

# Early Grade Reading Assessment Somalia Toolkit Executive Summary

*SUBMITTED TO UNICEF SOMALIA  
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The Somalia EGRA Executive Summary draws heavily, and in some sections, entirely from the EGRA Toolkit, Second Edition.

## Why Do We Need Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA)?

Countries around the world have boosted primary school enrollment to historically unprecedented rates. Thanks to the targeted efforts of the United Nations' Education for All (EFA) campaign and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were slated for achievement by 2015, the world has seen dramatic improvements in primary school enrollment rates; in some places they are now nearly the same rates as in high-income countries. The net enrollment rate for primary school in developing regions has reached an estimated 91 percent in 2015, up from 83 percent in 2000; and the number of out-of-school children of primary school age worldwide has fallen by almost half in the same time frame (United Nations, 2015).

While reasonable benchmarks for reading literacy can vary, research does indicate that the *minimum* speed a person needs to read in order to comprehend a text is roughly one word per 1-1.15 seconds, or at least 45-60 words per minute. Many languages will vary from this figure, given the specifics of the language. The importance of fluency to comprehension is based on the capacity of an individual's working memory to understand a sentence. Linguistic structures vary considerably, with English being considered to have a rather complex language structure, while many African languages have more transparent orthographies. According to Abadzi (2006), this means that at least 45-60 correct words per minute (CWPM) in a text suitable for that grade is considered as a reasonable goal for a country.<sup>1</sup> Others would argue for more flexibility in setting literacy benchmarks based on the specifics of the languages.

The ability of EGRA to measure student learning and the usefulness of EGRA data to inform interventions and governmental policies has been demonstrated time and again in countries with similar profiles to Somalia. In addition, EGRA data is diagnostic of a system's success and failures, rather than an individual student or schools', and is useful when sampling is representative of a larger country and institutional change is being considered. For example, in Kenya, EGRA served as the conduit to drive education reform that ultimately led to a national overhaul of the reading curriculum and teacher training strategies for Grades 1, 2 and 3. While many options exist to assess student reading, EGRA results are easy to understand, and the assessment is relatively cost-efficient and well-developed making it attractive to governments and donors.

While enrollment in primary education has increased worldwide, Somalia has yet to experience the same gains in early education. Currently, UNICEF estimates that only 30% of school-aged children are enrolled in school and in rural areas, such as the Gedo region where the proposed 2018 Somalia EGRA will take place in schools receiving Alternative Basic Education (ABE), that number drops to 18%.<sup>2</sup> Given the history and current educational climate of Somalia, EGRA can play a useful role in future aspirations for the country.

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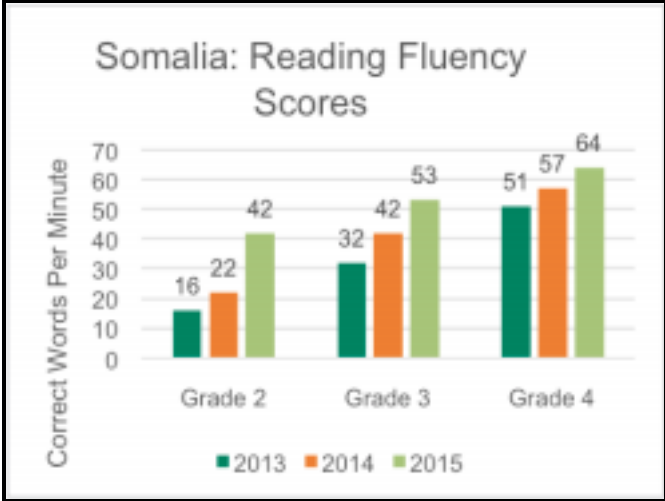
<sup>1</sup> Abadzi, H. (2006). *Efficient learning for the poor: insights from the frontier of cognitive neuroscience*. World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. (2015). *Education in Somalia*. <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/education.html>

