

# REMEDIAL EDUCATION AT SCALE: LITERATURE REVIEW

JULY 2023

**Remedial education programming aims to help learners catch up on missed learning through a variety of means that include specific content, active learning pedagogies, and additional instructional time.<sup>i</sup>**

*The framework on the right identifies seven components that evidence identifies as critical to teaching and learning (Mentors, Administrators, Teachers, Texts, Extra Practice, Regular Assessments, and Standards) and an eighth connected component focused on Child Well-Being.*

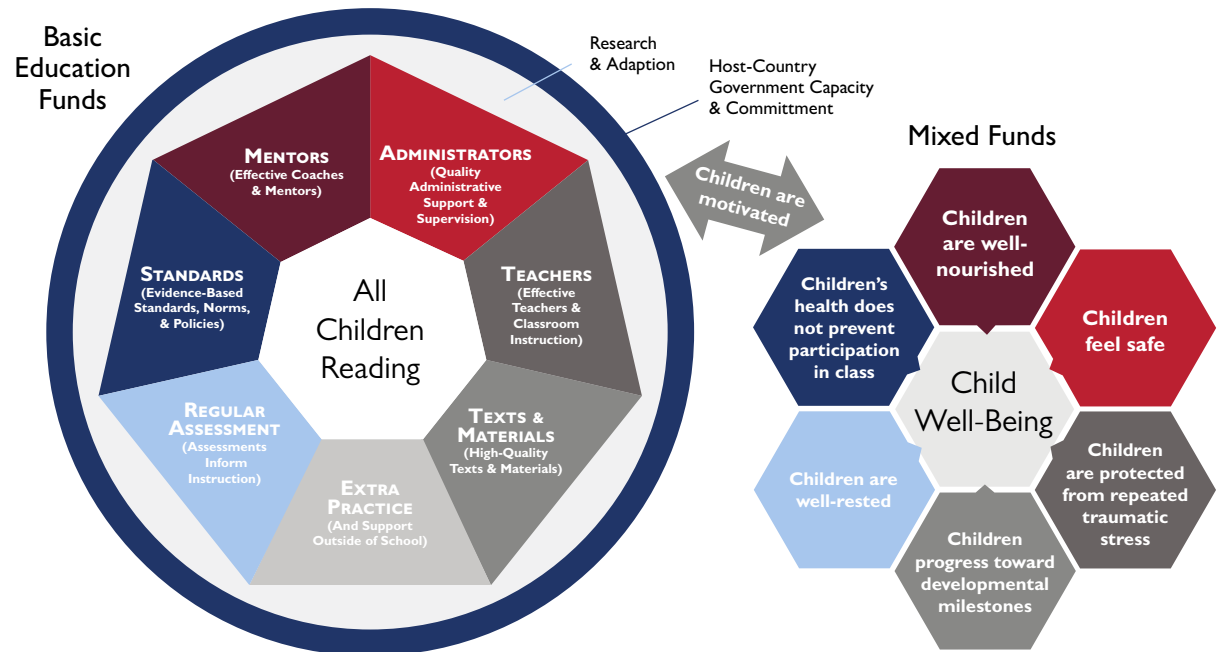
## RESEARCH BRIEF

Unless noted specifically, the activities described in this report are examples of practice rather than evidence of success. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption to schooling for the majority of learners around the world. COVID-19 closures often compounded school challenges arising from natural disasters and/or conflict. Disruptions further exacerbated disparities, with the marginalized and those already struggling with school being affected the most.<sup>ii,iii,iv,v</sup> According to the 2022 Learning Poverty Report, learning poverty indicators have risen to an estimated 76.7 percent in lower middle income countries (LMICs) and 91.7 percent in low income countries (LICs) due to the pandemic.<sup>vi</sup> Responding to COVID-19-related learning loss requires more systems-level and scaled responses. This report shares findings from a review of relevant literature and consultations to better inform ministries of education, USAID Missions, and partners of current initiatives and opportunities to further enhance remediation efforts. The review focuses on formal schooling, largely at the primary level, and programming at scale and on learners who are in school, generally on-age for their grade, and who need remedial support due to interruptions in schooling.

