



STATE OF THE ART (SOTA) CONFERENCE ON ARABIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES



Participant Guide

October 28-30, 2019 | Rabat, Morocco



USAID
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SPEAKERS & PRESENTERS

ANJULI SHIVSHANKER

Anjali Shivshanker is the Senior Research Advisor for the Education in Conflict and Crisis team at USAID. Prior to joining USAID, she supported or designed rigorous impact evaluations in fragile contexts across a wide variety of sectors, including education and social and emotional learning, and designed and conducted real-time evaluations of emergency responses to natural disasters and conflicts. She has also served in senior management roles of health and violence prevention programming for children and women. In the Middle East, she has worked in Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon.

BENJAMIN PIPER

Benjamin Piper is the Senior Director of Africa Education for RTI International, based in Nairobi, Kenya. He supports large-scale education projects across sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. He has led multi-country studies on the impact of scripted lesson plans on teacher instruction and the effectiveness of large-scale teacher professional development modalities, and is currently leading a multi-country study examining best practices in instructional coaching. Dr. Piper was previously the Chief of Party of the Kenyan national literacy program, Tusom; a set of randomized control trials in Kenya called PRIMR; and the National Tablets Programme. He is currently leading a multi-country study of highly effective large-scale education programs in collaboration with the Center for Global Development with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. He holds a Doctor of Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Master of Education degrees from Harvard and Furman University.

CAROL DA SILVA

Dr. Carol DeShano da Silva is a Senior Advisor for Basic Education at Save the Children, providing thought leadership and technical guidance to basic education programming in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning in development and humanitarian environments. She co-authored Save the Children's award-winning literacy approach, Literacy Boost. She has worked on education projects for USAID, the World Bank, and FHI 360, among other international organizations. She has taught courses on international education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the College of the Holy Cross, and American University, where she co-developed a new master's degree program in bilingual education. Dr. da Silva has provided technical assistance to projects or conducted research in Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru, the Philippines, Rwanda and Uganda. She speaks Portuguese and Spanish and has studied Italian and French. She holds a Master of Education and a Doctor of Education from Harvard University.

CHRISTINE CAPACCI-CARNEAL

Christine Capacci-Carneal is an Education Development Officer in USAID's Middle East Bureau. She has been with USAID since 2004. Prior to USAID, Chris worked for many years with non-governmental organizations such as Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children in their Sahel Field Office. Chris's career in international development education began as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Central African Republic and at the Africa-America Institute in the early 1990s. She has a Ph.D. in International Development Education from Florida State University and a master's in international development from American University.



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DAVID GREENE

David Greene is a career member of the U.S. Senior Foreign Service and assumed responsibilities as Charge d’Affaires at the U.S. Mission to Morocco in August 2019. He was previously Director of the Office of Egyptian Affairs. In his 23 years with the United States State Department, he has served overseas as Deputy Political Counselor in Islamabad, Pakistan; Political Counselor in Rabat, Morocco; as well as tours in Amman, Jordan; Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; and Cairo, Egypt. His assignments in Washington, DC include Director of the Office of Multilateral Affairs in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Deputy Director of the Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, and liaison for Middle East issues in the State Department’s Bureau of Legislative Affairs. Mr. Greene holds a bachelor’s in government from Harvard University, a master’s in international law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and a master’s in national security strategy from the National War College, where he was a distinguished graduate.

DEEPA SRIKANTIAH

Deepa Srikantiah, Ph.D., is a Senior Education and Research Specialist at World Learning, where she provides support for mathematics and literacy in basic education programs in the Global Development division. Dr. Srikantiah has over 15 years of experience working on mathematics, science, and literacy education programs in the United States, East Africa, and South and East Asia. With this experience, she supports the design and development of new programs and provides technical support for World Learning’s STEM programming and USAID-funded Quality Instruction Toward Access and Basic Education Improvement (QITABI) project in Lebanon. Dr. Srikantiah was a Senior Researcher for the USAID-funded Reading within Reach Project/Global Reading Network, where she contributed to building the research and evidence base in early grade reading and mathematics. In the 2015-2016 academic year, she was a Fulbright-Nehru U.S. Scholar in India, where she conducted research to improve mathematics and science education for poor, marginalized, and vulnerable youth and primary school students. Dr. Srikantiah was also an Education Specialist at the Global Partnership for Education Secretariat, a partnership hosted by the World Bank, where she initiated and headed the work on early grade mathematics education. Dr. Srikantiah started her career teaching chemistry and working on after-school STEM programs for students from poor, marginalized, and vulnerable backgrounds in the U.S. She holds a master’s and doctorate in international education policy from the University of Maryland, College Park.

EVA KOZMA

Eva Kozma is a literacy expert and an award-winning author of Arabic children’s books currently serving as a Reading Expert on the Lebanon QITABI project. She has a Ph.D. in education from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, Lebanon. Her areas of research include the Balanced Literacy Approach in the Arabic classroom and reading attitudes of elementary school children toward Arabic as a mother tongue. Dr. Kozma also holds a master’s in educational psychology from the American University of Beirut, with a focus on school guidance and counseling, and special education. Over the past 15 years, her research has focused on literacy best practices in pre-schools and elementary schools. She has built the capacities of hundreds of teachers and several non-governmental organizations in the MENA region. She has published several books for children and co-authored educational books for teachers. In 2014, Dr. Kozma launched Moubadara for Children and Youth Arabic Literature with a group of prominent authors to promote reading in Arabic as a mother tongue. She is an affiliate member of the American Psychological Association and the vice president of the Lebanese non-governmental organization Kibarouna, which focuses on elderly care and protection.

FATHI EL-ASHRY

Fathi El-Ashry, Ph.D., is a Senior Literacy Specialist with Creative Associates International, with specialization in early grade reading instruction and has wide experience in the MENA region. He is currently supporting the Morocco Ministry of Education's Arabic language reform initiative through the USAID-funded National Reading Program (NPR). He leads NPR's technical assistance to the Ministry of Education for reading, writing, and language skills development in Grades 1-6 across Morocco. He provided technical support to the Early Grade Reading Programs in Egypt, Yemen, and Jordan, as well as reading programs in Nigeria and Pakistan. Dr. El-Ashry also served as a lecturer of curriculum and instruction at Kafrelsheikh University in Egypt, focusing on Arabic language instruction and learning difficulties, and as a lecturer in Arabic Language at United Arab Emirates University. Dr. El-Ashry holds a Ph.D. in special education from the University of Florida.

FATIMA OUAHMI

Ms. Ouahmi is the Director of Communications for the Morocco Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, & Scientific Research. She has expertise in Arabic and English literacy, Arabic as a Second Language, teacher supervision and coaching, standard-based curriculum, differentiated instruction, formative assessment, understanding by backward design, educational resources, project-based learning, the Reggio Emilia approach, special education, character education, and anger management in schools.

FOUAD CHAFIQI

Mr. Chafiqi has served as the Director of Curricula for the Morocco Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research since June 2010. Before that time, he was a Professor of Higher Education in Educational Science, a Lecturer in Education Sciences at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Marrakech, and a Professor of Secondary Education Physics. Mr. Chafiqi has served on numerous committees and educational working groups, including the Arab Reading Challenge committee, the International Bureau of Education through UNESCO, Monitoring Committee of the Consortium for International Researchers and Specialists in Education and Evaluation, World Association of Educational Sciences, and the Didactic Group of Marrakech Sciences of the Cadi Ayyad University. He was a Visiting Professor and the UNESCO Chair in Education Sciences at Cheikh Anta Diop University and Dakar Ecole Normale Supérieure. He is also a member of the reading committee for several scientific journals, including Carrefours de l'éducation (France), International Review of Education for Higher Education, (Canada), The Palimpsest (Morocco), and the Canadian Journal of Education. He holds a Ph.D. in education sciences from Victor Segalen Bordeaux University in France and a postgraduate doctor in science education from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Morocco.

HAFS MAHMOUD ABU MALLOUH

Mr. Hafs is the Director of Professional Development Policies within the Educational Supervision and Training Department at the Jordan Ministry of Education. In 2017 and 2018, Mr. Hafs was the Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Control within the Ministry. Previously, he was the Head of School Development Department and Directorate of Educational Supervision and Training (2013-2016), an Education Supervisor (2006-2013) and a teacher for over ten years. He also advises several Arab countries in the design of teacher licensing programs/tests. Mr. Hafs has taken a leading role in the design and implementation of the USAID/UKAID Reading and Math Program (RAMP) initiative, which aims to improve the reading and mathematics skills of early grades students in Jordan, particularly on issues related to Teacher Training programs, Teacher Supervision and Coaching and Students Evaluation. Mr. Hafs also currently leads 1) the design of a new Career Path for teachers in Jordan, 2) the development of Teachers National Standards and Competencies and 3) the national curriculum for Continuous Professional Development. In the Middle East Region, Mr. Hafs participated in the development and implementation of several programs, including the Educational Measurement and Evaluation program, the Educational Leadership program, Stimulating Learning Environments, Psychosocial Support, Educational Policies, Educated School, School of the Future, and Teaching Values.

HANADA TAHA THOMURE

Professor Hanada Taha Thomure is the Endowed Professor of Arabic Language and Director of the Arabic Language Center for Research and Development at Zayed University in the United Arab Emirates. Previously, she served as Acting Dean of Bahrain Teachers College, University of Bahrain where she joined as Associate Dean in 2010. She has nearly 30 years of experience in teacher pre-service preparation and in-service training, Arabic Language curriculum design, national literacy strategy design, and literacy coaching. She designed the first system for leveling Arabic texts, currently used by regional and international publishers to level children's books. More than 7,000 books have been leveled free of charge with a grant from Arab Thought Foundation. She also designed and published the first Arabic Language Arts standards, currently used by thousands of students across the region. Professor Taha Thomure also helped secure funding and technical support to design the first early reading standardized test in the Arab world (Mubakkir), which has been used by more than 5,000 students within a year of its release. She holds a Ph.D. in education from the University of New Orleans, a master's in educational psychology and counseling, and a bachelor's in social and behavioral sciences with a minor in Arabic from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon.

HELEN BOYLE

Dr. Helen N. Boyle is Vice President and Director of Program Strategy at Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC). She re-joined EDC in 2019 after six years as an Associate Professor at Florida State University (FSU). She originally joined EDC in 1991 following her Peace Corps service in Morocco and served in numerous roles, including Project Director and Chief of Party, in countries including Nigeria and Lebanon. She directed EDC's Middle East and North Africa Center, and subsequently led its Basic Education and Literacy Team. At FSU, Helen designed and taught graduate-level courses in Education Leadership and Policy, including Education in Muslim Societies, Design and Management of International Development Education Projects, International Development Education and served as the Principal Investigator on several USAID- and UNICEF-funded projects awarded to the Learning Systems Institute. Dr. Boyle has over 20 years of experience as a senior technical advisor on international education and development projects focused on teacher training, early grade reading and literacy, program monitoring and evaluation, and Islamic education. She has provided technical assistance to and/or managed education projects in Yemen, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Haiti, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the West Bank. Dr. Boyle has a bachelor's degree from Boston College, a Master of Education from Harvard University, and a Ph.D. in comparative and social analysis in education from the University of Pittsburgh, with a focus on international development education and a minor in anthropology.

HILDA EL KHOURY

Ms. Hilda El Khoury is currently serving as Director of Counseling and Guidance (DOPS) at the Lebanon Ministry of Education and Higher Education, where she oversees pedagogical counselors and is responsible for the guidance and counseling of teachers and sometimes students in all Lebanese public schools. DOPS takes part in educational strategy and policymaking at the MEHE. Hilda was also the Head of the Official Exams Department for three years. During this period, and along with her team, she was able to computerize all the steps of the official exams and reduced the chances of error - whether in the correction process or the announcement of results - to null. Another achievement was the adaptation of the official exams depending on the need of students with disabilities, learning difficulties and special needs as well as the exemption from the official exams in severe cases. That way, all the students were given the chance to sit for the official exams. Hilda is a trained mathematics teacher and holds master's degrees in mathematics, informatics, and education. She is currently finalizing her Ph.D. in the Science of Education – Mathematics Education. Prior to joining the Ministry, she held a range of positions: advisor to the Lebanese official examinations mathematics committee; teacher trainer; mathematics coordinator in a variety of schools, education consultant; and teacher of mathematics. Hilda has applied the insights she gained from working in schools and with teachers to ensure the reforms she is currently shepherding—to support teachers and make the exams system in Lebanon more rigorous and transparent—are workable throughout the system.

IMAN ELHADDOUZI

Iman Elhaddouzi is a psychopedagogue and holds bachelor's degrees in languages didactics and primary education from the Granada University in Spain. She is currently preparing a Ph.D. in teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and performance. Since 2011, Iman has been a practitioner in the Moroccan education sector, contributing to literacy and education programming, the development of instructional resources and materials, supporting teacher training, and mobilizing families and communities. She has served as an Education and Reading Specialist within Creative Associate's Reading for Success program for the past four years, contributing to the development of early grade reading material, leading the design of reading enrichment methods and techniques, and supporting the implementation of reading enrichment programs to counter summer learning loss.

JOSHUA JOSA

Joshua Josa leads the Disability Portfolio at USAID's Office of Education. In his current role, he focuses on ensuring programming is truly "Education for All" by promoting the inclusion of children and persons with disabilities throughout the education system. Mr. Josa has worked for USAID since 2014 and is also a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, serving in Kenya from 2010-2012.

JUMA AL SAUD

Mr. Juma Al Saud is the Director of Supervision and Education Training Department at the Jordan Ministry of Education (MoE). Previously, he has been the head of the MoE School and Directorate Development Program (2016-2017), the Head of the Supervision Department in Na'our Field Directorate, an Education Supervisor for Sciences and Physics, and a teacher for fifteen years before that. Mr. Juma plays a key role in the USAID/UKAID Early Grade Reading and Mathematics (RAMP) initiative. He leads the Supervision and Coaching program of the initiative and implements a new model where teacher and student performance data inform the development of Field Directorates Teacher Coaching plans and Field Directorates and School Improvement Plans. Mr. Juma has a master's in education administration and a bachelor's in physics from the University of Jordan and a diploma in school administration.

LUIS CROUCH

Luis Crouch is a Senior Economist at RTI's International Development Group. He is on the board of Room to Read and the Central Square Foundation. He specializes in education policy, decentralized finance, political economy of reform, education statistics, planning, and projections. He has experience in all key areas of policy analysis, from the generation of primary data, to statistical and econometric analysis, to Cabinet-level policy dialogue. He has previously worked at the World Bank and at the Global Partnership for Education. In the last few years, he has become interested in early grade reading and targeted early childhood development, as the key entry-points to improve education systems' response to the quality imperative. He has authored many reports, technical papers, including papers in refereed journals, and contributed to various technical books.

MAGDY RIZK

Mr. Rizk has worked in the education and development fields since 1987, with solid understanding of the Egyptian education system through his experience as an education program implementer and as a schoolteacher, deputy, and headmaster for almost ten years. Throughout these years of experience, he built strong technical expertise in the areas of adult and basic education, life skills, early childhood programs, community schools. Mr. Rizk worked for International non-governmental organizations like CARE, KFW Development Bank, and Save the Children to implement the education components of USAID-funded programs such as New School Program in the capacity of technical advisor, professional development trainer, and team leader. He designed and delivered professional development training programs targeting Ministry of Education teachers and supervisors in various governorates of Egypt. In addition, he developed technical tools and guides to assist the field staff teams to implement the program activities and participated in the implementation of field assessments and studies.



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MELISSA CHIAPPETTA

Melissa Chiappetta is a monitoring and evaluation expert with 13 years of experience conducting evaluations and 17 years of experience managing projects in approximately 25 countries. Ms. Chiappetta currently serves as a Senior Research and Learning Advisor for USAID's Reading and Literacy Team. In this role, Ms. Chiappetta has led the Agency's efforts to develop a methodology for linking early grade reading and math results to USAID's Foreign Assistance Indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals. She also created a research design and secured more than \$3 million in funds for a multi-country study on inclusive education, led the development of a learning agenda for USAID's Reading Team, led the development and piloting of an expressive language module for the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), and led the development of a new system diagnostic tool for the literacy. Prior to joining USAID, Ms. Chiappetta led Abt Associates' Center for International Evaluation. In this role, she grew Abt's international research and evaluation portfolio by more than 200 percent, including by leading a bid to win Abt's first international education evaluation contract (worth more than \$14 million). Ms. Chiappetta has served as a technical team member or manager for more than 40 performance and impact evaluations in her career. In 2015, she served as lead trainer for three regional education monitoring and evaluation workshops for USAID education officers. Ms. Chiappetta was also one of the authors of the USAID EGRA Toolkit 2.0. She has a master's degree from Georgetown University.