# EGRA in Somalia

In 2014, Concern Worldwide reported on the results from the first Somalia EGRA data; however, the data was conducted as a program evaluation of their Comprehensive Foundational Literacy Intervention only.<sup>3</sup> The results showed that, despite mother tongue instruction in the early years, 47% of Somali students in Grade 2 were unable to read a single word in the oral reading passage.<sup>4</sup> After two years, at the endline of the Concern study, students showed significant gains thanks to reading interventions that were introduced. The data has some real limits, however, as it is only representative of students who were present on the day of the assessments and since Concern’s program focused only on the “extreme poor, results are lower than population based assessments would be in the same country.”<sup>5</sup> See Table 1 for a summary of results in the Concern sample. The results suggest increasing fluency levels for each grade over the 2013 to 2015 period.

**Table 1: EGRA in Mogadishu**



Another study examined Somali language literacy results, but in Ethiopia. The 2010 Research Triangle International’s (RTI) EGRA of the Somali region in Ethiopia, demonstrated somewhat better (but still sobering) outcomes than those identified in the Concern study. The results still showed low levels of literacy outcomes as 26% of students in Grade 2 were neither unable to read a single word in the oral reading passage nor read any words in 60 seconds, the basic minimum benchmark for grade 2.<sup>6</sup> RTI’s study was conducted in 33 schools and captured outcomes for 1183 students. See Table 2 for a summary.

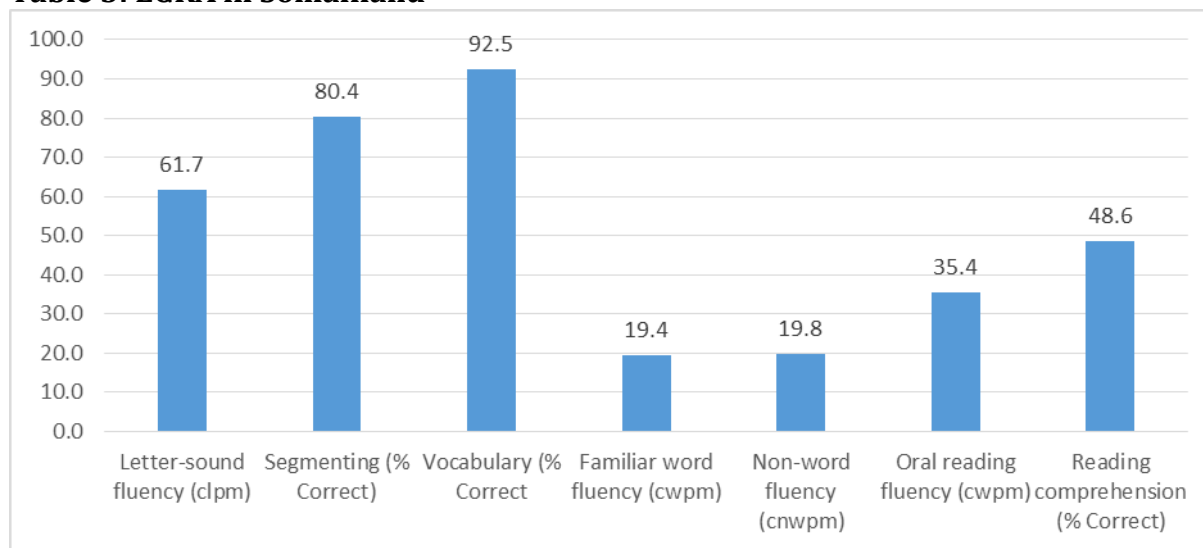
<sup>3</sup> RTI International. (2015). *Status of Early Grade Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa*.  
<sup>4</sup> Hobbs, J. (2016). *Finding Words: A further analysis of early grade reading assessments in vulnerable communities*.  
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>6</sup> Piper, B. (2010). *Ethiopia Early Grade Reading Assessment. Data and Analytic Report: Language and Early Learning*.  
<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Ethiopia%20Early%20Grade%20Reading%20Assessment.pdf>