## REMEDIATION AND LEARNING RECOVERY PRACTICES

















The review applies the USAID Reading MATTERS framework to cover all relevant and critical subject areas.

Exhibit I: USAID Reading MATTERS All Children Reading Framework<sup>vii</sup>



Promising examples of remedial education efforts at scale align with elements of quality education and may inspire and inform recovery efforts that seek to “build back better.” Insights apply to learning recovery efforts in general, including for COVID-19 and future crises/disasters. While guidance may be bountiful, reported examples of implementation are limited—severely so for some topical areas as indicated by Exhibit 2.

Exhibit 2: Prominence of evidence by MATTERS component

	MENTORS	ADMINIS-TRATORS	TEACHERS	TEXTS & MATERIALS	EXTRA PRACTICE	REGULAR ASSESSMENT	STANDARDS	CHILD WELL-BEING
Evidence of Practice	 Limited	 Limited	 Strong	 Medium	 Limited	 Medium	 Medium	 Medium
Evidence of Impact	 Limited	 Limited	 Medium	 Limited	 Limited	 Limited	 Limited	 Medium

### KEY TOP-LEVEL FINDINGS:

**Evidence-based STANDARDS, norms, and policies:** There is limited documented evidence that coherent regulations, policies, curricula, and indicators (“standards”) have been adapted to meet educational needs specific to at-scale remediation after disruption. Existing evidence is relegated to curricular adaptation, such as condensing the curriculum, and policies, including formal curriculum policy mechanisms. Based on a 2022 UNICEF survey, 70 percent of the 48 LMICs reporting implementing remediation programs to mitigate learning loss condensed their curriculum either regionally or nationally to support learning recovery. Given the evidence of remedial education programming occurring around the world and the guidance offered to update curricula and design system-wide approaches to address learning loss, regulations, policies, and curricula will need to adjust. Such new “standards” may emerge to align with national and regional remediation efforts. Documentation of these “standards” will be helpful to understand what policy mechanisms effectively support learning recovery.

Although not a component of the MATTERS Framework, maximizing student return to the classroom is foundational to learning recovery after disruption. The review uncovered four promising community engagement strategies to improve access post-COVID-19 disruptions: back-to-school campaigns, data-driven actions to identify students in greatest need of support, targeting the most vulnerable populations for initial remedial programming, and expanding WASH infrastructure and programming.



**Effective TEACHERS and classroom instruction:** Effective professional development and support are critical for teachers, especially during recovery efforts. Teachers also need attention to their socio-emotional health. Hybrid (in-person and online) training and peer-support groups, particularly those using virtual resources such as WhatsApp and Facebook, are promising approaches and the latter seem to be widespread and generally appreciated. Examples indicate multiple models for providing remedial instruction, including shorter- and longer-term strategies. Targeted instruction—temporarily grouping students by ability rather than age or grade—is an effective evidence-based approach and has widespread application; it can take place within the regular academic calendar or in short bursts during summer or vacation times. Incorporating tutoring is also a promising strategy.

Governments in Cambodia, Ghana, Gujarat (India), and Jordan are also applying self-guided learning approaches that build upon innovative tools that arose during school closures. A promising example includes providing pre-loaded tablets to 3,000 students with special needs. Attention to effectiveness will shed further light on these tools and approaches.