MICHAEL CHILDRESS

Michael Childress is a Technical Officer in FHI 360's Education in Emergencies (EiE) practice area, providing technical assistance to a USAID-funded project in Northeast Nigeria, as well as thought leadership, project support, and business development in EiE contexts. From 2017 to 2019, Michael worked with the International Rescue Committee in crisis-affected areas of Iraq, where he oversaw implementation of a \$6 million/year education portfolio, which included a large-scale teacher professional development program that reached 3,000 primary school teachers. Prior to that, Michael was the Director of Programs at The School Fund, a Research Fellow at Save the Children, a Fulbright Scholar, and an analyst at Survey Monkey. Michael is particularly interested in teacher professional development, social-emotional learning, non-formal and accelerated learning, and cash transfer programs. He holds a master's in international education policy from Harvard. Outside of work, Michael enjoys cycling, backpacking, and rock climbing.

MOHAMMED SASSI

Mohammed Sassi is the Director of Evaluation for the Morocco National Center for Evaluation and Examinations. Mr. Sassi has a master's degree in measurement and evaluation from Laval University in Quebec, Canada. His thesis was titled: "The Evaluation of Complex Productions: Study of Reliability of Descriptive Scales." Mr. Sassi also holds a diploma from the Faculty of Education Sciences from Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco and a bachelor's in philosophy. He has held numerous roles in Morocco educational institutions, including the Director General in Charge of Pedagogic Action and Director of the Center of National Examinations. He has served as the Morocco National Coordinator of TIMSS and PIRLS since 2003 and has represented Morocco on the PISA Governing Board. Mr. Sassi also has authored and co-authored several evaluation reports and articles at the national and international level.

NADA OWEIJANE

Dr. Nada Oweijane is the Acting President of the Center for Educational Research and Development since 2015. She is the holder of a bi-institutional Ph.D. in Social Sciences from Sorbonne-Paris University and the Lebanese University Institute of Social Sciences. Dr. Oweijane also undertakes responsibilities as a University Professor, teaching multiple courses at the Faculty of Education at the Lebanese University. Dr. Oweijane has experience conducting academic and applied research and studies, teaching at the university-level, training school principals and teachers, publishing university textbooks, overseeing the development of Lebanon's national curriculum, and publishing of the national textbooks for Lebanese schools.



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NAWAL SHALABY

Professor Nawal Shalaby is the Director of the Egyptian Center for Curriculum and Instructional Materials Development and the head of the Curriculum Development Research division at the Egyptian National Center for Educational Research and Development. She has a Ph.D. in curriculum development and has written many publications pertaining to the fields of education and curriculum development. She also has more than 30 years of experience in planning, developing, and implementing educational programs, curricula, and initiatives.

NELLY EL ZAYAT

For the past 20 years, Ms. El Zayat has been working in international education, specifically in student advising, scholarship management, admissions, curriculum design, e-learning, learner-centered teaching, and on bridging the gap between education and the job market. She has held positions in several educational organizations including AMIDEAST, the Institute of International Education, Georgetown University, and The American University in Cairo. She has been part of the core team working on Education 2.0, Egypt's new education system, since 2017. Ms. El Zayat is the Co-Founder and Director of Newton Education Services and is the Advisor to the Minister of Education on Early Childhood Education and Education Policy. She holds a master's degree in International Education Policy from Harvard University, a master's of Middle East Studies, and a bachelor's degree in economics, both from The American University in Cairo.

RAFFOUL SAADEH

Originally from Palestine, Mr. Saadeh has eight years of experience working in the field of international education as a practitioner and advisor. He has supported education programs in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Palestine, and the United States. Currently, he is the Education Technical Advisor for the Middle East with the International Rescue Committee. He brings with him a strong track record in building relationships with ministries of education and navigating difficult political contexts, capacity building of local partners, and motivating national teams to take on innovative ideas; as well as a breadth of knowledge in education in emergencies and supporting children's well-being. He also has experience as an assistant professor, student advisor, and previously mathematics high school teachers in Suitland, Maryland. He has a master's in public policy, and a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University.

REBECA MARTINEZ

Rebeca Martinez is the Reading and Instructional Program Advisor for the USAID Reading and Literacy Team. During her time at USAID, she has provided technical support to national literacy programs in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training, and activity design. Prior to joining USAID, she spent five years in the Dominican Republic working on literacy intervention programs and designing pre-service teacher training. Her experience in the field of education includes serving as an Instructional Supervisor for after-school programs in New York City, and teaching third grade in Denver Public Schools. She got her start in the field of international development as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine. Ms. Martinez has a master's in international educational development from Teachers College, Columbia University and a bachelor's in English from DePauw University.

REBECCA RHODES

Rebecca Rhodes serves as USAID's team lead for reading & literacy, guiding the development and implementation of USAID's 40+ programs with a literacy focus. With an undergraduate degree in language and literature from Harvard University, a master's in education policy and planning from Stanford, and a certification in elementary reading instruction from the State of New Jersey, she is an accomplished educator with 25 years of experience in education programming in both domestic and international contexts. Ms. Rhodes has worked extensively in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, and has consulted in Latin America and the Caribbean and South East Asia to improve teacher preparation and learning outcomes, including for the most marginalized.

RULA AL-JUNDI

Ms. Rula Al-Jundi brings 18 years of experience working in leadership positions in the education sector in Jordan and has collaborated closely with Ministry of Education personnel under multiple projects. Her expertise includes teacher training, capacity development, student assessment, continuous professional development, early grade literacy and numeracy, technology, instructional leadership, pedagogy, monitoring, and evaluation, change management, and the use of ICT in Jordan. Since 2016, she has served as a Senior Education Program Specialist on the USAID-funded RAMP program. RAMP is a \$47 million national effort designed to improve the reading and mathematics skills of students in Jordan from Kindergarten 2 through Grade 3 (K2–G3). Ms. Al-Jundi has focused on two improving the integration of early grade reading and mathematics learning materials into every K2–G3 classroom in Jordan and better equipping teachers and administrators to provide effective reading and mathematics instruction. For over 11 years at Change Agent for Arab Development and Education Reform, she served as Senior Education Program Specialist, and in other roles, where she designed and implemented a broad-range of training and professional development programs. These included, among others: Jordan’s Higher Education Diploma, Training of Trainers, Change Management, Accelerated Learning, Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Modern Pedagogy, Leadership in 21st Century, Appreciative Inquiry, Use e-Portfolios and ICT, and Situational Leadership. At the University of Jordan, she was an Instructional Designer in the e-learning office and also Lecturer at the King Abdullah II School for Information Technology.

SAID AMZAZI, MOROCCO MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

Mr. Said Amzazi was appointed by King Mohammed VI as the Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research on January 22, 2018. Minister Amzazi received his doctorate in biology from Pierre-et-Marie-Curie University in Paris. Before he became Minister of National Education, Minister Amzazi was the President of University Mohammed V in Rabat since 2015. From 2011-2014, he served as the Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs at the Faculty of Sciences of the University Mohammed V in Rabat, before becoming the Dean of the same faculty. He was also a member of the National Commission on Accreditation and Coordination of Higher Education, and a member of Preparatory Committee of the National Council of Languages and Moroccan Culture. Between 2012 and 2014, he was a member of the Higher Commission for equivalence of foreign diplomas within the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. He chaired the evaluation commission for the award of doctoral scholarships since 2015 and the Merit Scholarship Selection Committee of Mohammed VI Foundation since 2017. He also served as a member of the pedagogical and on-going training commission at the Conference of University Presidents since 2015. In 2016, he was the program coordinator of the Conference of University Presidents during the COP22 event, and coordinator of the Network of Deans of Faculties of Sciences of Moroccan public universities. He has supervised several Ph.D. candidates and written many publications on sciences at the national and international level.

SHIRIN LUTFEALI

Ms. Shirin Lutfeali is an Advisor for Basic Literacy and Numeracy at Save the Children, where she has worked for the past eight years. In this role, she provides general technical support to country offices on projects that focus on an improved learning environment and tangible impact for students, teachers, and the community. Currently, she is managing two USAID-funded early grade reading projects in Myanmar and Egypt. Ms. Lutfeali is also leading the implementation of Numeracy Boost, Save the Children’s numeracy intervention for early primary grades teachers which was piloted in Malawi and Bangladesh in 2012 and has since been implemented in Pakistan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Thailand, Jordan and El Salvador. Ms. Lutfeali began her career in education as a primary school teacher in Los Angeles and New York City public schools. She has taught across the elementary grades, but fourth grade is her favorite. Since then, she has worked in numerous post-conflict and emerging democracies such as Tajikistan, Egypt, and Afghanistan, where she has led projects involving increasing teacher quality and improving student learning outcomes. Ms. Lutfeali holds a master’s in elementary education from Teachers College, Columbia University and is fluent in Urdu and conversant in French.

STEFANIE KENDALL

Dr. Stefanie Kendall is the Team Lead for Education and Health in USAID's Middle East Bureau Office for Technical Support. She was the Education Officer for the Middle East Regional Platform based in Frankfurt, Germany, where she supported the Middle East North Africa Region on program design, procurement and strategy. Primary among her responsibilities over the last five years is her leadership of USAID's contribution to education in Yemen, designing programs for the education sector and school feeding, and representing USAID on the Donor and Local Education Groups. Dr. Kendall came to USAID in 2011, after 17 years of teaching elementary special needs children, high school English and Social Studies, and consulting with Save the Children in Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. She has a master's in curriculum and assessment from the University of Southern Maine, and a Ph.D. in teaching and learning in conflict and post-conflict from Michigan State University.

WAFI KOTOB

Dr. Wafi Kotob has been working in the education field since 1987. She began her education career as a schoolteacher, then worked as a school counselor, a teacher trainer, and an education researcher. In 2007, she was granted a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom for her research on theories of change and education reform. In 2009, Dr. Kotob joined the development sector as the Policy and Planning Specialist in the World Bank unit in the Ministry of Education in Lebanon, and later moved to UNICEF Lebanon as a Senior Education Specialist. Between 2013 and 2016, Dr. Kotob was the Chief of Party for the Developing Rehabilitation Assistance to Schools and Teacher Improvement program (D-RASATI) 2, a USAID-funded, nationally focused project with an overarching goal to support the Ministry of Education to improve the performance of the Lebanese public school system. Currently, Dr. Kotob is Chief of Party for the USAID-funded Quality Instruction toward Access to Basic Education Improvement 2 (QITABI-2) project, a five-year program seeking to improve learning outcomes for all students in primary schools in Lebanon. QITABI-2 targets an estimated 300,000 students, including those registered in second-shift classrooms in public schools.

YOUSSEF BELQASAMI

Professor Youssef Belqasmi is the Secretary General of National Education in Morocco. Dr. Belqasmi has been a strong supporter of USAID-funded education projects in Morocco for the past 15 years. He is an active advocate for educational innovation, especially through the use of technology. Prior to assuming the office of Secretary General in April 2009, Dr. Belqasmi was the Director of the Office of Planning, Statistics, and Strategy at the Ministry of Education from 2007 to 2009. He served as a professor and trainer in Computer Technology at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Mohammedia and other national and international universities. He started his career as an advisor to international organizations, including UNESCO. Dr. Belqasmi holds a Ph.D. in science and technology and computer science from the Mohammedia School of Engineering of the Mohammed V University. He also holds the degree of Senior Engineer in Information Technology from the Institut National Polytechnique in Toulouse, France.

YOUSSEF EL AZHARI

Dr. El Azhari is the Director of the National Unit for Teacher Professional Development and the Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Experimentation. Dr. Youssef El Azhari holds a Ph.D. in physics from Cadi Ayyad University. He is presently the Director of the National Center for Pedagogical Innovation and Experimentation. He is also the Head of Central Unit for Teacher training at the primary and secondary level at the Ministry of Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research. Dr. El Azhari was a professor of Physics from 1996 to 2007 at Ecole Normale Supérieure in Marrakech. He also taught at the School of Sciences from 2000 to 2016 and supervised and co-supervised numerous theses. He is an author of a series of scientific publications and research articles published in Morocco and internationally and has been a keynote speaker at conferences in Morocco and abroad. Dr. El Azhari is a Chairman and member of national and international committees in the area of teacher training and certification.



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USAID
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Major Changes in EGR and EGM in the MENA Region Since 2013



USAID
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State of the Art Conference on Primary Grade Arabic Literacy and Numeracy

READING ACHIEVEMENT

Progress in early grade reading has occurred at the level of phonemic and syllabic awareness and decoding, as evidenced by baseline, mid-line, and endline EGRA results in MENA countries. However, most students could not decode half of the words in the nonword reading EGRA

- Countries with multiple EGR administrations showed slow progress in oral reading fluency (ORF) and reading comprehension. Even where students were reading five times as many words correctly per minutes at endline than at baseline, they were not demonstrating the necessary fluency to read with comprehension.
- Reading comprehension tended to improve between Grades 2 and 3, but Grade 3 students still only averaged correct responses on one-third of the comprehension questions.

Arabic speaking countries that participated in *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)* in 2011 and 2015 have made gains—some significant—and none saw score declines. The positive upward trend is encouraging, although all of the Arabic-speaking countries scored below the international average both on PIRLS in 2011 and in 2015. Girls consistently scored higher than boys did on the PIRLS in 2015 in all of the Arabic speaking countries and girls generally made greater gains in their scores from 2011 to 2015.

Of the four countries that participated in the 2012 and 2015 *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, reading scores for 15-year olds increased in Jordan (+9) and Qatar (+14), while reading scores declined in Tunisia (-43) and the United Arab Emirates (-8). The changes for Qatar and Tunisia were statistically significant.

All of the participating Arabic speaking countries scored below the international average for PISA in both 2012 and 2015.

Various reading project results indicate that teachers have made progress in the teaching of reading and are now explicitly teaching phonemic awareness and basic phonics (alphabetic). Recently administered *Snapshot of School Management Effectiveness Surveys (SSMEs)* and other data indicate that once trained, teachers seem to be able to teach letters and sounds effectively and are now focusing more on these skills. However, in terms of organizing instruction to facilitate gains in ORF and comprehension, teachers still struggle.

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT

Donor-assisted projects with an explicit focus on early grade mathematics are still in their early stages, with fewer research-based results to draw from.

- Where EGM-focused projects have used experimental and control groups, students in EGM treatment groups made substantial gains between pre- and post-tests in all EGMA subtask areas.
- Treatment groups substantially reduced zero scores on quantity comparison, identifying missing numbers/seeing patterns in number sequences, Level 1 basic addition and subtraction, and word problems. However, progress was insufficient in treatment groups on more conceptual items, such as identifying missing numbers, Level 2 addition and subtraction, and word problems.

On the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), participating Arabic-speaking countries showed consistent score increases between 2011 and 2015 in Grades 4 and 8.

- However, all Arabic-speaking countries scored below the international average for mathematics in both years.
- *IMSS* measures mathematical knowledge in three domains: knowing, applying, and reasoning.² As with the EGMA results, the *TIMSS* 2015 reports for Arabic speaking countries showed progress in the knowing domain, but less in the application domain and even less in the reasoning domain.
- In both years, girls' scores in Grades 4 and 8 substantially exceeded boys' scores. In some cases, the gains made by boys exceeded those made by girls, but the girls tended to start out with higher scores.

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which tests 15-year-olds in reading, math and science every three years, only four Arabic-speaking countries administered the mathematics test in both 2012 and 2015, with Qatar showing a score increase (+21) and three (Jordan, UAE and Tunisia) showing a decline (-6, -7 and -21 respectively).

¹ While PISA does not measure early grade reading, it provides a sense of whether foundational skills in reading and math are learned well in the early grades.

² Knowing covers basic mathematical operations, procedures, etc. Application refers to the ability to apply knowledge and understand problems on a more conceptual level. Reasoning focuses not merely on solving simple problems but on navigating unfamiliar and complex problems that might require multiple steps.

Fostering the Development of Higher Order Skills in Literacy



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Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives and teacher training in the MENA region have focused heavily on emergent literacy skills such as **phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding**, but have put less emphasis on other skills such as **listening comprehension, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, morphological awareness, syntactical awareness and reading comprehension**. Interventions to improve EGR in Arabic need to address a variety of necessary skills and devise pedagogical strategies that will help teachers build these skills.

HIGHER ORDER KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO TEACH READING IN ARABIC

While all of the knowledge and skill areas in the textbox are important to reading, the relative weight of these skills can vary by language, type of script, etc. Evidence suggests that for Arabic, those in **BOLD** in the textbox are not as explicitly taught as would be desirable, but are instrumental in facilitating decoding, listening comprehension, fluency, and reading comprehension skills.

The Building Blocks of Comprehension

LISTENING COMPREHNSION in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is important, especially since everyday spoken languages in the region are not the same as MSA used for school and written texts. To develop listening skills students need to:

- remember and understand words
- apply linguistic rules and patterns
- analyze word and sentence patterns to deduce meaning

Research¹ states that: “Reading comprehension strategies include **questioning, visualization, text structure [...], summarizing, and retelling**. Teachers should ask **what, when, where, why, and how questions**, and **encourage students to raise questions as they read texts**. Teachers should **verbally express their own comprehension processes** as they read passages. For instance, when the teacher reads a sentence that does not make sense, the teacher pauses and says, ‘This part does not make sense to me. Let me reread this sentence.’”