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**Table 2: EGRA in Somali Region of Ethiopia**

		Somali EGRA Scores						
Task		Grade 2			Grade 3			Total
		Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	
Somali	Letter Identification	45.3	41.0	48.6	53.9	48.1	58.9	49.0
	Phonemic Awareness	4.4	3.8	4.9	4.3	3.6	5.0	4.4
	Word Naming Fluency	16.5	16.1	16.8	19.9	17.5	21.9	17.9
	Unfamiliar Word Fluency	16.7	15.9	17.3	20.7	18.1	23.0	18.4
	Oral Reading Fluency	25.8	25.7	25.8	26.9	23.7	29.7	26.3
	Reading Comprehension	30.4	29.4	31.2	34.7	32.5	36.5	32.2
	Listening Comprehension	53.5	55.1	52.3	51.3	49.6	52.8	52.6
Zero Scores (%)	Word Naming Fluency	28.1	26.9	29.0	23.6	25.1	22.3	26.2
	Unfamiliar Word Fluency	27.3	27.6	27.1	20.2	22.2	18.5	24.3
	Oral Reading Fluency	26.5	23.7	28.7	21.4	21.5	21.3	24.3
	Reading Comprehension	33.3	30.1	35.6	28.8	26.7	30.6	31.4

A final study in the Somali language was undertaken in 2016. Save the Children engaged independent contractors to conduct an EGRA in Somaliland. The sample included 48 schools, across six regions, totaling 744 students. The results were not disseminated in the typical EGRA formats used by the RTI and Concern data analysis, however, a review of the report showed that on the oral reading fluency, students in Grade 2 were reading only 35 correct words per minute, far below minimum benchmarks for Somali.<sup>7</sup> While an online presence for this study is unavailable at this time, a soft copy can be made available. See Table 3 for a summary.

**Table 3: EGRA in Somaliland**

Whereas some countries, such as Kenya, have undergone multiple EGRA studies supported by multiple donors, partners and in various languages and counties, literary rates and acquisition in Somalia are rather understudied due to the conflicts in the country over the last several decades. Certainly, the students of Somalia deserve to see their educational outcomes improve. Having accurate data on literacy outcomes, as a result of EGRA, is one means to that end. EGRA data reveals where students are in regards to national and international benchmarks and can be used at mid and end points of an intervention to measure impact. In addition, the data can be

<sup>7</sup> Save the Children. (2016). *Education for Empowerment through Cohesive and Harmonized Systems*.

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disaggregated to underscore unique patterns and needs in primary school reading instruction and attainment. The data presented in Table 4 shows the modest number of studies in Somalia or in Somali languages.

**Table 4: Summary of EGRA Activity in Somalia**

Study	Year	Location	Number of Schools	Number of Students
RTI	2010	Somali region, Ethiopia	33	1183
Concern	2013	Mogadishu	23 <sup>8</sup>	321
Save the Children	2016	Somaliland	48	744
UNICEF (proposed)	2018	Gedo region, Somalia	40	600

## Why Do We Need EGRA Again in Somalia?

The case for continuing to use EGRA includes several reasons, but notably:

- As the students for the UNICEF EGRA in 2018 will be sampled from rural and nomadic communities receiving ABE, research suggests that they may perform differently than the students in the Concern study that were all enrolled in urban schools in Mogadishu. Given that Concern focused on an urban population and *only* schools in which their intervention was present, the study to be conducted in Gedo will yield an important snapshot of **rural student learning** outcomes in Somalia that has not been captured heretofore.
- The ABE study has the potential to **survey a large sample**, which will yield data that can better inform interventions in the relevant region. Thus, the data can be more broadly applied to better understand the current climate of Somali education and the implications thereof. Concern's 2013-4 sample, the only one actually done in Somalia, was rather small – 321 students total (across three grades) – therefore the data's widespread application is limited.<sup>9</sup>
- While the RTI 2010 EGRA of the Somali language in Ethiopia included a larger sample representative of the Somali region, the **students were not in Somalia**, and the cultural context (including the interference of other languages present in Ethiopia on the performance of Somali students on a Somali EGRA) certainly informs both the education outcomes and the possibility of reform. This is an important distinction to consider.<sup>10</sup>
- The **Gedo region has not be studied yet** and as EGRA was only introduced to Somalia in 2013, additional data is in demand.<sup>11</sup> In order to understand the impact of any program implemented in the Gedo region, data is required from that region to make the analysis valid. Significant investments that are undertaken without careful analysis of the baseline