Exhibit 3: Prominence examples of targeted instructions<sup>viii,ix,x</sup>















COUNTRY	TARGET	DURATION & FREQUENCY	NOTES
 <b>BRAZIL</b>	Schools with at least 70 percent vulnerable students	1.5 hours, 2-week intensives, 4 times per year	Pilot with a plan to expand
 <b>CAMBODIA</b>	Grades 2-6	3 days a month (Thursdays during school day), 4 hours per day, 12 hours per month	5 core competencies in Khmer and math
 <b>GHANA</b>	10,000 basic education (kindergarten, primary, lower secondary) schools	3 days a week, 2 hours a day	English and math; 70,000 teachers trained nationally
 <b>NEPAL</b>	Pilot; 2,500 primary school children (Grade 4 and 5) in 64 schools across three local governments	2–3 hours per day, 10 weeks	Community school-teachers and NGO facilitators as monitors; uses ASER as an assessment tool
 <b>ZAMBIA</b>	Grades 1–6 (expanded from 3–5); 2,000 schools as of January 2021	1 hour per day, in addition to school day; in some cases, occurs between two shifts	Began as pilot in 2016, expansion continues

Exhibit 4: Texts and materials developed to support remedial education efforts<sup>xi, xii, xiii, xiv</sup>

	 <b>LEBANON</b>	 <b>MALAWI</b>	 <b>TURKEY</b>	 <b>JORDAN</b>
<b>Text/ Material for Students</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Text/ Material for Teachers</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Medium of Material</b>	 		 	 


Texts/materials developed   
  Texts/materials not developed   
  Digital   
  Print

**Effective coaches and MENTORS:** While evidence of the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring strategies during ongoing COVID-19 recovery efforts may be premature, examples from previous crises such as the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone indicate positive outcomes. Coaches and mentors can play pivotal roles in providing teachers and administrators with critical on-the-job training and support as well as monitoring student progress.

**Quality ADMINISTRATIVE support and supervision:** School and district education officials play a critical role in supporting staff, ensuring effective communication, and mobilizing the local community. The literature on remedial education does not prominently feature administrators but the evidence that does exist suggests their contributions are critical. Targeted professional training and coaching, as well as provision of mental health care and support, can enhance administrators' effectiveness.

**High-quality TEXTS and materials:** Education systems around the world rely on texts to complement and extend in-school instruction time. The study uncovered limited examples of the types of texts developed to support remediation efforts. Examples included workbooks, self-guided student lessons, and lesson notes for teachers, produced in both print and digital formats. Multi-modal offerings (both print and digital format) increase access. The quality and method of use of the materials remains unknown.

Education systems in Lebanon, and Jordan connect teaching and learning by producing and distributing guidance materials to help teachers effectively support students' use of these texts for learning recovery.



**Regular ASSESSMENTS inform instruction:** The Assessment component of the study examined the collection and use of assessment data to support learning recovery. The importance of using a variety of assessments at the national, school, and classroom levels to inform remedial education strategies and daily teaching practices is well documented. While efforts have been made to collect data to identify learning gaps, there is limited evidence that the data are effectively used to inform learning recovery decisions and instructional course corrections. Some global and country-specific efforts to collect and use assessment data to support learning recovery show promise, including regional diagnostic assessments in Mexico and national formative assessments in Chile. As LMICs continue to address learning loss, their strategies should incorporate national diagnostic assessments as a tool to design learning recovery programs, and follow guidance to incorporate school and classroom formative assessments to support real-time adjustments in content focus and teaching strategies.

### **EXTRA PRACTICE and support outside of school:**

Caregiver involvement improves children's learning outcomes, and clear communication between schools and caregivers is essential to fostering engagement. Messaging strategies for caregivers that emphasize the benefit, cost, and quality of education that children are receiving are cost-effective and evidence-based.

**Child Well-being:** Attention to Child Well Being must take place at the same time as these other seven components in order to achieve strong education delivery systems. The review revealed increased attention to mental health and psychosocial support as well as social-emotional learning programming at scale. Cases highlight varying approaches by ministries of education to assess needs and offer or provide access to support. Integration of social-emotional learning within the curriculum is also critical for promoting student achievement and prosocial behaviors and attitudes.