- **Phonological knowledge**: ability to recognize the systems of sounds (including or excluding phonetics), within a language or between different languages
- **Phonics skills**: Knowledge of the proper correlation of sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system
- **Lexical knowledge**: Knowledge relating to the words or vocabulary of a language
- **Orthographical knowledge**: Recognition and understanding of the conventional spelling system of a language

UNDERTAUGHT SKILLS

- **Morphological knowledge**: Ability to recognize the forms of words, in particular word roots and inflected forms
- **Syntactic knowledge**: Appreciation of the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language
- **Semantic knowledge**: Ability to derive the meaning of a word, phrase, or text

DECODING SKILLS refer to the ability to correctly associate sounds and symbols in written text, thus accurately identifying words and sentences. Decoding involves:

- remembering
- understanding relationships
- applying phonological and linguistic knowledge

ORAL READING FLUENCY (ORF)

is a bridge between word reading and listening comprehension. It depends on accurate decoding skills and understanding the language in which one is reading. Fluency develops when one attains a level of automaticity in decoding and involves:

- understanding sound/symbol relationships
- applying linguistic knowledge
- analyzing word/sentence patterns to identify meaning



COMPREHENSION SKILLS

rest on ORF ability. Students who decode slowly do not have the working memory to focus on the meaning of what is being read. A slow reader who finishes a sentence is likely to have already forgotten the first part of the sentence. Likewise, lack of linguistic knowledge and vocabulary slow down fluency and impede comprehension. Morphological and syntactical skills play a key role in reading with comprehension.

MORPHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE. Arabic words are composed of word roots to which prefixes, infixes, and suffixes are added. Both the root and the prefixes, infixes, and suffixes signal important information to the reader, such as the word family, the subject or object of a verb as well as possession for a noun. Likewise, prefixes, infixes and suffixes communicate different meanings associated with a common root word. Awareness of morphological patterns can help readers compensate for the absence of short vowel markers that are typically used in the early grades.²

SYNTACTICAL KNOWLEDGE. Children come to school with knowledge of syntax and exhibit this every day through their speech. Awareness of sentence construction is an aid to both decoding and word comprehension. This is particularly true for Arabic because it has many homographs and most text in the upper primary grades is unvoiced or partially voiced. The context and position of a word in the sentence and the other words surrounding it give readers clues to its role in the sentence and thus its meaning.

Instructional strategies and materials should develop and reinforce **morphological awareness** and **syntactical knowledge**. Practices such as:

- *Word games* (e.g. mixing up words in sentences and having students put them in order)
- *Word patterns* (e.g. making as many words as one can think of from a common root, adding prefixes, suffixes and infixes to roots, word analysis games, root color coding, etc.)
- *Prediction exercises* (e.g. guessing what words come next in a sentence)

...can help children to develop and use morphological awareness to decode with more fluency and comprehend what they have read.

SEMANTIC KNOWLEDGE, i.e. reading comprehension, evolves from mastery of all of the skills listed on page 1. However, it is clear that the ability to evaluate text (words and sentences) in terms of syntactical and morphological patterns greatly facilitates comprehension.

² Saiegh-Haddad, E., & Geva, E. (2007). Morphological awareness, phonological awareness, and reading in English–Arabic bilingual children. *Reading and Writing, 21*(5), 481. doi:10.1007/s11145-007-9074-x

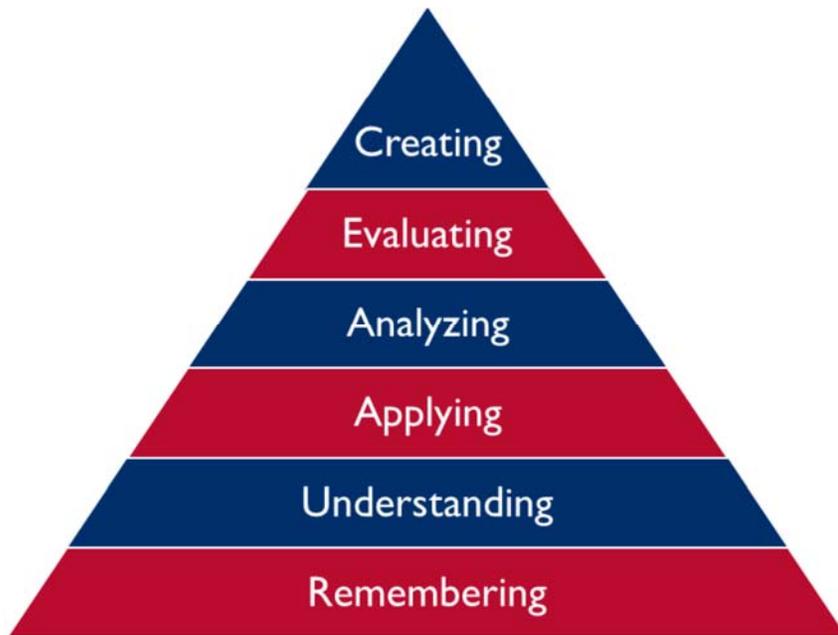
Fostering the Development of Higher Order Skills in Numeracy



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Figure 1: Bloom's Revised Taxonomy



Learning mathematics is a complex process that requires higher order skills, a practice that requires greater cognitive processing than simpler types of learning. Bloom's taxonomy (see Figure 1) is a well-known categorizations of cognitive processing skills.¹ Throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), international tests and project data reveal a greater classroom focus on lower order mathematical skills and knowledge, with less teaching time and attention devoted to application, analysis, evaluation, and creation in early grade mathematics.

The *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) international assessment measures mathematical knowledge in three domains:

- **Knowledge:** basic mathematical operations, procedures, etc.
- **Application:** the ability to apply knowledge and understand the conceptual nature of mathematical problems.
- **Reasoning:** the ability to navigate unfamiliar and complex problems that require multiple steps¹

Application and Reasoning are considered higher order skills. Although MENA countries saw improvements in their TIMSS scores from 2011 to 2015, all of the Arabic-speaking countries scored below the international average for mathematics in both years. Likewise, the *Early Grade Mathematics Assessment* tool assesses the following six types of skills and knowledge:

- Number identification
- Quantity comparison
- Missing numbers (patterns)
- Level 1 addition and subtraction
- Level 2 addition and subtraction
- Word problems

Overall, MENA students performed better on procedural EGMA tasks, such as number identification, quantity discrimination, and addition and subtraction at Level 1.²

For example, a survey in one MENA country found that children tended to memorize mathematical facts, rules, and formulas without understanding them.³ Progress is lagging on more conceptual items, such as identifying missing numbers, Level 2 addition and subtraction, and word problems.

The survey also found that early grade mathematics teachers did not feel confident teaching mathematics. Teachers reported feeling like they lacked skills to facilitate:

1. A deep understanding of mathematics principles and concepts.
2. The application of mathematics principles and concepts to math problems.
3. The build up of children's reasoning skills in EGM.

Teaching Higher Order Numeracy Skills

- Teaching higher order mathematical knowledge and skills often involves instructional configurations that are harder for teachers to manage. These include pair work, group work, joint problem solving, dealing with multiple methods to solve the same problem and modeling their own reasoning strategies..
- If teachers view these types of instructional strategies as extra work, they may resist integrating them into their classes. Teacher interviews from an EGM project revealed that participating teachers liked both the EGM intervention and the training they received, but when asked if EGM intervention should be continued, a substantial majority (5 to 1) said no.
- Teachers described the project as an additional burden to their normal teaching duties and viewed it as an “add-on.” This finding emphasizes the importance of integrating new teaching approaches, tools, etc. into teachers’ normal teaching practices and workload.

Supporting teachers in fostering higher order EGM skills

- Teaching and learning aids can be helpful to orchestrate more hands-on student work, assuming there are enough for all students.
- Teacher trainings must be practice-oriented and help teachers adapt their existing teaching and integrate new approaches into their teaching practice.
- Teachers need tools and guidance on how to closely monitor student learning, reinforce foundational skills, push students to apply knowledge and provide students time to do hands on work, whether individually or in pairs/groups.
- Supervisor and coaching visits also have a positive impact on teachers’ adherence to practices they learned through EGM training interventions.

¹ Mullis, I.V.S., Martin, M.O., Foy, P., & Hooper, M. (2016). TIMSS 2015 International Results in Mathematics. Chestnut Hill, MA, International Study Center at Boston College.

^{2,3} RTI International. (2014). National Early Grade Literacy and Numeracy Survey: Jordan: Impact Analysis Report, Final Report. Task Order 16: Education Data for Decision Making (EdData II): Amman, Jordan. 1–96.

Policy Recommendations to Support EGR and EGM in the Primary Grades



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STANDARDS

Standards are crucial in ensuring that EGR and EGM curricula, texts, teaching methods, teacher supervision, leadership, and assessments are coherent and reinforcing. They can:

- ✓ Provide guidance to curriculum developers, textbook writers, teachers, teacher supervisors and assessment experts
- ✓ Empower educators to work towards clear and common goals vis-a-vis reading and mathematics performance
- ✓ Facilitate the measurement of progress toward reading and mathematics performance goals
- ✓ Help shape parental expectations of their children's reading and mathematics learning
- ✓ Be established using available, current student EGR and EGM performance data in a country, or using international norms



CURRICULUM

In most MENA countries, reading is taught as part of the Arabic language curriculum, which can result in critical reading skills taught out of sequence, or too little emphasis placed on explicit reading skills within the broader topic of language learning. Additionally, reading skills are nested and need to be taught together.

EGR curricula tend to be more “stand-alone” and coherent. However, MENA mathematics curricula would benefit from **more focus on application and reasoning** as opposed to only facts and procedural learning.

Reading involves practice; children need to read to improve at reading

- Students in the MENA region generally have textbooks, but textbooks contain a finite number of reading texts, with a heavy focus on choral reading. While this is one of many strategies to develop oral reading fluency, students often end up memorizing texts instead of reading them.
- There is a dearth of non-textbook materials for children to read in class. Students need time to practice reading with storybooks, big books, and leveled readers.
- Non-textbook materials that do exist are often in French or English. Even when these texts are in Arabic, they are expensive and do not exist in sufficient quantity to provide students nationally with a sufficient variety of texts.
- While EGM textbooks are available, the lack of additional classroom resources to facilitate the application of mathematical skills and reasoning is a challenge. While mathematics resources or manipulatives are easy to make, teachers might see the time and effort required to make them an extra burden or expense.

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SUPERVISION & LEADERSHIP

... is a promising practice, representing:

- A way to **raise awareness** of the importance of sound EGR and EGM content and pedagogy among actors at various levels of an educational system
- A means to **substantively involve** some of those actors directly in the process of instructional improvement
- A tool for **ensuring that teachers implement** new and potentially challenging instructional strategies with fidelity

ASSESSMENT

...is critical to making system corrections and ascertaining if the system is making progress toward the standards and benchmarks. Evidence suggests that:



- Teacher monitoring of student learning in EGR and EGM gives teachers valuable information on student learning
- Assessment policies at national, school, and classroom levels are important in clarifying the roles of districts, school directors, and teachers in ongoing assessment.



TEACHERS

Data suggest that teachers often lack confidence in teaching both reading and mathematics and are not skilled at teaching higher order skills, such as comprehension and the application of mathematical concepts and reasoning. Policies to extend in-service training content in the following ways are needed.

Evidence demonstrates that student performance improves when teachers:

- Provide deliberate, structured, and developmentally appropriate practice in EGR and EGM skills
- Consistently employ effective pedagogies for each subject

Policies to introduce effective EGR/M routines and pedagogies into pre-service training are crucial so new teachers teach these subjects well from the outset. That said, most teachers in MENA countries are already teaching.

- In-service teacher training is expensive for MOEs
- Offered trainings are often short and not comprehensive enough to fully equip teachers to teach and apply concepts

Policymakers should develop or re-examine existing policies on in-service teacher education, specifically for EGR/M teachers, to incorporate feasible strategies for sustained in-service support such as:

- Distance learning courses
- District-level clusters and the provision of lesson notes
- Teacher guides
- “Scripted” lessons for in-service trainers

Both pre- and in-service EGR teacher trainings have focused heavily on emergent literacy skills:

- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Decoding

EGR trainings need to increase their focus on building early grade teachers’ capacity to teach higher-order skills:

- Instruction to improve student listening comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Oral reading fluency
- Reading comprehension
- Writing

At-Risk Learners: Strategies to Support EGR and EGM Achievement



State of the Art Conference on Primary Grade Arabic Literacy and Numeracy

Across the MENA region, children experience marginalization for many reasons, including poverty, gender, ethnic identities, religious affiliations, physical and mental disabilities, and living in rural areas, urban slums, or conflict and crisis. However, there is limited information about the early grade reading and mathematics achievement of marginalized children.

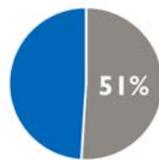
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Ongoing conflicts in the MENA region have had disastrous effects on children's education. Schools have been damaged or destroyed, children have been injured, families have been forced into financial distress or displacement. Where educational services are available, many children are too traumatized to focus and learn.

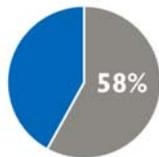
EGR & EGM OUTCOMES FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED CHILDREN IN THE MENA REGION

2018 International Development & Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) in Syria This baseline study on preschool children receiving remedial education¹ examines four domains of development: motor development, emergent literacy, emergent numeracy and socio-emotional development.

51% correct in **emergent literacy** - children scored highest in oral comprehension and print awareness, and lowest in letter identification and emergent writing.



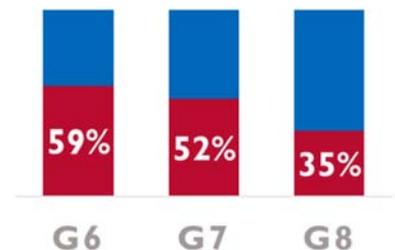
58% correct in **emergent numeracy**, with very high scores in comparing things by size and length, but very low scores in number identification.



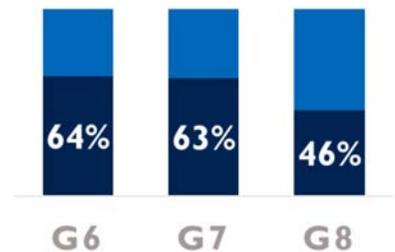
Note: the sample was very small and there was wide variability in the scores in each domain, hence results must be viewed cautiously.

2017 Annual State of Education (ASER) in Syria This study was designed to assess literacy and numeracy performance in upper primary and lower secondary students across five schools.²

59% of G6 students
52% of G7 students
35% of G8 students
could not read a Grade 2-level story.



Results were **worse in mathematics**:
64% of G6 students
63% of G7 students
46% of G8 students
could not solve a Grade 2-level subtraction problem.



Although evidence is sparse, results suggest that conflict- and crisis-affected children are not developing foundational skills in reading and math.

¹ Sinclair, B. R., M. (2018). Syria international development and early learning assessment (IDELA): Baseline report. Washington, DC, Chemonics International, Inc.: 13.

² I. R. C. (March 2017). Impact of war on Syrian children's learning: Testing shows gaps in literacy and math skills. IRC. New York, NY, IRC.

³ Hadidi, M.S. & Al Khateeb, J.M. (2015). Special education in Arab countries: Current challenges. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education. 62:5, 518-530.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

While special education services have expanded across the region, it remains a pressing problem. Many children with special needs have little or no access to education. Even in wealthier MENA countries, funding for the education of special needs children education is limited.

While Arab countries have signed onto United Nations agreements on the treatment and education of people with disabilities, which often advocate inclusion, inclusion itself is a relatively new idea and thus not widely implemented.