<sup>8</sup> Despite an extensive search, I was unable to find an exact number of schools assessed by Concern. A summary of their work in Somalia states that as of 2010, they were supporting 23 schools.

<https://doj19z5hov92o.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/resource/2011/07/concern-somalia-brochure.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF EASRO and AERC. (2016) *Improving Quality Education and Children's Learning Outcomes*.

[https://www.unicef.org/esaro/ACER\\_Full\\_Report\\_Single\\_page\\_view.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/esaro/ACER_Full_Report_Single_page_view.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> RTI International. (2015). *Status of Early Grade Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

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and endline outcomes potentially applicable to the intervention (with a control group) would not create a valid sample.

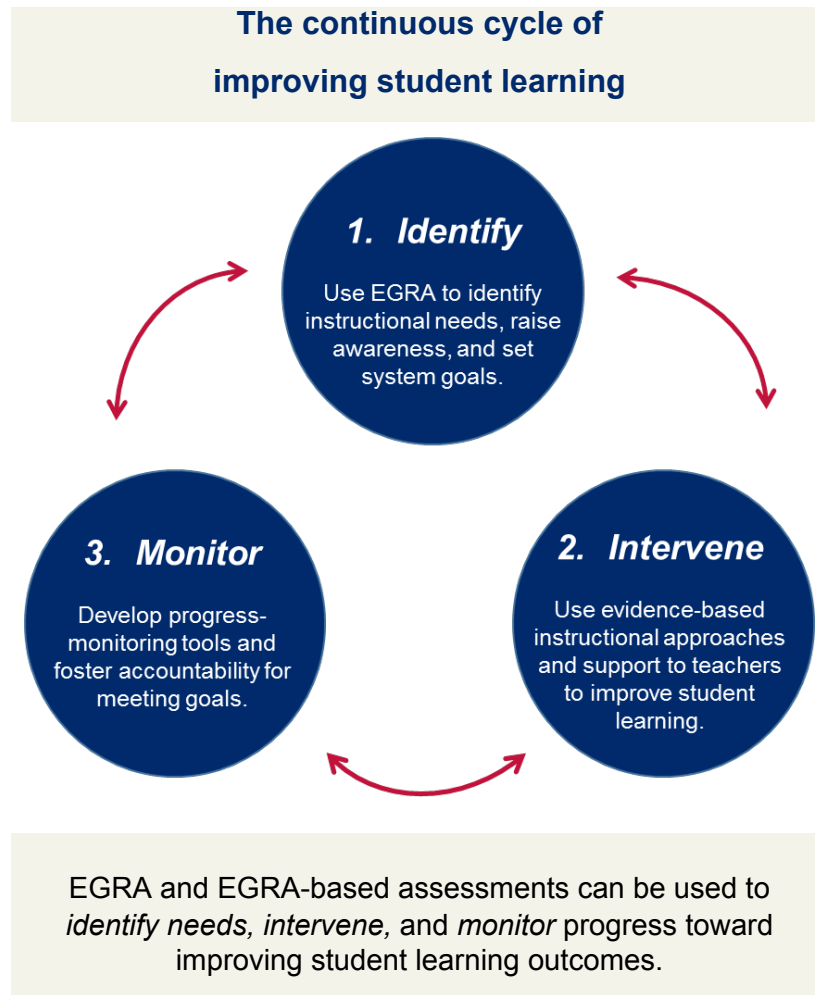
- Lastly, ***EGRA data on ABE schools in Somalia remains unavailable***, and data on ABE results in other countries remains rare.