## **AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

Multiple practice areas require additional research and evaluation to increase the evidence base for effective remediation and learning recovery practices. Gaps in the literature include remedial education efforts for students with disabilities, texts and materials specific to learning recovery, effective strategies to support the well-being of learning communities during remediation, effective professional development and support strategies for teachers and administrators, effective curricular adjustment approaches, and examples of updated education standards to address learning recovery.

## **REFERENCES**

- i Davidson, Marcia, Wedni Ralaingita, Elizabeth Marsden, Elizabeth Long. "Remediation Literature Review." Science of Teaching for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy. [https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SOT-Remediation-Literature-Review\\_link4NOV.pdf](https://scienceofteaching.site/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SOT-Remediation-Literature-Review_link4NOV.pdf) (November 2022)
- ii UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank. Where are we in Education Recovery. 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/media/117626/file/Where%20are%20we%20in%20Education%20Recovery>
- iii UNESCO & UNICEF. Viet Nam: Case Study: Situation Analysis on the Effects of and Responses to COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Asia. October 2021. <https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/9346/file/Sit%20An%20-%20Viet%20Nam%20case%20study.pdf>
- iv Angrist, Noam, Andreas de Barros, Radhika Bhula, Shiraz Chakera, Chris Cummiskey, Joseph DeStefano, John Floretta, Michelle Kaffenberger, Benjamin Piper, and Jonathan Stern. "Building back better to avert a learning catastrophe: Estimating learning loss from COVID-19 school shutdowns in Africa and facilitating short-term and long-term learning recovery." International Journal of Educational Development 84 (2021): 102397. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102397>
- v UNESCO and McKinsey and Company. COVID-19 response mediation: Helping Students Catch Up on Lost Learning, with a Focus on Closing Equity Gaps. July 2020. [https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/about%20us/covid%20response%20center/overview/covid-19%20education%20response%20toolkit/202010\\_unesco-mckinsey%20response%20toolkit\\_remediation\\_vf.pdf](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/about%20us/covid%20response%20center/overview/covid-19%20education%20response%20toolkit/202010_unesco-mckinsey%20response%20toolkit_remediation_vf.pdf)
- vi Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update. June 23, 2022. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf>
- vii USAID. USAID Reading MATTERS conceptual framework. November 2019. [https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Reading%20MATTERS%20Conceptual%20Framework\\_Nov19.pdf](https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/Reading%20MATTERS%20Conceptual%20Framework_Nov19.pdf), p. 1
- viii Adapted from The World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, FCDO, UNICEF, USAID, and UNESCO. Guide for Learning Recovery and Acceleration: Using the RAPID Framework to Address COVID-19 Learning Losses and Build Forward Better. June 2022. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/related/Guide-for-Learning-Recovery-and-Acceleration-06-23.pdf>
- ix Ashleigh Morrell, in discussion with author, September 19, 2022
- x Pershad, Devyani. Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL): The Story of Catch Up in Zambia. [https://riseprogramme.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Devyani\\_Pershad.pdf](https://riseprogramme.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Devyani_Pershad.pdf) (September 2021)
- xi Lebanon: World Learning Inc, "Quality Instruction towards Access and Basic Education Improvement 2. Twelfth Quarterly Report. January–March 2022," 2022.
- xii Malawi: Chiwaula, Lizzie W., Esme Chipokadzamira, and Elizabeth Selemeni Meke. "The Impact of COVID-19 on Primary Education in Malawi: Exploring Policy Responses and Practices." Journal of international cooperation in education 24, no. 2 (2021): 61–76.
- xiii Turkey: Mahmut, Ö. Z. E. R., Eren, S. U. N. A., ŞENSOY, S., CENGİZ, M., GENÇOĞLU, C., NUMANOĞLU, K. V., & GÜL, M. N. (2021). The Turkish National Remedial Program (TNRP) to Combat the Negative Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 29(2), 442–451. doi: 10.24106/kefdergi.901367
- xiv Jordan: UNICEF Jordan. Learning Bridges Impact Study. Amman Jordan: UNICEF, January 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/jordan/reports/learning-bridges-impact-study>