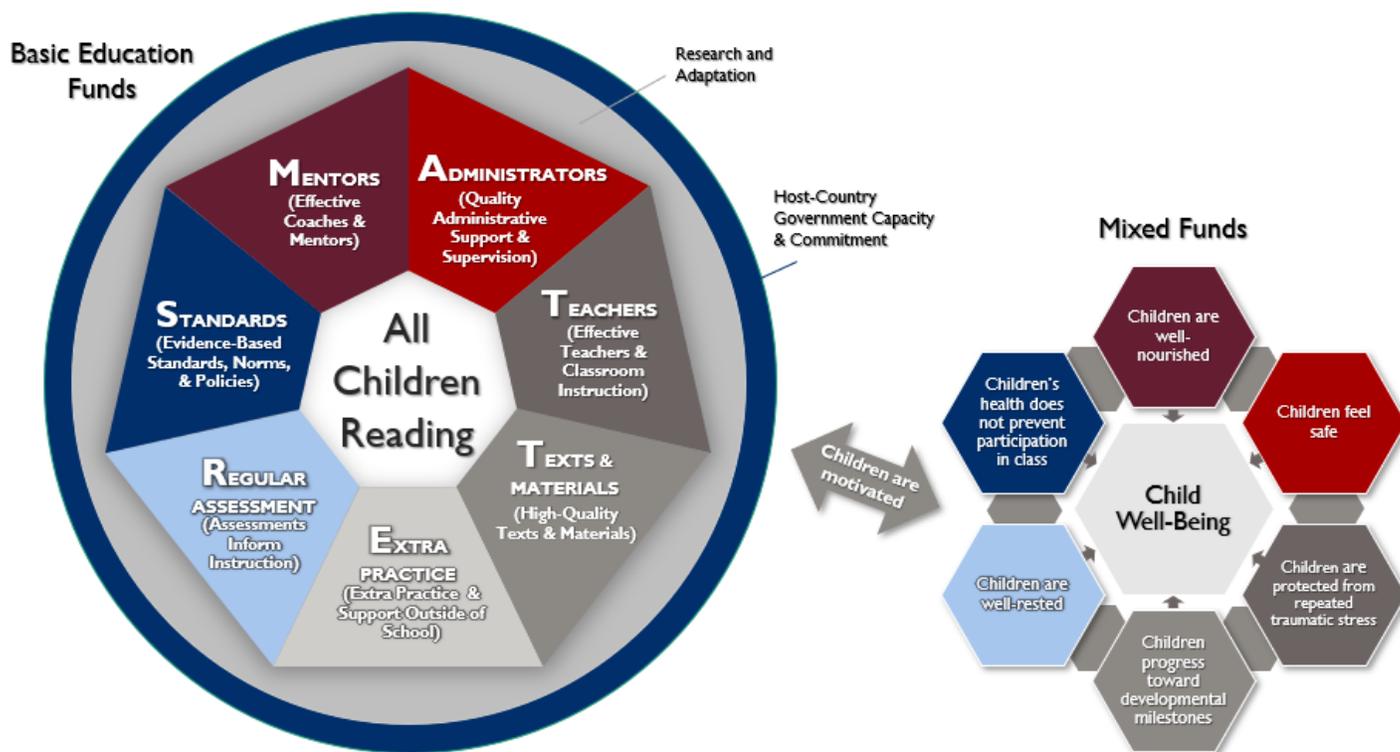
Studies suggest there are common challenges to education for children with disabilities in the MENA region, including inaccurate or limited data on children with disabilities or children receiving special education and negative perceptions that children with disabilities are burdensome to society.³ A 2016 study in Morocco identified numerous challenges, which have been echoed in other literature, including:

- Disabilities, special education, and services for children with disabilities are **not defined in laws/policies**.
- A **lack of quality control and regulation** for special education programs.
- Laws/policies without the specificity required to ensure all children with disabilities have **access to education**.
- Laws/policies predicated on a **medical model as opposed to a social/human rights approach**.
- **School inaccessibility** for students with physical disabilities.
- **Absence of policies to test children for hearing and vision problems** or learning disabilities in school.
- A **dearth of standard screening tools** and the ability to use them at the school level.
- **Few assistive devices in schools** and the segregation of students with disabilities into special education classrooms.
- Lack of teacher awareness of **simple adaptive techniques** or classroom accommodations they could use to assist children with low vision or hearing in mainstream classrooms.
- Absence of systematization in the use of diagnostic tools to identify children with disabilities; home testing, using the **Project Portage model** of home-based instruction to mothers to help promote the development of young children with developmental delays; **or more recently the Early Start Denver Model** a behavioral therapy for children with autism between the ages of 12- 48 months, have been used to identify children with disabilities, but not systematically.



Photo Credit: Gulf News

USAID Reading MATTERS Conceptual Framework (Draft)



Introduction to the Reading MATTERS Framework

USAID’s Reading MATTERS (Mentors, Administrators, Teachers, Texts, Extra Practice, Regular Assessment, Standards) 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 read¹.

This framework incorporates, and expands upon, the elements of the 5 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 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 be present under that component or sub-factor in order to foster the most widespread progress towards literacy for those beginning to learn to read.

¹ The 7 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.

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 any education system for improved reading instruction. They can conduct targeted analysis and develop context-appropriate literacy interventions that advance USAID's education priorities in all types of learning environments. The Reading MATTERS Framework should never be used as a guide to programming without contextual analysis; instead, it should shape and inform context-specific exploration of the unique challenges in reading and literacy in a given country or programmatic situation.

USAID's Reading MATTERS Framework is adaptable to the needs and available resources of an education program. Analysis and interventions guided by USAID's Reading MATTERS 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. Data collection on the state of the components through the use of tools like the Literacy Landscape Assessment [insert link] can guide investments in specific components or sub-factors that are not functioning well in each programming context.

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% of their budget or 4% of their GDP to education), and; b) at a subject-specific level, (for example, by passing a bilingual education law that stipulates that the youngest students must receive 3-6 years of reading instruction in a language they use and understand).
- 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, and school environments and materials, including identifying differences in subpopulations, to learn what strengths and gaps exist in the Reading MATTERS system in their context, so they can adapt programming for 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 outside of school.
- 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 through reading to learners as well as listening to learners read starting at the earliest age.
- Appropriate, accessible, and affordable reading materials are available for children and their families for reading practice outside of school.

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 be 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 towards 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 while at school to, at a minimum, enable them 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 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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STATE OF THE ART (SOTA) CONFERENCE ON ARABIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Day 2: October 29, 2019



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COACHING AND MENTORING

Providing general guidance or one-off training is not effective at changing teacher practices or improving student learning. Teachers improve best through ongoing support such as coaching or mentoring¹. The support that is provided should be detailed, actionable and tailored to the needs of teachers.² Coaching is best when combined with opportunities to discuss with peers and apply new knowledge in the classroom.³

FHI 360 recommends a **balanced** approach to coaching that incorporates open-ended reflection and directive feedback. Effective coaching can be delivered by school leaders, external experts or both.

BALANCED COACHING

External Coaching

- Pro: Supportive relationships, subject matter expertise
- Con: High-resource, difficult to maintain

Soft Coaching

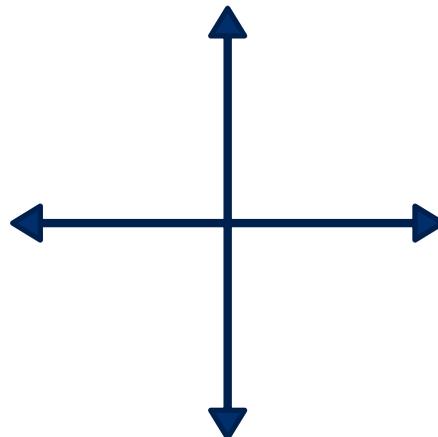
Develop teacher capacity through open-ended self-reflection

- Pro: More sustainable
- Con: Administrators may lack subject matter expertise

Hard Coaching

Change teacher practices through directive feedback

- Pro: Clear outcomes
- Con: Too supervisory, high resource



Administrator Coaching

- Pro: More sustainable
- Con: Supervisory relationship may undermine supportive relationship

Examples of Soft Coaching:

- “What are your goals for this semester?”
- “How do you think today’s lesson succeeded or could be improved?”
- “Let’s discuss your lesson plan for tomorrow”

Examples of Hard Coaching:

- “Your next lesson should include one groupactivity.”
- “I’ll be following up to make sure you come to class every day next week.”
- “What is one student-led routine you plan to incorporate in your class?”

¹ Knight, J. (2007). Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Pres.

² Ganimian, A.J., Murnane, R.J. (2016). Improving Education in Developing Countries: Lessons from Rigorous Impact Evaluations. Review of Educational Research, 86 (3), 719-755.

³ Orr, D.; Westbrook, J., Pryor, J., Durrani, N., Sebba, J., Adu-Yeboah, C (2013). What are the impacts and cost-effectiveness of strategies to improve performance of untrained and under- trained teachers in the classroom in developing countries? London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Centre, Institute of Education, University of London.

Examples of Coaching and Mentoring Activities

Balanced Coaching

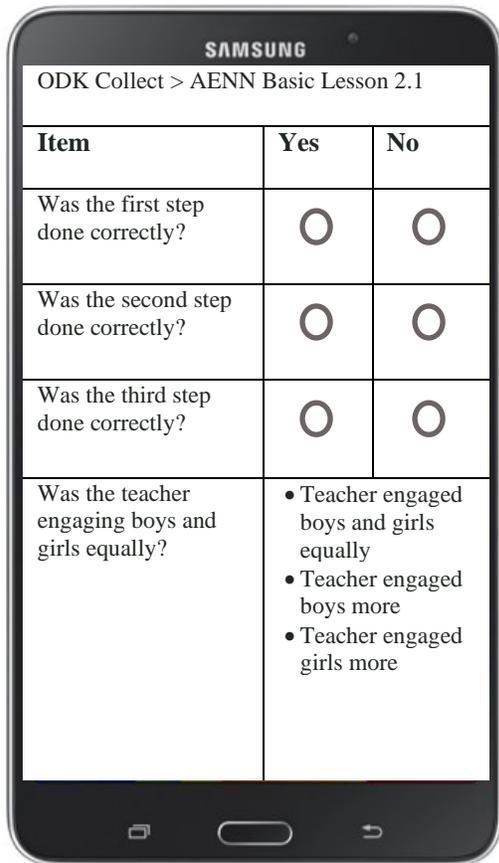
In Northern Nigeria, the UNICEF Reading and Numeracy Activity (RANA) uses a balanced soft and hard coaching method delivered through external experts and school administrators with three simple steps:

1. Let the teacher speaker first.
2. Point out what went well.
3. Point out what can be improved.

How do you think the lesson went?

You did a great job engaging all learners in the class.

Let's make a plan for how to pace the next lesson so it ends on time.



The screenshot shows a Samsung smartphone screen with the following content:

SAMSUNG
ODK Collect > AENN Basic Lesson 2.1

Item	Yes	No
Was the first step done correctly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was the second step done correctly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was the third step done correctly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Was the teacher engaging boys and girls equally?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher engaged boys and girls equally• Teacher engaged boys more• Teacher engaged girls more	

Example data collection platform for tablet-based coaching

Mobile Mentoring

The Teachers for Teachers initiative in Kakuma Refugee Camp provides opportunities for sustained support from external professional resources by connecting teachers with a “Global Mentor” – volunteers from around the world with classroom teaching experience – on WhatsApp for soft coaching.



Teachers in Kakuma accessing mobile mentoring (Teachers College Columbia University)

Teacher Learning Circles

A teacher learning circle is a type of soft coaching in which a group of teachers have an opportunity to reflect and learn from each other's experiences in the classroom. Their meetings can be self-guided or led by administrators. They may be:

- **Scripted** with preselected topics and specific activities
- **Structured** with preselected topics; or
- **Autonomous** with participants driving topics and activities

Tablet-Based Coaching

In Northeast Nigeria, where local educational institutional capacity has been damaged by protracted conflict, school support officers are aided by a tablet-based system that both collects monitoring data and provides guidelines for feedback through a directive coaching approach.

Additional Resources

[Teachers in Crisis Contexts Peer Coaching Pack](#)

[Educator-Centered Instructional Coaching](#)

[FHI 360 Early Grade Literacy](#)

[Teachers College Columbia University Teachers for Teachers Initiative](#)

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rebeca Martinez & Rula Al-Jundi

Effective teaching is the single most important factor in ensuring high-quality instruction and improved learning outcomes for students. Teacher professional development is key to ensuring teachers are well prepared to use best practices, and research-based strategies in their classroom. The following is a summary of guidelines for designing and implementing effective teacher professional development, with examples from Jordan's Reading and Math Program (RAMP).

GUIDELINE	RAMP EXAMPLE
Both pre and in-service training need to mirror the expectations of the curriculum and the realities of the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MoE has included all RAMP methodologies in the Induction program for all newly recruited teachers. • RAMP has developed in-service training that is centralized and aligned with curriculum, all examples are from MoE textbooks.
Assess teachers needs prior to developing training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAMP is building the capacity of supervisors to identify teachers needs and develop in-school training for their staff.
Trainings should be guided by the principles of adult learning theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAMP uses two core principles of adult learning: Self-Directing and Learning by Doing, in the design of all its activities. • All RAMP trainings allow teachers to reflect on their prior experience and practice new activities and strategies.
Trainers need clear guidance on what the training should cover, including expected outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All RAMP training sessions have clearly defined outcomes. • RAMP conducts ToT training for all MoE supervisors where priorities and expectations for teacher PD are shared.
All training must be conducted with the necessary teaching and learning materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every year, RAMP teachers receive their materials at the initial training session. • Each teacher gets copies of all training modules as well as a teacher's guide.
Trainers should always model the strategies and instructional approaches they want teachers to use in the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice is an essential component of all RAMP trainings, and takes one of the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Modeling by the trainer. ○ Practice among groups. ○ Modeling by one teacher (micro-lesson)
Create appropriate incentives for Teacher PD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAMP training is being accredited by the MoE and is being considered as a pathway for promotion and increased credentials for teachers.
Monitor and evaluate Teacher PD programs for effectiveness and adapt as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAMP solicits feedback from all participants at the end of each training, including teachers and supervisors, and uses an analysis of the responses to modify and improve their professional development sessions. • RAMP is also monitoring the performance of those students whose teachers received training through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LQAS results ○ Classroom observation tool, where 3 to 5 students are randomly selected and asked to read or to solve mathematics tasks. • The data gathered from these assessments, such as the low ORF scores that were recorded for many students, have led to major modifications and changes in RAMP programming.

RECOMMENDED PRIMARY GRADE STANDARDS & POLICIES

Melissa Chiappetta & Nelly El Zayat

STANDARDS

Content Standards: Clear content standards define what students should learn in every subject area, at every grade level. They describe what students should know and do as a result of instruction. Standards should dictate and align with the curriculum and textbooks and be based on robust evidence.

Performance Standards: Countries should set clear performance standards that describe how students should perform on assessments to meet their country's content standards; the Global Proficiency Framework includes global performance standards for grades 2-6 in reading and math. Country performance standards do not have to be the same as the global performance standards depicted in the GPF, but countries must use the GPF to report against the Sustainable Development Goals and USAID's F Indicators, unless a country participates in a regional/international assessment.

Assessments: Continuous (in-class), end-of-term, and national student assessments should all be mandated by policy and aligned with curricular and content standards to ensure regular implementation. Policy should also provide a means of analyzing data and developing findings and recommendations based on assessment results. Assessments should inform differentiated instruction, training/coaching of teachers, allocation of resources, etc.

Benchmarks: Countries should set clear benchmarks to ensure teachers know the expectations for their students and to allow tracking of disparities in outcomes. A benchmark is the cutoff point or assessment score that designates a performance standard has been met on a given assessment and content domain/sub-domain; the desired competence or skills countries believe students should developmentally be able to demonstrate when provided appropriate resources and support. Benchmarks should not be based on the current performance of students in schools. Policy linking is one way of setting benchmarks.

Targets: Targets provide a goal for the number or percentage of children that will reach the benchmark in a given period of time; targets should be based on the current performance of students in schools and should provide a realistic timeline for when students should be able to achieve minimum proficiency standards. They should also vary across populations. Countries should seek to set targets for the percentage of students by sociodemographic group they expect to achieve benchmarks in a given period of time and then should allocate resources to addressing gaps in programming that limit progress towards those targets.

Education Management Information System: Country EMISs should also include tracking of teacher and student attendance, quality of instruction, teacher training, book deployment, demographic information of teachers and students, etc. to help inform ways to address disparities in outcomes and identify system weaknesses and address them. Countries should also ensure a robust process for regularly reviewing this data, reflecting and acting on it, and disseminating information widely.

POLICIES

Language of Instruction: In countries with multilingual contexts, it's critical to have a policy that clearly outlines what language will be used in the classroom. This should be a language that students and teachers use and understand and for which materials exist.

Inclusive Education: A national-level policy outlining how the Ministry of Education will support students with disabilities should impact other policies including making sure materials are accessible to all students, that teachers are trained to instruct all students, that children have access to instruction in a language they use and understand (inclusive of sign language), and that students with disabilities have access to the same quality of education as all other students.

Books and Materials: National book policies can help facilitate the development of books that are affordable, accessible, appropriate and widely available to all students. Book policies should also ensure a minimum of one book per student per subject and access for all students to decodable, leveled, and supplementary readers as well as manipulatives to support instruction in mathematics. National book policies should also make provisions for students to take books home with them to allow for practice outside of school.

Teacher Certification: Clear guidelines on teacher licensing procedures and what the minimal education levels are for teacher-candidates help ensure all teachers have the content and pedagogical knowledge needed to provide effective instruction.

Teacher Assignment and Rationalization: Teacher assignment policies should provide clear guidelines on how to assign teachers through a process that matches school and students' needs to teacher qualifications and ensures fair and equivalent class sizes and quality of instruction nationwide. Teacher assignment should also take into consideration effects on teacher motivation as well as teacher level of fluency in the language of instruction of assigned classrooms.

Teacher Training and Coaching: Policy should set clear guidelines for teacher in-service training and coaching requirements to ensure teachers are provided with the level of support needed to provide quality instruction.