## **EGRA as a System Diagnostic**

The system diagnostic EGRA, as presented in the EGRA toolkit, is designed to fit into a complete cycle of learning support and improvement. As depicted in Table 5, EGRA can be used as part of a comprehensive approach to improving student reading skills, with the first step being an overall system-level identification of areas for improvement. EGRA is able to generate baseline data on early reading acquisition (Gove & Dubeck, 2015). General benchmarking and creation of goals for future applications can also be done during the initial EGRA application. Based on EGRA results, education ministries or local systems can then intervene to guide the content of new or existing programs using evidence-based instructional approaches to support teachers for improving foundational skills in reading. Results from an EGRA can thus inform the design of both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs, including ABE interventions.

Once recommendations on the form of the EGRA study are implemented, parallel forms of an EGRA can be used to follow progress and gains in student learning over time through continuous monitoring, with the expectation that such a process will encourage teachers and education administrators to ensure students make progress in achieving foundational skills.

### **Table 5: Cycle of Student Learning**



## Summary of Skills Necessary for Successful Reading

The ultimate goal of learning to read is comprehension, or “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Snow & the RAND Reading Study Group, 2002, p. 11). To competent readers, reading may seem effortless; they read a text and understand it with such speed and ease that they are not conscious of the process of comprehension itself. However, comprehension is actually a highly complex skill that is built from a wide array of subskills working together simultaneously. The aim of the Somalia EGRA is to best understand the current education outcomes for Grade 2 students in program areas, such that interventions can be aligned to reach the ultimate goal of reading comprehension at large scale. A Somali EGRA will capture the progress of Somali students on the following literacy skills through the various subtests that can be included (and discussed later in this paper) in the EGRA. Those skills include:

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### ***Phonological Awareness***

Phonological awareness can be defined as “the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory aspects of spoken language (including the ability to distinguish or segment words, syllables, or phonemes), independent of meaning” (National Center for Family Literacy [NCFL], 2008, p. vii). Phonemic awareness, a term often used interchangeably with phonological awareness, is actually a subset thereof and refers specifically to the awareness of phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound that distinguish the meaning of a word in a given language. For example, the English consonant sounds /p/, /k/, and fricative /ð/ (i.e., the “th” sound) are the phonemes that make the word “pat” distinguishable from “cat” and “that” in spoken language.

### ***The Alphabetic Principle, Phonics, and Decoding***

The alphabetic principle is the understanding that words are made up of sounds (i.e., phonemes) and that letters (i.e. graphemes) are symbols that represent those sounds. Just like the sounds, letters can be put together to make words or singled out in words to help children decode and spell them. Alphabet knowledge includes knowledge of the individual letter names, their distinctive graphic features, and which phoneme(s) each letter symbol represents.

### ***Vocabulary and Oral Language***

Reading comprehension involves more than just word recognition. In order to construct meaning, we must link the words we read to their semantic representation or meaning attached to the word in our minds; and knowing the meaning of words relates to one’s overall oral language comprehension (Kamhi & Catts, 1991; Nation, 2005; Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001). Vocabulary refers to the ability of children to understand the meaning of words when we hear or read them (receptive), as well as to use them when we speak or write (productive). Reading experts have suggested that vocabulary knowledge of between 90 and 95 percent of the words in a text is required for comprehension (Nagy & Scott, 2000). It is not surprising, then, that in longitudinal studies, vocabulary has repeatedly been shown to influence and be predictive of later reading comprehension (Muter et al., 2004; Roth, Speece, & Cooper, 2002; Share & Leiken, 2004).

