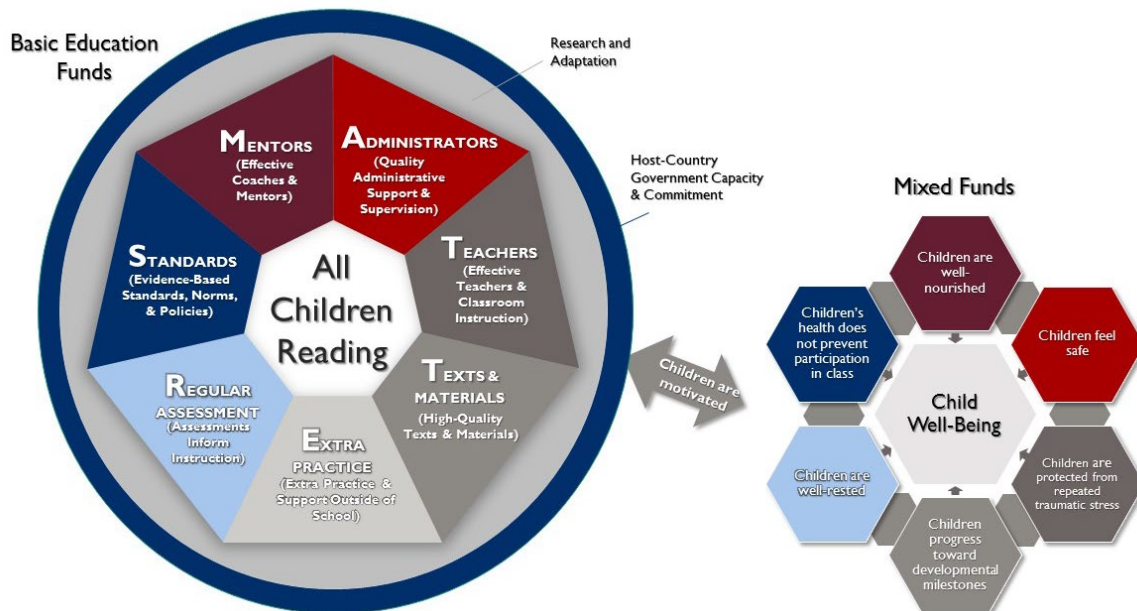


# USAID READING MATTERS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE READING MATTERS FRAMEWORK

USAID’s Reading MATTERS (**M**entors, **A**dministrators, **T**eachers, **T**exts, **E**xtra Practice, **R**egular Assessment, **S**tandards) Conceptual Framework highlights seven components that evidence shows are critical to fostering reading acquisition for all. The framework situates these components within a larger system that, in ideal circumstances, is driven by host-country capacity and commitment, calibrated by research and adaptation, and supported by a constellation of factors that determine a child’s well-being, such that strong reading outcomes are consistently achieved. Each component of the framework encompasses multiple reading-specific sub-factors, all of which must be considered based on context and must be coordinated in a coherent fashion for students to learn to read.<sup>1</sup>

FIGURE I. All Children Reading Framework



<sup>1</sup> The seven components themselves are not reading-specific, but they serve as a holistic and context-sensitive lens through which to determine what will be the most cost-effective and efficient investments in reading and literacy in any given circumstance or environment.

This framework incorporates, and expands upon, the elements of the five Ts framework (Time, Texts, Tongue, Teaching, and Testing) that USAID used as an organizing principle for agency investments in early grade reading from 2011 to 2018. The dynamic relationship between the seven education-specific components on the left in Figure 1 and the six facets of child well-being on the right is at the heart of increasing students' motivation to learn to read. The framework sets out, for each component and sub-factor, an evidence-based description of the ideal conditions that should prevail under that component or sub-factor in order to foster the most widespread progress toward literacy for those beginning to learn to read.

USAID's Reading MATTERS Framework can be used by national, regional, or local governments, or by donor agencies and their implementing partners, to inform the planning, execution, and evaluation of reading and literacy instructional programs for primary grade students and youth. Using the framework as a starting point, development practitioners and educators can identify the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in reading instruction in any education system. They can conduct targeted analysis and develop context-appropriate literacy interventions that advance USAID's education priorities in all types of learning environments. When possible, all elements in the Reading MATTERS framework (those that are reading-specific from the left of the diagram and those related to child well-being from the right of the diagram) should be explored before designing reading interventions, using a tool like the Literacy Landscape Analysis. However, when this is not feasible, governments, donors, and partners can simply use the framework as a way of identifying potential gaps in analysis and/or reading programming, especially in cases when reading interventions do not have the desired impact.

USAID's Reading MATTERS Framework is adaptable to the needs and available resources of an education program. Analysis and interventions guided by the framework can target specific components and factors in an education system. Or, if resources are available, they can address all of the components, strengthening the connections between sub-factors and accelerating the pace at which all children receive the high-quality reading instruction they deserve.