Teacher Incentives: Policies around teacher salaries and other incentives should ensure fairness, equity, and rewards for high-quality teaching and classroom instruction as well as consequences for extensive absenteeism, unfair treatment of students, etc.

Education Finance: Strong education finance policies are critical to ensuring sufficient resources for education. Policies around education finance should strive to improve measures of equity, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and impact. Experts recommend levels at 4-6% of GDP and 15-20% of national budgets, provided the resources are used according to their intended purpose. USAID's Financing Self Reliance Framework includes five pillars for which policy should exist: domestic resource mobilization, public financial management, fiscal transparency and accountability, enabling environment for private investment, and functioning financial markets.

Private School Enabling/Regulatory Policies: It is important that policies set in place quality guidelines and an enabling environment to regulate private schools.

Accelerated Education: Policies that allow for accelerated education are critical in contexts where there are significant populations of out-of-school children who have never attended primary school. For children and youth who are out-of-school, over-age and have either never entered formal schooling or have missed significant portions, accelerated education can provide a pathway for gaining equivalent, certified competencies. The Accelerated Education Principles, available on the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) website provide guidance on best practices in AEP programming.

Policies for Education of Crisis-and-Conflict-Affected Children: There are several key policies and standards critical for education in emergencies. Specifically, policies should: 1) uphold the protected status under international humanitarian and human rights law of education facilities, learners, teachers, and other education personnel; 2) respect, protect and fulfill the right to education and ensure continuity of education for all; 3) ensure that every education facility rebuilt or replaced is safe; 4) be based on an analysis of the context that is developed through participatory and inclusive processes; be supported with action plans, laws, and budgets that allow a quick response to emergency; 5) allow schools for refugees to use the curricula and language of the country or area of origin; 6) allow non-state actors, such as NGOs and UN agencies, to establish education through emergency programs. More details on these and other policies for education in emergencies are available on the INEE website through the INEE Minimum Standards for Education Guide.

READING: TEXTS & MATERIALS

Dr. Hanada Taha Thomure

The Moroccan Arabic language materials experience:

The development of the Moroccan national Arabic language curriculum grades 1-4 came as a response to the curriculum review done in 2015. The new curriculum evolved from the same competencies, yet added to it authentic, age-appropriate, leveled texts; integrated the various types of reading and writing in it; deep training of trainers and training of teachers, detailed teacher manuals; and a wonderful effort done to ensure the buy in of all stakeholders involved.

The *BilArabi* Arabic language materials experience:

Arabic Language Curriculum is a new K-8 curriculum that is being piloted in 10 private schools this academic year. The curriculum is a response to data reported in research on the teaching and learning of Arabic language and to research results and recommendation on the Arabic language teacher preparation and training in the Arab world.

The curriculum attempts to modernize the teaching and learning of Arabic language using research-based strategies and approaches that are contextualized to fit within the Arabic classroom realities. The curriculum was artistically produced and embraced the following:

- **Clear philosophy and language approach**
- **Literature-based instruction**
- **Reading and writing workshop**
- **Higher order thinking skills**
- **Figurative language concepts**
- **Assessment integration**
- **Teachers books that train and focus on pedagogy**
- **Standards-based instruction**
- **Leveled texts**
- **Vocabulary workshop**
- **Diglossic component**
- **Phonics, sight words and morphology**
- **Arabic calligraphy**
- **Digital component utilized**

EXTRA READING PRACTICE IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Rebecca Rhodes

Research shows that time for practice is an essential factor in developing improved reading fluency and comprehension. Many students, however, attend schools where time for independent reading practice is limited and does not meet the minimum recommendation of 60 minutes of reading time a day. While the focus of any reading activity should be on in-classroom instruction, additional out-of-school programming can provide much needed support to students who are struggling with reading, or simply do not receive enough practice time at school. As with other components of a reading activity, there are some important do’s and don’ts to crafting a high-quality, effective out-of-school program which are summarized below:

DO...	DON'T...
Design programs with non-readers and beginning readers in mind.	Design programs that cater to those who can demonstrate competence (spelling bees, 'best reader competition).
Target specific reading skills.	Design programs which focus solely on 'enjoyment' of reading and have no instructional component.
Ensure that facilitators for out-of-school reading programs have appropriate training.	Create programs that rely on untrained volunteers.
Focus on empowering parents, building parent leadership, and developing capacity for families to act as partners in decision-making with schools.	Focus on what parents can do for the school.
Provide training, resources, and support to encourage family engagement at home.	Create a “one-size-fits-all” program.
Offer classes for families that can improve adult life skills and increase their ability to support children’s education and learning.	Create home reading programs that do not accurately reflect the skill level of parents.

DATA FOR SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Melissa Chiappetta and Anjali Shivshanker

While there have been gains in the quality of education in the past several years across countries in the Middle East and North Africa, many learners still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. For instance, according to the 2018 World Development Report, more than 40 percent of Grade 2 learners in Yemen and 30 percent of Grade 2 learners in Morocco could not read a single word of short passage. And, disparities in access to quality education vary significantly, with refugees, IDPs, learners with disabilities, girls, and learners from the poorest families suffering the most.



Scale

- Education systems should strive to achieve measurable improvements in learning outcomes at scale, meaning for all learners in a country.
- To achieve learning outcomes at scale, assessment systems should track outcomes by grade, age, sex, level and type of disability, region, first language, language of instruction, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, rural/urban location, and any other key characteristics of marginalized and vulnerable groups. This will help Ministries to identify when current interventions are working for some groups and not others.
- In addition to tracking learning outcomes across groups, Ministries of Education and donors should track school resources, including availability of books, readers, teacher lesson plans, and manipulatives. They should track teacher education levels; language capabilities; attendance at trainings; attendance in the classroom; quality of instruction; access to quality coaching and administrative oversight; and feelings around safety, support, and motivation. For learners, they should track attendance, socioemotional outcomes, and feelings of safety and motivation. Finally, they should monitor access to reading materials in households, availability of books that learners can take home, time on task in class, and extra reading and math practice outside of class. Understanding differences in these factors between groups as they relate to learning outcomes will help Ministries target appropriate interventions.
- Achieving learning outcomes at scale likely does not mean delivering a single intervention countrywide, but instead delivering interventions that meet the needs of teachers and learners, according to context. This may best be done through Ministry coordination with donors and partners to leverage comparative advantages.



Sustainability

- Sustainability requires planning interventions with a systems perspective, recognizing that a change or gap in one aspect of the system affects the entire system.
- Sustainability requires local ownership, capacity, and commitment.
- Governments and donors must work together to identify and address gaps in government capacity to maintain effective education programs.
- Sufficient education financing is critical to sustaining gains in learning outcomes. Experts suggest that 4-6 percent of GDP and 15-20 percent of budgets should be dedicated to education. However, sustainability requires more than increased funding. Transparency and accountability of expenditures are also critical.

- Funds must also be targeted toward the most efficient and effective components of systems or interventions. To identify the best use of funds, governments should closely track costs - both salaries and direct costs - by system or intervention component. They should also track donor costs and determine how much it will cost for the government to continue interventions in the future (note: government costs usually do not mirror those of donors).
- Sustainable education systems must also be resilient: able to maintain quality, safe, equitable, effective education services for all learners in the face of conflict, crises, or other changes in context. Resilient systems require data to identify emerging barriers to quality education, reasons for barriers, and solutions with wide buy-in.
- Sustainability may require diverse partnerships, including with the private sector.



Scaling and Sustaining Innovative Solutions

- Education innovations should be designed with a potential pathway to scale and sustainability in mind, whether that pathway be: a) commercial; b) through incorporation into government practices; or c) through a combination of commercial and public support.
- Key ingredients to scaling promising innovations include sufficient financing, a conducive enabling environment, a thoughtful delivery plan, adaptations to address the needs of marginalized and vulnerable populations, and an efficient and cost-effective design that considers both supply and demand-side challenges.



STATE OF THE ART (SOTA) CONFERENCE ON ARABIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Day 3: October 30, 2019



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POLICY LINKING

OVERVIEW

Policy linking is a methodology long used in the United States and the United Kingdom, amongst other countries, to set aligned benchmarks on different assessments for reading and mathematics outcomes. While it is an old standard setting methodology, its use has been extended to help countries set benchmarks that will allow reporting against global standards. Policy linking allows countries to use their existing national assessments or early grade reading and math assessments to report against the USAID Foreign Assistance (“F”) indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It works by linking national assessments to the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF), a framework developed by multilateral donors and partners based on current national content and assessment frameworks across more than 100 countries, that provides performance expectations/standards for learners in Grades 2-6 in reading and mathematics. By doing so, it allows countries and donors to compare learning outcomes across language groups in countries as well as across countries and over time, assuming all new assessments are subsequently linked to the GPF.

CHALLENGES WITH COMPARING/AGGREGATING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Countries face three common challenges to ensuring both the comparability of reading and mathematics outcomes and their ability to aggregate outcomes from their national and population-based assessments (including assessments such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment and the Annual Status of Education Report [ASER] Assessment) to inform programming:

- 1) Language of Assessment:** First, they have long faced a challenge in understanding how learners who are learning in different languages are performing in relation to one another and, thus, in determining where to invest scarce resources to have the most impact to improve learning. This is because the rate of acquisition of these languages and the ability to learn to read in these languages differs across languages. It takes less time for learners to learn to read in languages with more transparent orthographies (languages with fewer sounds and direct correspondence between sounds and letters), such as Spanish, than it does for learners to learn to read in more opaque languages, such as Arabic or Amharic.
- 2) Changes in Instruments Over Time:** Second, many countries have also faced challenges in comparing assessment results over time due to changing assessment instruments, which affects the difficulty level of the assessments, and not having equated the different tests.
- 3) Comparing with Other Countries:** Finally, countries have struggled to compare their learning assessment results with results from other countries to gain an understanding of how their systems and learners stack up against those of other countries given the challenges described above with both differing languages of assessments and different difficulty levels of assessment instruments.

Similarly, international donors face significant challenges in identifying in which countries the greatest need for education interventions lies, which groups are most in need of targeted interventions within countries, and how much progress is being made comparatively across contexts and populations toward improving children’s reading and math abilities. This lack of comparability also makes country reporting against SDG 4.1.1 infeasible.

SOLUTIONS

The best way to address these challenges is by linking national assessments across languages and contexts. There are two ways of linking assessments with different characteristics:

- 1) **Statistical linking:** Statistical linking can take two forms—test-based linking and item-based linking. With test-based linking, the same learners take two different assessments, which can then be calibrated to ensure equivalent levels of difficulty. With item-based linking, a subset of items from multiple assessments are included in the same assessment to allow for calibration across assessments. This is more suitable to new data collection where linking is envisioned as part of the design and requires more resources and political buy-in.
- 2) **Policy linking:** Policy linking is a form of linking in which experts judge the level of difficulty of assessment items using a common set of performance standards and set corresponding benchmarks to define levels of minimum proficiency. Assessment results can then be compared across assessments at the benchmarks (or cut scores).

Statistical linking tends to be costly and time consuming, as it requires learners taking multiple tests or longer tests across large samples. It also requires engagement of psychometricians with experience statistically calibrating assessments. Given these constraints, policy linking has gained international buy-in as a cost-effective and practical solution for countries looking to maintain use of their national assessments to set benchmarks that will allow them to report against USAID's F Indicators and the SDGs and compare to results over time, across contexts, and across countries.

IMPLEMENTING POLICY LINKING

Policy linking works by bringing together a group of approximately 15 panelists per assessment that includes expert teachers, content specialists, and language experts from across a country to collectively set benchmarks. The panel reviews the GPF, which defines performance standards for learners under four global proficiency levels (GPLs)—does not meet minimum proficiency, partially meets minimum proficiency, meets minimum proficiency, and exceeds minimum proficiency. Based on the detailed descriptors in the GPF, the teachers each independently determine how learners who fall into each GPL would likely perform on each item from the national assessment being linked. They then review how panelist scores compare and are presented with impact data that how the percentage of learners who would fall into each GPL based on their ratings. Finally, the panelists independently review each assessment item again and determine whether learners in each proficiency category would get the item correct or incorrect. The facilitators then compile and average the benchmarks identified by the panelists and present them to the Ministry of Education for reporting against global indicators.

REQUIREMENTS AND COSTS

- Government buy-in and commitment
- Availability of 12 master teachers and 3 curriculum/teacher training/pedagogy specialists per grade level/language/subject combination for which officials wish to set internationally linked benchmarks (note: 2-3 grade-level/language/subject benchmarks can be set during a 4-day workshop, e.g., in a four-day workshop, a country could set Grade 2 reading and mathematics benchmarks for assessments administered in one language)
- Availability of expert facilitators (a lead facilitator and one content facilitator with expertise in reading or math and strong familiarity with the GPF per panel, along with a data analyst)
- A recent quality reading and/or mathematics assessment that aligns closely with the GPF
- Approximately \$100,000 per workshop to facilitate panelist transportation and per diem costs as well as cover facilities and snacks

ADVANTAGES

- Low-cost method for countries to set benchmarks that are linked to global standards
- Allows countries to continue to use their national assessments for measuring learning outcomes and reporting on global indicators
- Facilitates wide government buy-in and ownership since benchmarks are set by countries rather than donors and can be continued by governments after development assistance ends
- Does not rely on current learner performance to set benchmarks, which can distort benchmarks when there are not a sufficient number of proficient learners in a country
- Allows countries to compare assessment results over time, across contexts, and across languages to better target interventions to the most vulnerable groups (assuming all assessments are linked to the GPF)
- Allows countries to compare progress in learning outcomes amongst one another
- Allows countries to report against USAID's "F" indicators and the SDGs

NATIONAL VERSUS INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKS

- Countries may choose to set national benchmarks that vary from their internationally linked benchmarks. They may wish to do this if they have an established content and/or assessment framework that does not align with the GPF.
- If the country has not already set national benchmarks, they could use the same policy linking workshop to set both national and international benchmarks, using their national content and/or assessment framework and the GPF in the same workshop to generate two sets of benchmarks.

KEY TERMS

- **Content Standards:** describe what learners should know and do as a result of instruction. Countries typically set their own content standards. USAID and other stakeholders used content standards from more than 100 countries to inform the GPF.
- **Performance Standards:** describe how learners should perform on assessments to meet the content standard; the GPF includes the performance standards for grades 2-6 in reading and math. Countries can also set their own performance standards and set benchmarks against those standards; they just will not be able to report against the SDGs using those standards.
- **Benchmark:** a cutoff point or assessment score that designates a performance standard has been met on a given assessment; the desired competence or skills countries believe learners should developmentally be able to demonstrate when provided appropriate resources and support. Benchmarks should not be altered based on the current performance of learners in schools.
- **Target:** a goal for the number or percentage of children that will reach the benchmark in a given period of time; targets should be altered based on the current performance of learners in schools and should provide a realistic timeline for when learners should be able to achieve minimum proficiency standards. They should also vary across populations.
- **Global Proficiency Framework (GPF):** a framework developed by donors and partners based on current country content and assessment frameworks across more than 100 countries, that provides performance expectations/standards for learners in Grades 2-6 in reading and mathematics
- **Global Proficiency Levels (GPLs):** the four levels of proficiency defined by the GPF for classifying learner outcomes: does not meet minimum proficiency, partially meets minimum proficiency, meets minimum proficiency, and exceeds minimum proficiency.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MATHEMATICS IN THE EARLY GRADES

Shirin Lutfeali and Deepa Srikantaiah

Over the course of 15 months, a group of mathematics teaching and learning experts collaborated to produce guidance on effective instructional strategies in early mathematics, drawing from our collective field and research experience and the existing evidence base. A summary of each of the instructional strategies is provided below.



Developmental Progressions

- Are research-based learning trajectories within and across mathematical domains that reflect increasingly sophisticated understanding and describe the key steps in children’s understanding of concepts.
- Describe how children’s learning progresses from simple to more complex understanding within a single domain (for instance, number) or subdomain (for instance, cardinality).
- Teachers use this knowledge of how children are likely to progress to inform their teaching.



Mathematical Models

- Refers to any picture, drawing, or object that represents targeted mathematical ideas.
- Models are physical objects, such as counters, and commonly referred to as manipulatives.
- Can also include drawings like a number line.
- All children benefit from using mathematical models, despite their abilities, because they enable children to “see” abstract mathematical concepts and reason concretely with mathematical ideas.
- For example, it helps children make meaning of mathematical symbols, procedures, and rules.



Explanation and Justification

- Children explain or justify their thinking when they describe how they arrived at a solution to a problem or comment on or critique the thinking, arguments or solutions of others.
- Invites children to make predictions, analyze mathematical situations, explore or propose other possible solutions or present arguments for a particular solution.
- Children can explain or justify their thinking orally, in writing, or by using drawings, diagrams or manipulatives.