### ***Fluency***

Fluency is “the ability to read text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression” (NICHD, 2000, pp. 3–5). According to Snow and the RAND Reading Study Group (2002). Fluency can be conceptualized as both an antecedent to and a consequence of comprehension. Some aspects of fluent, expressive reading may depend on a thorough understanding of a text. However, some components of fluency—quick and efficient recognition of words and at least some aspects of syntactic parsing [sentence structure processing]—appear to be prerequisites for comprehension. (p. 13)

Fluency can be seen as a bridge between word recognition and text comprehension. While decoding is the first step to word recognition, readers must eventually advance in their decoding ability to the point where it becomes automatic; then their attention is free to shift from the individual letters and words to the ideas themselves contained in the text (Armbruster et al., 2003; Hudson, Lane, & Pullen, 2005; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Speed may also be critical due to the constraints of our short-term working memory. Working memory can only hold so much information at one time, and if we decode too slowly because we are paying attention to each



individual word part, we will not have enough space in our working memory for the whole sentence; we will forget the beginning of the text sequence by the time we reach the end. If we cannot hold the whole sequence in our working memory at once, we cannot extract meaning from it (Hirsch, 2003; Abadzi, 2006).

## ***Comprehension***

Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading. It enables students to make meaning out of what they read and use that meaning not only for the pleasure of reading but also to learn new things, especially other academic content. Reading comprehension is also a highly complex task that requires both extracting and constructing meaning from text. Reading comprehension relies on a successful interplay of motivation, attention, strategies, memory, background topic knowledge, linguistic knowledge, vocabulary, decoding, fluency, and more, and is therefore a difficult construct for any assessment to measure directly (Snow & the RAND Reading Study Group, 2002).

## **Best Practices**

As EGRA has expanded into over a hundred countries and even more languages, many lessons have been learned that are worth bearing in mind in the planning and execution of the Somalia ABE-centered EGRA.

- *Instructions.* Debating the EGRA protocol, or the instructions the assessors are to follow, is unproductive. The instructions were carefully developed based on evidence from prior research and experience and are only modified when necessary. Instead, spending time on the accurate and meaningful translation of the instructions is critical for successful implementation.
- *Pretesting and pilot testing.* Both of these steps are important parts of the process (the EGRA Toolkit outlines these processes specifically) and must be planned and budgeted for properly. Many studies have ultimately suffered due to limited or nonexistent pretesting and pilot testing.
- *Minimum content.* At minimum, a meaningful EGRA assessment should include listening comprehension, letter sound fluency, nonword reading, and oral reading fluency with comprehension. There are several other subtasks that could be included, depending on contextual factors specific to Somali and the Gedo intervention.
- Use of the same or nearly identical subtask items across multiple forms of an instrument is critical. Best practice is to *limit the need for post-administration statistical equating* whenever possible. Strong instrument design procedures can produce highly comparable forms that mitigate the need for equating. When equating is needed, it can be done by giving both tools to a set of children and then determining how performance differs on the two measures.

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# Suggested EGRA Components for Somalia

In this section, we present ideas on what EGRA components (or subtests or subtasks) should be included in the Somalia EGRA. There are several factors that contribute to the recommended components to be included in the Somalia EGRA. First, EGRA data is not widely available on Somali schools, nor is the test overexposed in the Somalia context. This allows for unbiased results and extensive variations of the tool. Secondly, given that the ABE schools are nomadic in nature, the potential data could be representative of similar, nomadic schools and communities in other parts of the country; therefore, the minimum subtests are included in addition to three other subtests in order to provide a robust data set. The proposed EGRA also allows for a capture of pre-reading skills (via subtests Orientation to Print and Listening Comprehension) in addition to early reading skills allowing for the range of scores to reflect both proficient and emerging readers. Allowing for the inclusion of a range of tasks that can cover both floor and ceiling effects is important given the likelihood of wide variation in outcomes for this diverse population. Similarly, given the nuances of the Somali language, the use of Letter Sounds Identification (instead of Letter Name Identification) is recommended to best understand where reading support inputs are needed.