## **2. ALL CHILDREN READING: COMPONENTS AND SUB-FACTORS**

This section provides, for each of the components on the left of the framework, an overview of major sub-factors that must be in harmony with one another to ensure that children learn to read. The interplay between these components and all of their sub-factors is critical to ensuring that children achieve the best possible reading outcomes. The components are evidence-based **and** designed to build on and reinforce each other to inform a seamless system for delivery of high-quality reading instruction at scale. In USAID-funded activities seeking to improve learning outcomes, basic education resources will often need to support improvement **in at least one** of the seven components. However, which components are in need of intervention or support will depend entirely on country contextual analysis.

### **All Children Reading**

The system provides, in a safe environment, high-quality, consistent reading instruction for all, inclusive of, but not limited to, girls and boys, those living in poverty, rural and urban learners, children who are vulnerable or experiencing marginalization, those of all genders and sexual orientations, children with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and ethnic/linguistic minorities. For the system to support all learners, all components of the framework must incorporate principles of universal design for learning, and research must focus on differences in outcomes between groups.

## Host Country Government Commitment and Capacity

- Host-country governments (or those in charge of ensuring that children learn to read in a given context) demonstrate **commitment** to high-quality reading instruction on two levels: a) at a general system level (for example, by allocating at least 18 percent of their budget or 4 percent of their GDP to education), and b) at a subject-specific level, (for example, by passing an education law that supports multilingualism and stipulates that the youngest students must receive 3-6 years of reading instruction in a language they use and understand before “transitioning” to a less familiar language).
- Ministries of Education, Planning, and Finance increase their **capacity** to teach reading by cultivating: a) a human resource base qualified to teach reading, b) a materials production cycle that guarantees appropriate reading material for every learner, c) budgeting procedures that stabilize the supply of teachers, materials, and testing procedures needed to support reading development, and d) research and evaluation expertise to examine and report on reading instruction and outcomes.

## Research and Adaptation

- Key stakeholders and institutions continually collect and use data on reading outcomes, classroom instruction in reading, teacher knowledge/behavior, school environments and materials, and access to reading materials for extra practice outside of school, including identifying differences in subpopulations. By analyzing this data, they learn what strengths and gaps exist in the Reading MATTERS system in their context, so that they can adapt programming to assist all children to learn to read.

## Standards (Evidence-Based Standards, Norms, Policies)

- National book policy includes a coherent set of regulations and indicators to govern the development, production, printing, distribution, dissemination, and use of reading materials.
- Standards for government approval and procurement of reading material include criteria to ensure that books are affordable, appropriate, accessible, and widely available (i.e. open source).
- Government adopts national reading curriculum that allocates at least 90 minutes a day to reading instruction, sequences basic skills according to the evidence base, provides for appropriate instructional and practice time, and follows best practice for the introduction of foreign languages into the reading classroom.
- Policy establishes appropriate reading benchmarks/standards and targets as well as an assessment framework for screening the needs of all learners by sub-population and monitoring their progress.
- Policy provides for appropriate incentives, certification, assignment, oversight, support, and ongoing professional development both for teacher performance and attendance in general and in the specifics of reading instruction for school leaders and teachers.

## **Texts (High-Quality Texts and Materials)**

- Every student is issued his/her/their own essential reading materials (i.e. decodable readers, leveled readers, supplementary reading material) designed specifically for reading instruction in languages students use and understand outside of school.
- All books that students use meet Global Book Alliance standards for being available, accessible, appropriate, and affordable, and are printed and bound using paper and processes of high enough quality to render them durable.
- Every student has access to fiction and non-fiction story books, all of which are language- and level-appropriate.
- Learners with disabilities have texts available that are born accessible (i.e. designed in its first version for use by those with disabilities, for example by including braille or signed translation when a title is published) so they can use them.
- Every teacher has a structured teacher's guide that aligns with the curriculum and textbooks and makes his/her/their job of teaching reading and literacy easier.

## **Teachers (Effective Teachers and Classroom Instruction)**

- Pre- and in-service training in the specifics of reading and literacy instruction are aligned with one another, based on teachers' needs/skill-set, and provide classroom-based opportunities to practice new reading instructional skills.
- Teachers implement evidence-based, direct, and explicit reading instruction in languages students understand and maximize time on task in reading instruction so that students spend the majority of their class time in their own reading practice (i.e. as contrasted with listening to the teacher read).
- Teachers use universal design principles to the best of their ability in reading instruction, enabling disabled learners to gain reading and literacy skills.