Connections between Formal and Informal Mathematics

- Making connections between formal and informal mathematics is critical in the early years.
- Connections provide a way for curriculum developers and teachers to validate and recognize that children come to school with mathematical knowledge.
- When first attending school, whether at the primary or pre-primary level, children already are engaged in solving math problems and knowing, recognizing, and building upon the knowledge they have developed is key.
- This recognition helps make all mathematics relevant to children's lives, which can increase motivation and interest

Reference: Sitabkhan, Y., Davis, J., Earnest, D., Evans, N., Ketterlin-Geller, L., Lutfeali, S., Ngware, M., Perry, L., Pinto, C., Platas, L., Ralaingita, W., Smith, K., & Srikantaiah, D. (2019). *Instructional Strategies for Mathematics in the Early Grades*. A Working Paper Developed by the Mathematics Working Group.



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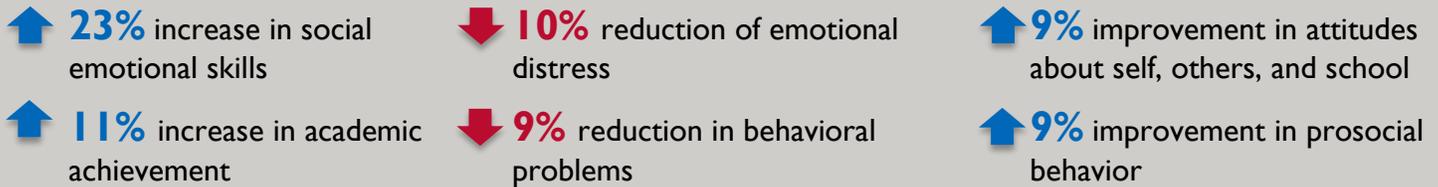
October 28-30, 2019 | Rabat, Morocco

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions and develop self-control and interpersonal skills. The Casel framework identifies five core competencies:

1. **Self-awareness:** recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts and values and how they influence behavior.
2. **Social awareness:** take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
3. **Responsible decision making:** to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns and social norms.
4. **Self-management:** to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations.
5. **Relationship skills:** to establish and maintain healthy rewarding relationships with diverse individuals.

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS ARE CRITICAL FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS.

An analysis of 213 school based SEL interventions found:



EXAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

SEL may be delivered in classes, integrated into school curricula, or conducted in after-school or non-formal settings—as long as it takes place in a safe, caring environment with teachers who can model SEL skill.

CONFLICT AND CRISIS

Children who experience severe and prolonged adversity can have a “toxic stress” response that damages brain development. This response can harm a child’s health, behavior, relationships and ability to learn. However, SEL opportunities provided in safe educational environments, with nurturing teachers and other caregivers, have been shown to help reduce or reverse the detrimental effects of toxic stress. SEL may also help improve relationships between children in schools.

Researchers are currently testing a [program](#) in Turkey designed to reduce student’s anti-social behaviors towards Syrian refugees by teaching perspective-taking. FHI 360 and the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report drafted a policy paper, [Education as Healing: Addressing the Trauma of Displacement through Social and Emotional Learning](#) that explores evidence-based ways to incorporate SEL research and programming into education work around the world. The paper also highlights the importance of comprehensive support for teachers. In order to teach kids how to be well, teachers must be well themselves.

Mindfulness

Teacher-guided activities to help students understand, calm, and manage negative emotions



Brain Games

Fun activities to promote executive functioning like listening, focus, impulse control, and memory



Group Work

Strategies to promote social skills and community-building integrated into academic tasks



Additional Resources

- [Networking to Integrate SDG Target 4.7 and SEL into Educational Materials \(NISSEM\)](#)
- [The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies \(INEE\)](#)
- [Education in Crisis and Conflict Network \(ECCN\)](#)
- [FHI 360’s SEL Fact Sheet](#)
- [International Rescue Committee’s Safe Healing and Learning Spaces Toolkit](#)

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

WHAT DOES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?



Inclusive education requires a profound cultural shift at the early childhood, primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, and having one system of education for all learners with the provision of supports inclusive of learners with disabilities.

Inclusive Education embraces “Universal Design for Learning” and ensures school systems are equipped with skills, knowledge and resources to teach all learners in accessible environments.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?



Budgeting Issues

few countries have developed plans with budgets for implementing early intervention and inclusive education



Stigma & Discrimination

stigma and discrimination continue to marginalize learners with disabilities, especially girls with disabilities



Proper Training

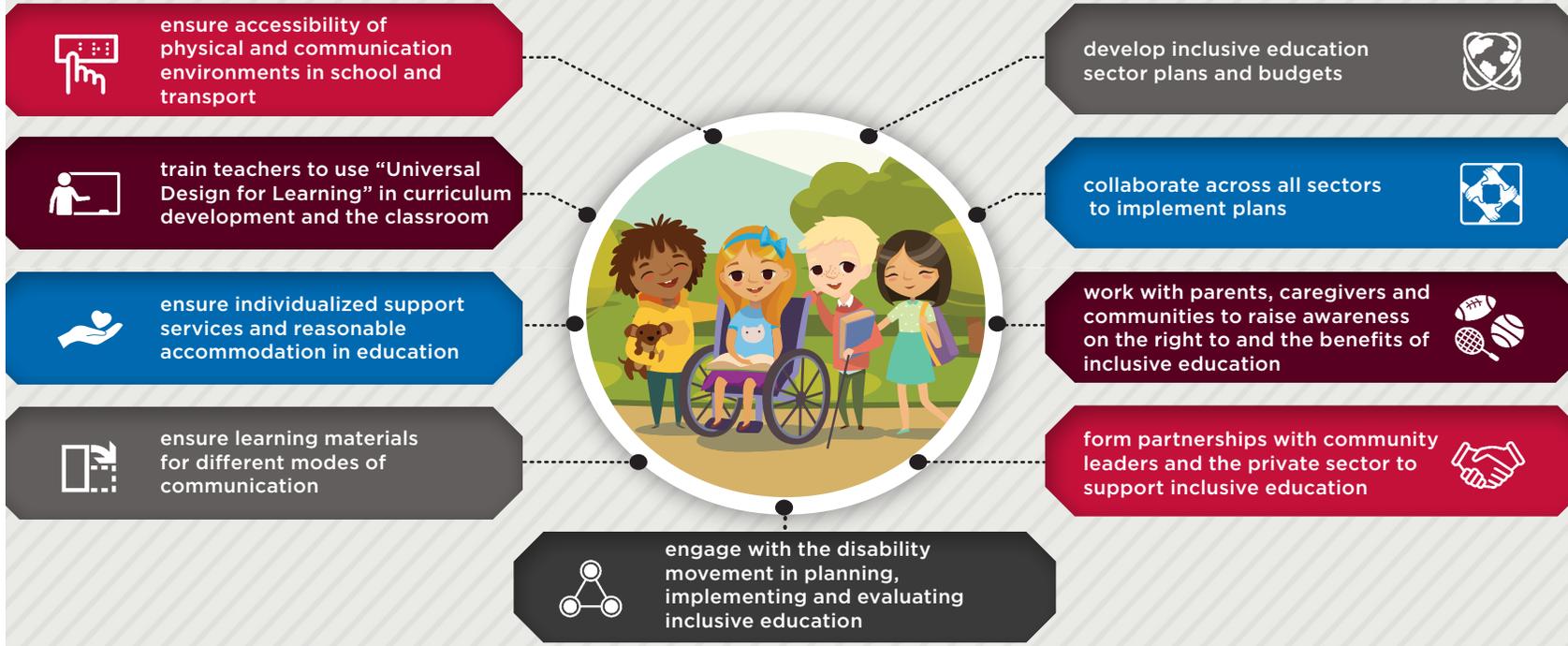
teachers lack proper training and accessible learning materials to effectively teach all learners, including young children



Missed Opportunities

humanitarian and relief efforts usually forget learners with disabilities

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



STATISTICS

While the objective of SDG4 is to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

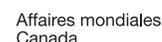
as many as half of the estimated
65,000,000

primary and lower secondary-school age children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



Educating students with disabilities has economic, social and health benefits, for them, their families and the national GDP. Supporting teachers to respond to diverse learning styles benefits all learners and improves the quality of education for all.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Carol da Silva and Anjuli Shivshanker

In recent years, the international development community has made considerable advances in monitoring and evaluating (M&E) the quality and outcomes of its primary grade learning programs. Along with this progress has come a demand for increasingly sophisticated and localized tools. As the number of children and youth affected by conflict or crisis grows, measurement approaches appropriate for conflict and crisis-affected populations is increasingly demanded.



Best Practices to Capture Learning in Multilingual or Diglossic Contexts

- Given the diglossic nature of Arabic, the instructions and background questions for assessments should be in the learner's mother tongue, while the test items should be in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).
- Difficulty of items based on the match between the Arabic dialect and MSA should be considered when leveling test items for specific age groups.



M&E for Equity and Inclusion

- The data collected by education systems at the classroom, school, regional, and national levels must allow for aggregation and disaggregation by contextually relevant facets of marginalization, such as displacement, gender, disability, or ethnic group.
- Data systems should allow for layered analysis of marginalization. For example, examining the differences in learning outcomes for displaced versus non-displaced girls.
- Using data to understand equity and inclusion requires more than disaggregation. Education systems should design indicators that capture progress against the equity and inclusion outcomes. For example, an indicator focused on equity would be “% reduction in gap between male and female instructors in the classroom.” See Equity of Access to Education Indicator Guidance.¹
- M&E data on equity and inclusion will need to be interpreted alongside other data about the education system, such as data from classroom observations; teacher and learner attendance at school and trainings; access to materials; school safety; and learning outcomes.
- Education sector assessments need to include conflict and crisis-affected populations in the sampling frame.



M&E in Conflict or Crisis-Affected Settings or for Displaced Populations

- Sometimes in crisis contexts a single, formal curricula may not exist.² In this case, assessments should be designed to test general literacy and numeracy skills that reflect national or international proficiency benchmarks, rather than curricular standards.³
- Exposure to crisis and conflict can negatively impact academic outcomes. Measuring the social and emotional skills of learners as well as how those skills correlate with reading and math learning outcomes can be critical to understanding how to improve academic outcomes.⁴

¹ <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/equity-access-indicator-guidance>

² <http://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2019/03/14/syrias-broken-schools-will-make-it-difficult-to-fix-the-country>

³ For example, the Syria Holistic Assessment of Learning (SHAL), which was developed to validly and reliably measure what Syrian children do know as opposed to what they do not – a critical tool in a context in which there are at least seven different curricula being used as of 2019.

⁴ The Holistic Assessment of Learning and Development Outcomes (HALDO) is an example of such as assessment. It enables practitioners to understand the needs of learners aged 4–12 across four domains: literacy, numeracy, social and emotional learning (SEL), and executive functioning.

- Education Management Information Systems need to be feasible to use--both for entering and extracting data-- for highly mobile or hard-to-find populations.
- Assessments must be constructed with intentional holism. When subtasks or items are chosen based solely on alignment with program goals, the psychometric properties are often ignored, compromising the accuracy and meaning of the resulting information.
- The assessment instrument must be feasible to administer for the intended user. This often means that the administration and scoring guidance must be accessible for relatively untrained teachers/facilitators or enumerators



Measurement Approaches Useful for Cross-National Comparisons

- Policy Linking is a methodology that allows for comparison between learning outcomes across multiple languages, time periods, and countries. It is particularly useful for comparing outcomes between marginalized groups.
- Policy linking also allows countries to aggregate outcomes across various groups for international reporting against USAID Foreign Assistance Indicators and the Sustainable Development Goals.

READING

Hanada Taha Thomure, Fathi Elashry, Rebecca Rhodes & Rebeca Martinez

USAID's Reading MATTERS (Mentors, Administrators, Teachers, Texts, Extra Practice, Regular Assessment, Standards) 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.

Key Questions for Discussions

What are the most important contextual factors in your country/region that should be considered when using the Reading MATTERS framework?

What are some challenges you've faced in implementing 1-2 of the different components included in the Reading MATTERS Framework? How have you addressed these challenges?

How can we as primary grade specialists best explain the interconnected nature of the components of the Reading MATTERS Framework to those with whom we work?

How could you and your partners use the Reading MATTERS framework in your context?

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Melissa Chiappetta

TARGETS

INDICATORS

<p>4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes</p>	<p>4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of the lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex</p>
<p>4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</p>	<p>4.2.1 Proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being, by sex</p> <p>4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex</p>
<p>4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including university</p>	<p>4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex</p>
<p>4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</p>	<p>4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill</p>
<p>4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations</p>	<p>4.5.1 Party indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile, and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples, and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated</p>
<p>4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy</p>	<p>4.6.1 Percentage of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in a functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p>
<p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contributions to sustainable development</p>	<p>4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher education, and (d) student assessment</p>
<p>4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability, and gender-sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all</p>	<p>4.A.1 Proportion of schools with access to: (a) electricity; (b) the Internet for pedagogical purposes; (c) computers for pedagogical purposes; (d) adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities; (e) basic drinking water; (f) single-sex basic sanitation facilities; and (g) basic handwashing facilities (as per the WASH indicator definitions)</p>
<p>4.B By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering, and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries.</p>	<p>4.B.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships, by sector and type of study</p>
<p>4.C By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States</p>	<p>4.C.1 Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in a given country</p>



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Remedial Education: educational interventions that address the learning needs of a targeted group of children who are falling behind academically or not mastering specific competencies in their grade level.

Traditionally, remedial education targets children who have been excluded from education, live in conflicted areas, orphans, refugees, and other vulnerable groups, especially before they lose interest in learning. Each pupil is different in terms of learning ability, academic standards, classroom learning and academic performance. Each has his own in learning. We need to understand their specific needs and offer specific additional opportunities to learn.

Why is it important? Without adequate and timely support to address their learning needs, students continue to perform poorly. Eventually, they are at risk of dropping out if this is not addressed properly at the early stages. On a systems level, high repetition rates and school dropout, in addition to the great number of school age children out of school due to low performance and low quality of education, have driven countries to find strategies to improve educational outcomes in the format of alternative programs that go beyond regular instruction in national strategies. Well targeted and well implemented remedial interventions can give an opportunity for low performing students to catch up with their peers and possibly avoid grade repetition. As an example, selecting at risk students from Grade 1 - 5, assess them, and provide them with after school remedial programs to master the content to progress to the next grade.

How can it be implemented? Remedial education can be a standalone program in or outside of school/ school hours, integrated into ongoing programs, a component within curriculum guidelines, and even national policy.

One key feature of remedial education programs is determining the competencies needing improvement, and the learning levels of program participants at time of selection, during, and after intervention. Once a target group has been identified, program objectives and expected outcomes have been defined; the method to increase the effectiveness is to choose the delivery mode or modes that will meet the stated objectives.

Modes of Implementation and Delivery

- Small group tutoring
- Separate classrooms for low performing students
- Grouping students by ability
- Volunteer tutoring
- Peer tutoring
- One-to-one tutoring

Settings for Delivering Remedial Programs

- During school hours: curricular
- After school hours: co-curricular and extra-curricular
- Summer program
- Remedial centers

Who delivers remedial education instruction?

Education professionals, family, community members, and even peers.

Recommendations

- Professional development for classroom teachers in proven methods should be a major emphasis of programming for low performing students, particularly in reading and math.
- Scarce resources can be channeled to implement programs at specific points within the primary school cycle where children are more likely to drop out from school such as when transitioning to lower secondary.



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- Remedial education should be part of the teacher education curriculum and in-service teacher training. Therefore teachers, facilitators or other program instructors and supervisors should be trained in strategies to best identify potential beneficiaries, become familiar with the pedagogic materials and understand how to put them in practice in the classroom, in addition to assess and monitor student learning during the intervention.
- Remedial education programs help children to improve learning levels, but students need to continue to receive a quality education where their learning gains is sustained & not fall back
- A more affordable way to provide remediation support can take place after school hours or during summer vacation in the format of “summer camps,” delivered by volunteer tutors selected within the community and who receive some training.

Defining low performing students: Students needing remedial education may be identified by their teachers, informally selected among students with low test scores, or may be part of a specific group selected for a remedial intervention. Teachers may receive training on how to better identify student’s learning needs. It is not uncommon for remedial interventions to be delivered to entire classrooms where baseline assessment results of students indicate low levels.

Defining indicators of expected outcomes: Indicators of expected outcomes of the remedial interventions will be planned based on the learner’s level and educational needs. They can be as broad as passing the grade or as specific as acquiring reading fluency.

Discussion Questions:

- What have been some challenges faced or observed in implementing remedial programs?
- What evidence in your context is linked to the success of a remedial education program?
- How is it possible to implement extra academic support through a remedial program in already poor resourced school systems in terms of human and financial resources and its challenges?



STATE OF THE ART (SOTA) CONFERENCE ON ARABIC LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Other Resources



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USAID EDUCATION: ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR MARGINALIZED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

USAID works to ensure children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes their social well-being.