An important consideration is also the mode of training of the data collectors. Given the insecurity in Somalia, a Training of Trainers model will be employed that has two levels of dissemination of skills. First, a lead trainer should train a team of trainers. Subsequently, in the field, the team of trainers should train the actual data collectors. Given the degrees of separation from the genesis of training, it is possible that there may be a reduction in performance (with respect to reliability) on data collection. Therefore, while over a dozen EGRA subtests exist that the Somalia EGRA could be drawn from, it is recommended that care be taken to choose those subtests that can be realistically trained on in this modified cascade training model. We want to have the subtests that can be implemented with the greatest success. Table 6 presents the subtests that we are suggesting, given the specific experiences in previous EGRA studies and the need for a range of tasks required for a full-bodied EGRA. Note that the proposed tasks include a measure to assess the struggling children (orientation to print) as well as having two comprehension measures (comprehension on connected text as well as sentence comprehension) in order to better estimate outcomes at the upper end of the distribution.

**Table 6: *Proposed 2018 Somalia EGRA***

## Proposed Somalia EGRA Components

Component	Early reading skill	Skill demonstrated by students' ability to:
1. Orientation to print	Knowledge of print	Indicate text direction, concept of word, or other basic knowledge of print.
2. Listening comprehension	Listening comprehension; oral language	Respond correctly to different types of questions, including literal and inferential questions about the text the assessor reads to them
3. Letter identification: letter sounds	Phonemic knowledge	Provide the sound of letters presented in both upper case and lower case in a random order
4. Nonword reading	Decoding	Make letter-sound connections (grapheme-phoneme correspondences, or GPCs) through the reading of simple nonsense words
5. Sentence Choice	Reading comprehension	Measures ability to understand grade-level sentences. It requires the student to decide if the meaning is realistic or silly.
6. Oral reading fluency with comprehension	Oral reading fluency	Read a text with accuracy, with little effort, and at a sufficient rate
	Reading comprehension	Respond correctly to different types of questions, including literal and inferential questions about the text they have read

The EGRAs referenced earlier in this report all had slightly different components from the proposed 2018 EGRA, as follows. The 2010 EGRA in Ethiopia of the Somali region included the subtests: *Phonological Awareness and Familiar Word Reading* and instead of Letter Sound Identification, *Letter Name Identification* was included.<sup>12</sup> Concern's 2013 version was limited to only three subtests<sup>13</sup>. This seems like a missed opportunity given the complexity of learning in Somalia. Finally, the Save the Children assessment included *Phonemic Segmentation, Vocabulary and Familiar Word Reading* in their 2016 EGRA, which are not included in the proposed 2018 Somalia EGRA.<sup>14</sup> Table 7 presents the subtests utilized in the previous Somali assessments.

<sup>12</sup> The report in its entirety can be found here:

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Ethiopia%20Early%20Grade%20Reading%20Assessment.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Concern's report in its entirety can be found here:

[https://www.concern.net/sites/default/files/media/resource/g2569\\_lost\\_for\\_words\\_report\\_final\\_2.pdf](https://www.concern.net/sites/default/files/media/resource/g2569_lost_for_words_report_final_2.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Save the Children. (2016). *Education for Empowerment through Cohesive and Harmonized Systems*. While an online version of this report is unavailable at this time, a soft copy can be made available.

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**Table 7: Subtests of EGRAs Conducted in the Somali language**

Study	Grade	Orientation to Print	Listening Comprehension	Letter Sounds Identification	Non-Word Reading	Oral Reading Fluency + Comprehension	Sentence Choice
Ethiopia/Somali (RTI, 2010)	2,3		✓		✓	✓	
Somalia (Concern, 2013)	2			✓	✓	✓	
Somaliland (Save, 2016)	2			✓	✓	✓	
Proposed Somalia (UNICEF, 2018)	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Given the previous studies and the current educational climate, it is suggested that the 2018 Alternative Basic Education Somali EGRA include the following subtests:

### ***Orientation to Print***

Orientation to print measures knowledge of early print concepts such as a what a word is, what letters are, and the directionality of text. The task is untimed and does not have a discontinuation rule. Students are given a page of Somali text and will be asked to indicate where to begin reading, indicate direction of reading within a line (left to right) and the direction of reading within a page (top to bottom).