## **Mentors and Coaches (Effective Coaches and Mentors)**

- Literacy coaches are trained education professionals, with significant knowledge of reading and literacy instruction, that effectively support and improve teachers' reading instructional skills.
- Literacy coaching occurs at ongoing, regular intervals with greater intensity at the beginning of a program (or teacher's career) and less intensity as teachers gain mastery of reading instructional skills.

## **Administrators (Quality Administrative Support and Supervision)**

- School leader and district/regional-level education officer training and practice ensure oversight and monitoring of teacher and student attendance and instructional quality in schools, particularly with regards to reading instruction.
- School administrators take steps to ensure that their schools are safe for all teachers and learners, (for example, instituting reporting structures and protocols for reporting and responding to

incidents of violence/abuse and/or ensuring that appropriate disaster risk reduction measures are in place).

### **Regular Assessments (Assessments Inform Instruction)**

- All reading assessments are leveled and aligned with curriculum and benchmarks.
- At the classroom level, teachers assess all learners' reading ability both formatively (to determine learning needs and adapt instruction) and summatively (to measure progress toward end-of-term or end-of year benchmarks).
- At district, regional, or national levels, representative assessments of reading ability for grades 2, 4, and 6 are conducted approximately every two years and analyzed in conjunction with regular monitoring data on quality of instruction, access of learners and teachers to materials, and teacher knowledge, among other data sources. Anonymized aggregate data is stored and protected in the local Education Management Information System, widely disseminated, and used to inform reading instruction policy and practice.

### **Extra Practice (Extra Practice and Support Outside of School)**

- Family and community members support expressive language development and the promotion of daily reading skills practice as they are able, including by listening to learners reading from an early age and by reading to them if they have the skills to do so. All family members can play some positive role in supporting literacy development, and research suggests that most families include at least one member (a sibling, an aunt, an uncle, a grandparent, a cousin, etc.) who has some basic reading skill.
- Appropriate, accessible, and affordable reading materials are available for children and their families for reading practice outside of school.
- Family and community members receive support in using these materials, as necessary depending on their own literacy levels.

## **3. CHILD WELL-BEING: COMPONENTS AND SUB-FACTORS**

This section provides, for each of the child well-being components on the right of the framework, an overview of key sub-factors that, when present, accelerate and enhance reading acquisition. The best reading outcomes will occur when children's well-being, as measured according to the six well-being sub-factors, is nurtured and assured.

However, host country governments, donors, and other education stakeholders such as NGOs and private actors should not wait to initiate improvements in reading delivery systems until students' well-being is guaranteed. Rather, when possible, they should promote cross-sectoral efforts (and funding) to address well-being concerns **at the same time** as they endeavor to improve and harmonize the functioning of the seven components of strong reading delivery systems. They should also use these components and sub-factors to better understand why systems that include effective implementation of the seven elements on the left may not yield consistently strong reading outcomes. Additionally, this framework may support efforts to identify strategic partnerships within USAID activities and between the work of USAID, other donors, and host-country governments that help to advance learning.

## Child Well-Being

- Children are healthy, well-nourished, safe, and protected from repeated traumatic stress in the school, community, and home environments. They are progressing toward cognitive and communications developmental milestones, and they arrive at school well-nourished and well-rested.

## Children's Health Does Not Prevent Participation in Class

- All students have the a) vaccinations, b) medications, and c) primary care they need to stay well, recover quickly from illness, and attend reading class regularly in order to optimize their reading outcomes.
- Children of lower socio-economic status and/or those who experience frequent illness receive targeted outreach and support to ensure they are healthy enough to attend reading class with their peers.

## Children Are Well-Nourished

- Learners are food and nutrition secure, meaning food and nutrients are available through home, school, or elsewhere; they are able to access and use them; and their sources are stable, as required under the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition.
- Learners are well-nourished during early childhood and throughout their years of schooling, enabling them to develop cognitively and physically to be prepared to learn.

## Children Feel Safe

- Learners feel and are safe getting to and from school.
- Children are free from physical, sexual, and psychological violence/abuse, including bullying, while at school, thereby increasing their likelihood of being able to learn.

## Children Are Protected from Repeated Traumatic Stress

- Children are free from repeated traumatic physical, emotional, and environmental stress and/or are receiving support to manage and cope with stress.
- Children develop a healthy stress response system, allowing them to progress in their education despite adversity.

## Children Progress Toward Developmental Milestones

- Children's motor, communication, and cognitive skills development proceeds as expected; progress can be charted on an internationally recognized scale for child growth and development and provides the needed linguistic and metacognitive basis for learning to read.
- Children with learning disabilities experiencing language-based problems with reading, spelling, and writing receive evidence-based, specific, and targeted in- and out-of-school instruction and support in order to learn to read.

## Children Are Well-Rested

- Children benefit from both a quality and quantity of sleep that enables them to both learn and remember, functions that are critical for reading acquisition.
- Learners get at least nine hours of quality sleep each night before participating in reading class.

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