USAID believes that education is a foundational driver of development, and fundamental to achieving self-reliance. When children and youth go to school and receive training in skills they can use in the workforce and to navigate life, they are able to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, communities, and countries. USAID works in more than 50 developing countries to ensure that investments in education systems--from pre-primary to higher education--enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Despite worldwide improvements in access to education, millions of children and youth still lack access to quality learning opportunities. Even after being enrolled in learning opportunities, these children and youth still face inequities in receiving the full benefit of education. This is especially pronounced for marginalized and vulnerable children and youth, such as girls, those in rural areas, individuals with disabilities, children and youth

More than 75 million children and youth between the ages of 3 and 18 living in crisis- or conflict-affected countries need educational support.

from poor households, and those in crisis and conflict settings. USAID and its partners are working to bring education opportunities to these populations and address the barriers that prevent equity and inclusion for all children and youth.

Many interventions show promise, such as making financing more equitable and accessible to poor families; using technology to expand access to learning in hard-to-reach locations; and providing flexible, second-chance, or alternative learning opportunities to reach children or youth who have dropped out of formal education. But enrollment and attendance in primary, secondary, higher education, or training does not automatically lead to learning. The expansion of schooling and learning opportunities is a necessary first step to education but must be coupled with investments that improve quality. USAID's programs unlock the true potential of education as children and youth gain more skills, capabilities, and competencies.

Approximately 50 percent of the 150 million children with disabilities worldwide are out of school; 90 percent of those have never been in school.

COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

- In **Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal**, USAID programming is addressing critical needs in the education system for students with disabilities such as development and use of teaching and learning materials; efforts to screen, identify, and refer children and youth with disabilities for services that enable greater access to school; or training of teachers to better support these students in the classroom. In total, approximately 900,000 students with and without disabilities will benefit from these programs.
- In **Liberia**, the Accelerated Quality Education for Liberian Children program condenses six years of primary education into only three years of instruction, giving learners the education they need to reenter formal schooling. There are no school fees, and the program provides instructional materials, effectively removing the biggest reason why 300,000 Liberian children do not attend school: cost.
- In **Mozambique**, instruction was previously all in Portuguese, which many children do not speak when they start school. The five-year Let's Read! bilingual early grade literacy program is working in partnership with the Mozambique Ministry of Education and Human Development to improve early grade literacy instruction in Grades 1-3. The program promotes instruction in three local languages – Emakhuwa, Elomwe and Echuwabo – in Nampula and Zambézia provinces to prepare children for transition to Portuguese in later grades. In 2018, Let's Read! reached over 110,000 Grade 1 students in 907 schools in Nampula and Zambézia. The Bilingual Education Campaign in Nampula and Zambézia reached approximately 7,410 participants.

CONTACT

E3: Office of Education

U.S. Agency for International Development
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 8th fl
Washington, DC, USA 20009

Email: officeofeducation@usaid.gov
Phone 202-712-0000



USAID EDUCATION: EARLY LEARNING AND FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

PHOTO CREDIT: USAID

By ensuring children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills, USAID advances economic opportunity and life-long learning.

Education is a foundational driver of development, and fundamental to achieving self-reliance. When children and youth build skills they can use for work and school, they can pursue more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, their communities, and their countries. USAID works in more than 50 nations to promote education that enables all children and youth to acquire the skills they need to be productive members of society.

SKILLS-BASED LEARNING THAT CHANGES LIVES

Worldwide, 617 million learners do not meet minimum standards in reading and math. Two-thirds of these young people, or 400 million learners, are already in school. Children and youth who do not develop foundational language, reading, math, and socio-emotional skills struggle to catch up with their peers later in life. The inequities they experience can be compounded by discrimination, crisis and conflict, and identity-based violence in and around schools.

Gaining foundational reading, math, and social and emotional skills is a strong predictor of whether an individual will stay in school, obtain a degree, get and maintain a job—or become involved in a crime.

USAID works to build foundational skills for children and youth at all levels from the pre-primary level onward. In both formal and non-formal settings, USAID strengthens students' holistic development in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning (SEL). USAID invests in educational standards, materials, teacher professional development, school leadership initiatives, student assessment, and community engagement to teach learners these essential skills. USAID promotes the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across its portfolio, ensuring that disabled students and those experiencing other barriers to learning (i.e. crisis & conflict, poverty, discrimination, etc.) build a strong academic foundation.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

The UN Sustainable Development Goals call for ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. USAID's global networks for improved learning support the achievement of this ambition. Through partnerships such as the **Global Book Alliance**, the **Global Reading Network**, and the **Mobiles for Education Alliance**, USAID works to enhance the long-term impact, scale, and sustainability of innovative initiatives to improve language, reading, math, and SEL outcomes for students around the world. Examples of our work from pre-primary to secondary education include:

- The **All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development (ACR –GCD)** is a partnership for innovation in education technology between USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government that prioritizes literacy development for children with disabilities. Recent prize competitions such as Sign On for Literacy and Book Boost have catalyzed the use of accessible materials for sign language users and learners with print disabilities.
- In **Mali**, it is not unusual to have 100 students in a classroom with a single teacher and very few, if any, books. The Selective Integrated Reading Activity has developed techniques that are improving reading and writing instruction even in these challenging circumstances. Midway through the program, four times more students in the participating schools could read at national standard levels than could before the program started.
- In **Nigeria**, the Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI+) activity supports in- and out- of school children to read and write in Hausa and English. In 2018, 2000+ teachers and more than 600,000 primary school children benefited from over two million NEI+ student books. NEI+ has demonstrated significant improvement in reading gains for children and youth, and has helped 68,000 learners to qualify for formal schooling.
- In **Egypt**, USAID partnered with the Ministry of Education to create a network of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) schools so high-performing students from remote areas across Egypt can access premium quality STEM education. These schools established curriculum, trained teachers, and implemented an assessment system. To date, the program has benefitted 1,468 high school students, 44 percent of whom are girls.

CONTACT

E3: Office of Education
U.S. Agency for International Development
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 8th fl
Washington, DC, USA 20009

E-mail: officeofeducation@usaid.gov
Phone : 202-712-0000



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



EDUCATION IS TRANSFORMATIONAL

Education is transformational for individuals and societies; it creates pathways to better health, economic growth, a sustainable environment, and peaceful, democratic societies and to achieving self-reliance. Our vision is a world where partner country education systems enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society.

PHOTO CREDIT: USAID

STRATEGY AND POLICY

USAID leverages its expertise, partnerships, and global perspective to guide and influence the education sector, advancing the Agency’s development priorities. In September 2018, USAID released the first-ever [U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education](#). The [USAID Education Policy](#), launched in November 2018, provides an Agency-wide vision and direction for supporting partner countries in strengthening their capacity to deliver quality learning opportunities for children and youth from pre-primary through higher education. Its priorities are that:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

“Investing in high-quality education for all children and youth builds the human capital partner countries need to lead their own development and growth.”

—USAID Administrator
Mark Green

PARTNERING FOR RESULTS

USAID supports global partnerships and initiatives that foster innovation, create new opportunities for collective action, and leverage the Agency’s annual \$1 billion investment in education. Global partnerships include: the [Global Partnership for Education](#), the [All Children Reading Grand Challenge for Development](#), the [Global Book Alliance](#), the [Mobiles for Education Alliance](#), and [Education Cannot Wait](#). USAID is also expanding engagement with the private sector through programs like the [Youth Employment Funders Group](#) and initiatives such as the [Blended Finance](#) grant to leverage private capital and support entrepreneurs to achieve education outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa since there is tremendous opportunity for private investment in the education sector in emerging markets.

In 2018, USAID reached more than 35 million children and youth with basic and higher education programs. Examples include:

- In **Kenya**, the Tusome program (Kiswahili for “Let’s Read”) is a partnership between USAID and the Ministry of Education to improve literacy for 7.4 million pupils in all public primary schools and 1,500 low-cost private schools across the country. The Tusome technical approach employs research-driven learning materials, proven teaching methodologies, and cutting-edge tablet-based feedback and monitoring system. To date, the program has trained every lower primary school teacher in 24,136 schools with state-of-the-art interventions that define how Kenyan children learn to read and provided more than 24 million new textbooks to schools.
- In **Jordan**, where the unemployment rate is above 30 percent and an influx of refugees from Syria has increased the number of out-of-school youth, a USAID-funded “second chance” education program has allowed 18,000 youth to complete a 10th grade certificate and helped them become contributing members of society.
- In **Indonesia**, through the Mitra Kunci initiative, USAID is partnering with the Government of Indonesia and the private sector to equip 200,000 poor and vulnerable youth aged 18-34 with the skills and resources needed to compete in that country’s job market. Young people, especially women and people with disabilities, will receive training, information, and resources to prepare them to meet the needs of the private sector.
- Current education and training systems in most of the Europe and Eurasia countries are not adequately linked with the labor market needs. The Supporting Entrepreneurship Education in Europe and Eurasia (SEEEE) regional project (in **Serbia, North Macedonia, Moldova, and Georgia**), in collaboration with private sector partners, prepares the next generation of young people to meaningfully engage in supporting economic development of their countries. In FY18, SEEEE reached 15,154 students and 814 teachers.

CONTACT

E3: Office of Education
U.S. Agency for International Development
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, 8th fl
Washington, DC, USA 20009

Phone 202-712-0000
email: officeofeducation@usaid.gov



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KATE MALONEY FOR USAID

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SOFT SKILLS

USAID Education Policy Brief

SUGGESTED CITATION

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The following staff at USAID authored this brief: Kalene Resler, Anjuli Shivshanker, Samantha Alvis, Chris Capacci-Carneal, Melissa Chiappetta, Lauren Greubel, Julie Hanson-Swanson, Ashley Henderson, Josh Josa, Laura Lartigue, Rebeca Martinez, Leah Maxson, Olga Merchan, Yolande Miller-Grandvaux, Sandy Olesky-Ojikutu, Rebecca Pagel, Nancy Taggart, Nina Weisenhorn, and Wendy Wheaton.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Achieving sustainable, quality learning and improving education outcomes are foundational drivers of a country's journey to self-reliance. Extensive evidence illustrates that children and youth with strong social and emotional skills or soft skills do better in school,¹ in life,² and at work³ because they gain the skills needed to lead productive lives and contribute positively to society. Both the 2018 [USG Strategy on International Basic Education](#) and the 2018 [USAID Education Policy](#) emphasize the importance of social and emotional skills or soft skills in assuring the long-term success of children and youth. Through the Strategy and Policy, USAID is providing new opportunities to systematically design, measure, implement, and understand the impact of programs that build social and emotional skills or soft skills for children and youth.

To support USAID staff and implementing partners in this work, this brief:

1. Provides an introductory understanding of what USAID means by the terms “social and emotional skills” and “soft skills” and how to communicate about them.
2. Specifies the desired outcomes and quality standards for programming that teach social and emotional skills or soft skills.
3. Identifies areas in which evidence and best practices still have gaps, and areas in which we should consider investing in further learning.

2. USAID TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Several sectors, including education, use the umbrella terms “social and emotional skills” and “soft skills” to refer to a broad set of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that affect how children and youth interact with each other, solve problems, make decisions, and feel about themselves. Navigating the often-overlapping use of these umbrella terms within and across sectors and countries can pose a challenge in programming towards skills development. As outlined in the USAID Education Policy, USAID will continue to use the term “social and emotional skills” for basic education programming and the term “soft skills” for youth workforce and higher education programming. The remainder of this section provides additional clarity and guidance on how USAID will define and use

¹ Rebecca D. Taylor et al., “Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects.” *Child Development* 88, no. 4 (2017): 1156-71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>; Joseph A. Durlak et al., “The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions.” *Child Development* 82, no. 1 (2011): 405-32, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>.

² Damon E. Jones et al., “Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness.” *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 11 (2015): 2283-90, <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302630>; Sarah Gates et al., “Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes.” Washington, D.C. USAID’s YouthPower: Implementation, YouthPower Action. (2016).

³ Laura H. Lippman et al., “Workforce Connections: Key “Soft Skills” That Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields.” *Child Trends* #2015-24 (2015).

these terms and gives guidance on how to effectively collaborate and communicate about these skills within and across sectors.

Box 1. Illustrative Social and Emotional Skills⁶

1. Self awareness: self-confidence, self-efficacy, identifying emotions
2. Self management: self-discipline, impulse control, stress management
3. Social awareness: empathy, respect for others, perspective taking
4. Relationship skills: communication, teamwork
5. Responsible decision-making: identifying problems, analyzing situations

The USAID Education Policy defines “soft skills” as a “broad set of skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that enable people to effectively navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals.”⁵ Within USAID, the term “soft skills” has typically been used in youth workforce development programs, higher education programs, and in the context of cross-sectoral positive youth development programming, aligning with USAID’s vision to help youth become healthy, productive, included, and engaged individuals.

The USAID Education Policy defines “social and emotional skills” as a “set of cognitive, social, and emotional competencies that children, youth, and adults learn through explicit, active, focused, sequenced instruction that allows them to understand and manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”⁴ Within USAID, the terms “social and emotional skills” and a common variant, “social and emotional learning,” are typically used in the context of formal or non-formal education programming, across all levels of the education system.

Box 2. Illustrative Soft Skills Correlated to Workforce Outcomes⁷

1. Higher-order thinking skills: problem solving, critical thinking, decision-making
2. Self-control: delay gratification, impulse control, directing and focusing attention, managing emotions, regulating behavior
3. Social skills: respecting others, using context-appropriate behavior, resolving conflict
4. Communication skills: oral, written, and non-verbal communication
5. Positive self-concept: self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness and beliefs, self-esteem, well-being, and pride

⁴ This definition from the 2018 USAID Education Policy comes from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#), a U.S.-based institute that produces research evidence and practical guidance for implementing social and emotional learning throughout school systems.

⁵ USAID. *2018 USAID Education Policy*. Washington, DC (2018).

https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2018_Education_Policy_FINAL_WEB.pdf. USAID has funded a series of studies that demonstrate the importance of soft skills development for fostering positive youth outcomes in multiple domains, including reproductive health, violence prevention, and workforce success. Please see the [Youth Power Learning Agenda website](#) for an up-to-date list of studies.

⁶ [CASEL](#) provides the most up-to-date theory and research on education programs that support this list of skills.

⁷ L. Hinson, C. Kapungu, C. Jessee, M. Skinner, M. Bardini, and T. Evans-Whipp. “Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit: A Guide for Implementers of Youth.” Washington, D.C.: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International (2016); F. Soares, S. Babb, O. Diener, S. Gates, and C. Ignatowski. “Guiding Principles for Building Soft Skills among Adolescents and Young Adults.” Washington, D.C.: USAID’s YouthPower (2017); Lippman et al., “Workforce Connections: Key “Soft Skills” That Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields,” 2015.

Communicating Effectively about Social and Emotional Skills or Soft Skills

Box 3. Communicating with a Ministry of Education

Many countries in which USAID works have policies or programs related to social and emotional learning or soft skills development based on their own cultural, historical, or social contexts.

USAID worked with three State Agencies for Mass Education in Nigeria to develop curriculum and scripted lessons on social and emotional learning for Nonformal Learning Centers using existing curriculum. Age-appropriate social and emotional competencies were already defined within the Nigerian Ministry of Education Civic Education Curriculum and served as a contextually relevant framework for adaptation to non-formal education for crisis-affected, displaced learners.

Over the past few decades, skills development in children and youth has been studied in many sectors, producing a wealth of evidence on a wide range of child and youth outcomes and a variety of definitions and terms for social and emotional skills or soft skills. Outside of USAID, staff and partners will hear and see different terms being used and will need to adapt their language to work effectively across disciplines.

The fields of psychology and education most often use the term “social and emotional skills” or “non-academic skills,” while disciplines of economics, agriculture, workforce development, and the private sector tend to use the terms “soft skills,” “transferable skills,” “life skills,” or “non-cognitive skills.” The fields of gender and global health also use “life skills,” with social and emotional competencies being a key subset of these skills. Practitioners from humanitarian or social services backgrounds may use the term “psychosocial support” or “holistic well-being.” The

field of public mental health views soft skills as a part of positive mental health; programs aimed at building soft skills can be a part of mental health promotion.

Do: Familiarize yourself with the other broad terms different professional disciplines use to talk about a similar set of skills.⁸

Do: Establish a shared language and vision with country stakeholders (Ministry of Education, implementing partners, other donors, etc.).

Do: Explicitly name and define a skill and a measurement approach. Assure all stakeholders agree on the answers to the following questions:

- What outcomes does this program hope to achieve? For which population?
- What is the role of social and emotional skills or soft skills in achieving the outcomes? How do they fit into the theory of change?
- How will we measure these skills?

Don't: Assume that other stakeholders have the same definition of a skill as USAID, even if the terminology is identical or similar.

