunities organized at the school level for students who are falling behind (remedial/extra course work).

- Are there policies or programs in place for schools to organize or implement remedial or extracurricular program for EGL subjects (literacy and numeracy)?
- Do schools rely on learning outcomes data to identify struggling learners? Or all learners either required to participate, or is participation solely voluntary?

3.3. Mechanisms in place and evidence of their use to recognize and/or reward teachers/students/schools that are performing well with respect to specific learning outcomes.

- How are high performing students/teachers/schools recognized?
- Are there specific policies, programs and protocols that districts or schools follow to recognize high performers (beyond student competitions), specifically for EGL outcomes?
- Are EGL teaching and learning performance data criteria used as the basis for recognition/awards?

3.4. District/sub-district levels using data on school performance to orient the provision of external support, and evidence that schools/teachers needing more support are given extra attention/resources/help.

- Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at sub-district (cluster levels)?
  - Are there dedicated teacher support personnel at the school level?
  - To what extent do they use data from student assessment or classroom observations to provide need-based support and feedback?
  - How frequently are external support personnel able to visit a given school or teacher in an academic term or year?
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3.5. National-level review of needs across schools/districts—with decisions regarding how to allocate resources and support reflective of what that review reveals.

- What are the existing performance review processes at national/district levels?
- How do needs get translated into strategic plans?
- How do strategic plans get translated into annual or multi-year budgets?
- How is budget and plan execution monitored and tracked at each level?
- Do plans and budgets allocate resources based on need?