⁸ Gates et al., “Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes,” 2016, provides an example of how specific terms are used across sectors of youth workforce, violent prevention, and sexual and reproductive health.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS OR SOFT SKILLS IN ACHIEVING EDUCATION AND YOUTH OUTCOMES

The USAID Education Policy supports partner country education systems to provide all children and youth with the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. In order to achieve this goal, the Policy identifies four priorities that are critical to supporting countries on their journey to self-reliance:

1. Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.⁹
2. Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
3. Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
4. Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

Skills development plays a role in achieving all four education priorities in a variety of ways:

1. By providing quality, safe, and inclusive services delivered by supportive adults and role models that build learners' social and emotional skills, education systems will be able to reach and retain all learners, particularly the most marginalized.
2. By building learners' social and emotional skills, education systems may boost the growth of academic outcomes, such as literacy and numeracy skills.
3. In crisis and conflict settings, education services that teach social and emotional skills may help mitigate the negative effects of prolonged exposure to conflict and crisis.
4. Education and training can equip youth with soft skills that can help them be successful in a variety of career pathways.
5. Higher education institutions are drivers of development. They can build the social and emotional skills of teachers and training professionals so they may create a more inclusive,

⁹ The USAID Education Policy identifies these children as girls, children affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, children and youth with disabilities, children in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, children and youth who are sexual minorities, and victims of trafficking.

supportive classroom environment. They have a unique role in preparing learners with the advanced knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's global economy. They also drive contextually specific and country-owned research and learning.

Equal access to quality education is a foundational driver of a country's journey to self-reliance. The concept of self-reliance¹⁰ applies not only to education systems and institutions in partner countries, but also to the children, youth, and communities who benefit from education. The development of social and emotional skills or soft skills through education can foster individual self-reliance by providing individuals with the capability to act independently, adapt to changing conditions, and make the most of their assets and opportunities. Additionally, skills development provides strong returns in individual earnings and income. In high-income contexts, programming has been shown to return \$11 of benefits back to society for every \$1 invested because children and youth who benefit from these programs gain the skills they need to lead productive lives and contribute positively to society.¹¹

Building social and emotional skills or soft skills among citizens is an investment in the human capital of a country. When a country's future leaders and policymakers develop key soft skills such as goal setting and responsible decision-making, governance can improve. Competencies such as social awareness and empathy may lead to more inclusive, equitable development and decrease conflict. Additionally, in conflict and crisis contexts, individuals with basic education and foundational literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills can be more resilient,¹² adaptive to new environments, and able to overcome personal, social, and economic obstacles.

4. THE BEST AVAILABLE EVIDENCE ON THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS OR SOFT SKILLS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

USAID recognizes the importance of social and emotional skills or soft skills for all children and youth regardless of where they are in their educations. This recognition is in part based on the extensive body of existing evidence from various fields in the United States, Europe, or other high-income contexts, as well as emerging evidence from low- and middle-income countries. Though more rigorous evidence from the settings where USAID and partners work is urgently needed, the best available evidence illustrates that:

- Education programs that promote social and emotional skills can improve children and youth's attitudes about themselves and others, increase positive social behaviors, reduce conduct

¹⁰ Self-reliance in the education sector entails a country's capacity to plan, finance, and implement quality education for all children and youth, and a commitment to do so effectively, inclusively, and with accountability.

¹¹ Clive Belfield et al., "The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning." Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education Teachers College, Columbia University, (2015, revised version), www.cbcse.org.

¹² USAID. "Resilience at USAID: 2016 Progress Report." Washington, D.C. (2016), Retrieved from https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/082816_Resilience_FinalB.PDF.

problems, reduce emotional distress, and importantly, improve academic performance.¹³ This includes students with disabilities.¹⁴

- Education programs that purposefully and actively build social and emotional skills also can foster inclusivity at school.¹⁵ They may reduce bias in discipline, school management, or instructional approaches that prevent girls,¹⁶ children with disabilities, minorities, or other types of marginalized learners from accessing and benefitting from school.¹⁷ They may reduce stigmas associated with disability, increase self-worth, and provide a sense of belongingness among children with disabilities.¹⁸ Disability-inclusive education programs can improve the social and emotional skills of students with and without disabilities.¹⁹

Box 4. Teacher Professional Development in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

An impact evaluation in Uganda found that strengthening the social and emotional skills of teachers creates a safer, more supportive school environment and reduces the incidence of corporal punishment ([Devries et al. 2015, e383-e384](#)).

An impact evaluation in the DRC found that teacher professional development and an improved literacy, numeracy, and a social and emotional skills curriculum improved students' perceptions of their schools as safe and supportive and improved their literacy and numeracy skills. ([Torrente et al. 2019](#)).

- Exposure to violence and adversity can lead to impairments in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental well-being.²⁰ The harmful effects of toxic stress can be blocked or even

¹³ Durlak et al., “The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions,” 2011; Taylor et al., “Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects,” 2017.

¹⁴ Roy McConkey et al. “Promoting Social Inclusion Through Unified Sports for Youth with Intellectual Disabilities: A Five-Nation Study.” *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research* 57, no. 10 (2012): 923-35. A qualitative, descriptive study that explores and explains the impact that inclusive programming can have on the social and emotional skills of children or youth with disabilities.

¹⁵ Example: one-year impacts of a universal social and emotional learning intervention with primary school students in the Democratic Republic of Congo illustrated that impacts were largest for the math scores of language minority children and in low-performing schools. J. Lawrence Aber et al., “Impacts After One Year of “Healing Classroom” on Children’s Reading and Math Skills in DRC: Results From a Cluster Randomized Trial.” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10, no. 3 (2017): 507-29.

¹⁶ Ha Yeon Kim et al., “The Impact of IRC’s Healing Classrooms Tutoring on Children’s Learning and Social-Emotional Outcomes in Niger.” International Rescue Committee and New York University Policy Brief, Number 2.2.2 (2019).

¹⁷ Overview of how social and emotional skills may help create more equitable, inclusive classrooms: Anne Gregory et al., “Social and Emotional Learning: Social and Emotional Learning and Equity in School Discipline.” *The Future of Children* 27, no. 1 (2017): 117-36.

¹⁸ Valeria Cavioni et al., “Social and Emotional Learning for Children with Learning Disability: Implications for Inclusion.” *International Journal of Emotional Education* 9, no. 2 (2017): 100-9.

¹⁹ Todd Grindal et al., “A Summary of the Research Evidence on Inclusive Education.” Abt Associates. (2016).

reversed when children have safe learning environments, nurturing relationships with key adults, and develop social and emotional skills.²¹ Crisis-affected children also can benefit most from social-emotional learning interventions in terms of improving academic achievement.²²

Box 5. Employment in Rwanda

A rigorous impact evaluation of a program in Rwanda that provided soft skills training and school-to-work transition supports increased youth's soft skills and their incidence of employment relative to a control group (Alcid and Martin 2017, 1-4).

- Teachers are critical partners for children's social, emotional, and academic development,²³ and their own well-being is correlated with better classroom management practices and relationship building, which contributes to improved student behavior and academic achievement.²⁴
- Employers particularly value advanced cognitive and soft skills in their employees.²⁵ Social skills, higher-order thinking, and self-control contribute to four types of workforce outcomes: employment, performance, income/wages, and entrepreneurial success.²⁶ Leadership, a complex soft skill, requires mastery of social skills, communication, self-control, and the ability to perceive and manage emotions.²⁷
- Enhancing youth's communication, conflict management, and problem-solving skills, and assisting them with building positive peer-to-peer relationships can contribute to the prevention of emotional, physical,²⁸ and potentially even sexual abuse and violence.²⁹ Social and emotional skills or soft skills can serve as protective assets for young women, particularly those who are outside of school or in the workforce. Programs focusing on skills development in adolescent

²⁰ Jack P. Shonkoff et al., "The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress." *Pediatrics* 129, no. 1 (2012): e232-e246.

²¹ Rana Dajani et al., "Hair Cortisol Concentrations in War-Affected Adolescents: A Prospective Intervention Trial." *Psychoneuroendocrinology* 89 (2018): 138-46.

²² Stephanie M. Jones et al., "Two-Year Impacts of a Universal School-Based Social-Emotional and Literacy Intervention: An Experiment in Translational Developmental Research." *Child Development* 82, no. 2 (2011): 533-54.

²³ P.A. Jennings et al., "Impacts of the CARE for Teachers Program on Teachers' Social and Emotional Competence and Classroom Interactions." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 109, no. 7 (2017): 1010-1028.

²⁴ Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl, "Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers." *The Future of Children* 27, no. 1 (2017): 137-55.

²⁵ Wendy Cunningham et al., "Employer Voices, Employer Demands, and Implications for Public Skills Development Policy Connecting the Labor and Education Sectors." World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper WPS7582 (2016).

²⁶ Lippman et al., "Workforce Connections: Key "Soft Skills" That Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields," (2015).

²⁷ David Rosete et al., "Emotional Intelligence and Its Relationship to Workplace Performance Outcomes of Leadership Effectiveness." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 26, no. 5 (2005): 388-99, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730510607871>.

²⁸ Sandra J. Wilson et al., "School-based Interventions for Aggressive and Disruptive Behavior: Update of a Meta-Analysis." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 33, no. 2 (2007): S130-S143, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2007.04.011>.

²⁹ Kristin L. Dunkle et al., "Perpetration of Partner Violence and HIV Risk Behaviour Among Young Men in the Rural Eastern Cape, South Africa." *AIDS* 20, no. 16 (2006): 2107-14, 10.1097/01.aids.0000247582.00826.52.

girls have been shown to decrease risky sexual behavior, improve health outcomes, delay early marriage, and improve future livelihoods.³⁰

5. DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE LEARNING

The size of the evidence base in context to where USAID works does not yet match the size of the evidence base in the United States; however, it is growing. USAID’s policy commitment to social and emotional skills or soft skills for children and youth at all levels of the education system, both formal and non-formal, requires focused investments in research and learning.

USAID and partners are well-placed to make significant contributions to the global understanding of the use, significance, and sustainability of programming for social and emotional skills or soft skills and related outcomes. Potential questions include:

- What interventions effectively and cost-effectively improve learners’ social and emotional skills or soft skills, particularly in crisis and conflict-affected contexts? What are the causal mechanisms through which interventions produce impacts? How can effective interventions be brought to scale in different education systems?
- In contexts where academic achievement is low, what is the relationship between social and emotional skills and academic achievement over time, particularly for the most marginalized students?
- How do gender, power, privilege, and culture interact with social and emotional skills or soft skills development?³¹ Are certain skills more meaningful to positive outcomes in some contexts than in others?
- How does an inclusive learning environment influence the development of social and emotional skills or soft skills in all students, including those who are from marginalized groups?
- What are the most effective and cost-effective ways to measure social and emotional skills or soft skills for different types of learners, teachers, instructors, faculty, or caregivers? What are the most effective and cost-effective ways to measure implementation of interventions,

Box 6. Psychosocial interventions teach skills and improve well-being

An impact evaluation of a program for Syrian and Jordanian adolescents, ages 12-18, showed that a structured, 8-week psychosocial intervention that taught participants to manage their impulses, assess risk, and rebuild empathy for themselves and others led to improved psychosocial well-being for both Syrians and Jordanians and decreased risk of mental health disorders. Important gender differences exist. Impacts for improved perceptions of safety and protection were limited to young men only. ([Kurtz, 2016](#); [Panter-Brick et al., 2017](#)).

³⁰ Kendra Dupuy et al., “Life Skills in Non-Formal Contexts for Adolescent Girls in Developing Countries.” CMI Report, Number 5. (2018).

³¹ Gregory et al., “Social and Emotional Learning: Social and Emotional Learning and Equity in School Discipline,” 2017.

specifically the way they are sequenced and children and youth’s exposure to various components of the intervention?

- How does technology enable effective social and emotional or soft skills programming?
- How do we best engage with higher education institutions to create contextually relevant research on how social and emotional skills or soft skills investments grow a country’s human capital and reinforce or amplify the impact of investments in education and youth workforce?
- How do higher education institutions best prepare a workforce of teachers, instructors, or faculty members to build social and emotional skills or soft skills for children and youth?

USAID’s Office of Education is working to answer these types of questions in both stable and crisis and conflict-affected settings, at several levels of the education system both formally and non-formally, and with a focus on equity and inclusion. USAID’s Office of Education will use the most rigorous methodologies available for the question; for example, if the question seeks to understand the effectiveness of an intervention, USAID recommends using an impact evaluation.

6. PROGRAM QUALITY PRINCIPLES

USAID provides basic program, quality principles for staff and partners to keep in mind when designing and implementing activities or programs that aim to grow social and emotional skills or soft skills for learners across the education continuum. When designing any program, USAID staff and partners should judiciously apply the best available evidence and draw on local expertise. These principles complement the existing [guiding principles for building soft skills in youth-focused programming](#).

1. Make the theory of change explicit. Identify the role that specific social and emotional skills or soft skills plays in achieving the desired outcomes in the results framework. At the activity level, the logic model or results framework should name specific social and emotional skills or soft skills, as well as identify how the learning environment and teachers, instructors, faculty, or caregivers reinforce their positive development. This sets the vision for USAID, ministry partners, implementing partners, and other stakeholders.
2. Understand the starting point for children and youth, the adults who teach them, and their families and caregivers. Target populations may already have important social and emotional skills or soft skills.
3. Tailor the way teachers, instructors, or faculty articulate, teach, and measure social and emotional skills or soft skills to the specific cultural context, prevailing social norms, age, developmental stage, and sex of the beneficiaries.

4. Ensure that the learning environment and the relationship between learners and their teachers, instructors, or faculty provide positive opportunities to practice and reinforce their learned skills.^{32,33} At a minimum, the learning environment must be physically and emotionally safe.
5. Ensure that the instructional content and other activities not included in the curriculum or classroom provide children and youth with relevant, appropriately sequenced, active, focused, and explicit instruction.³⁴ Relevant instruction teaches skills in combination, not in isolation,³⁵ and can be delivered in myriad ways beyond academic lesson plans, including teacher- or caregiver-focused activities, play-based learning, service learning projects, or extracurricular activities.
6. Leverage existing teachers and leaders. Social and emotional skills or soft skills instruction can be provided to and by teachers, instructors, or faculty; specialty staff are not required.³⁶
7. Train staff on a referral pathway to child protection and/or age-appropriate health services for learners. Social and emotional skills or soft skills programming does not replace the right children and youth have to legal services, health services, protective services, or other social services.
8. Map out where structural inequalities will limit the effectiveness of social and emotional skills. While social and emotional skills or soft skills have been shown to increase the agency and resilience of youth at the individual level, breaking down barriers to opportunities for all learners requires analysis and understanding of the structural inequalities present at other levels of the system.
9. Measure skill levels of children, youth, and their instructors or teachers at baseline, endline, and along the life of the intervention at critical points, for example in response to a shock or stress (like gang violence, displacement, or a natural disaster). Taking baseline assessments for social and emotional skills or soft skills alongside other pre-designed assessments on gender or social inclusion³⁷ will support interventions that teach at the right level for all learners, including

³² Soares et al., “Guiding Principles for Building Soft Skills among Adolescents and Young Adults,” (2017).

³³ James Rogan and Gwen Heaner, “Rapid Education and Risk Analysis Toolkit.” USAID. (2015).

³⁴ In the United States, programs that provide sequenced, active, explicit, focused instruction positively impact social and emotional skills, attitudes, social behavior, conduct problems, academic performance, and emotional distress. Programs that do not meet these quality standards affect only attitudes, conduct problems, and academic performance (i.e., they ultimately do not affect social and emotional skills or trigger the causal pathways linked to social and emotional skills). Durlak et al., “The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions,” (2011).

³⁵ EducationLinks. “Guiding Principles For Building Soft Skills.” (2017) Accessed from: <https://www.edulinks.org/resources/guiding-principles-building-soft-skills>.

³⁶ When school personnel (e.g., teachers, instructors, or faculty members) as opposed to non-school personnel deliver social and emotional skills programs, academic achievement improves. Durlak et al., “The Impact of Enhancing Students’ Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions,” 2011.

³⁷ USAID’s [ADS Chapter 205](#) (2017) and [How-To Note: Disability Inclusive Education](#) (2018) provide further guidance on this principle.

women and girls and learners with disabilities,³⁸ and provide appropriate professional development for teachers, instructors, and faculty. Measuring results of the programs that build social and emotional skills or soft skills will help grow the evidence base in contexts where USAID works, even though validated tools for measuring social and emotional skills or soft skills still are emerging.

7. KEY RESOURCES

While the section above provides key programming principles for USAID staff and partners to follow when designing and implementing activities that develop social and emotional skills or soft skills, additional guidance on skills definitions, programming approaches, implementation guidance, and measurement tools can be found on [EducationLinks](#). USAID invites partners to share their successes and challenges in implementing, measuring, and evaluating programs focused on growing the social and emotional skills or soft skills of children and youth through this [submission form](#) on EducationLinks.

³⁸ Anne Hayes, Ann Turnbull, and Norma Moran, “Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Read: Promoting Literacy for Learners with Disabilities.” USAID, Toolkit for International Education Stakeholders, (2018).