*Rationale: Orientation to Print allows for some potential positive data that can be a helpful balance given the anticipated zero scores on more difficult subtests. In addition, it measures important pre-reading skills that can be easily addressed by intervention, if needed.*

### ***Listening Comprehension***

The listening comprehension subtest involves a passage that is read aloud by the assessor, and then students respond to oral comprehension questions or statements, usually five questions, about the passage. This subtest can be included at the beginning of the series to ease the children into the assessment process and orient them to the language of assessment. The task is also untimed.

*Rationale: While this subtest has only been used once in Somali, it is a useful data set to include as to listening comprehension is a different skill than reading comprehension and offers another understanding of how learners “approach, process and respond to text.”<sup>15</sup>*

### ***Letter Identification: Letter Sounds***

The Letter Sounds Identification subtest is a timed (60 seconds) activity in which students are given a page of 100 Somali letter sounds and diphthongs (e.g., in English: th, sh, ey, ea, ai, ow, oy) to identify as quickly and correctly as they can. Students are given 60 seconds since standardized reading data is measured in correct words per minute. The letters are represented by the frequency of their use in Grade 2 texts and instruction.

<sup>15</sup> Research Triangle Institute. (2011). *The Early Grade Reading Assessment: Applications and Interventions to Improve Basic Literacy*.

*Rationale: Knowledge of how letters correspond to sounds is a critical skill children must master to become successful readers. Letter-sound identification tests the actual knowledge students need to have to be able to decode words—i.e., knowing the sound the letter represents allows students to sound out a word. As the Somali language has tonal variations, as well, identifying letter sounds makes more sense than including the Letter Name Identification subtest.*

### **Nonword Reading**

Perhaps the most unique proposed subtest is Nonword reading. Students are given a list of 50 orthographically correct, but nonexistent words in Somali, which they will have to decode in order to read; for example, in English, the word “dat” follows all the rules of the language, yet is a nonsense word. This subtest is also timed at 60 seconds. Nonword reading is a measure of decoding ability as distinct from whole word recognition or memorization. Many children in the early grades learn to memorize or recognize by sight a broad range of words. Exhaustion of this sight-word vocabulary at around age 10 has been associated with the “fourth-grade slump” in the United States (Hirsch, 2003).

*Rationale: To be successful readers, children must combine both decoding and whole-word recognition skills; tests that do not include a decoding exercise can overestimate children’s ability to read unfamiliar words, as the words being tested may be part of the sight-recognition vocabulary. Thus, such an overestimation of ability can forfeit opportunities to intervene and support learners and teachers.*

### **Sentence Comprehension**

Sentence Comprehension (or sentence choice) is a recently developed subtest and was designed for use with students who could read connected text with Grade 2 benchmark levels. The students are presented with 10 sentences that are obviously true and 10 sentences that are obviously false (i.e., silly; not true – “goats fly in the sky” versus “birds fly in the sky.”). “Based on their everyday knowledge, students discern whether the sentence” is either true or false.<sup>16</sup> Each student then marks their responses directly on their own paper or shares the answer out loud with the assessor. Beyond the instructions, there is no oral reading and correlated scoring component to this subtest and it is untimed.

*Rationale: Given the presence of mother tongue instruction in Somali schools, which is a benefit to early readers, this subtest allows for an additional understanding of the depth of student comprehension at grade 2 level. While students may not complete an oral reading passage, the sentence comprehension allows for more dynamic responses and measures of early literacy that expand our understanding of what all students are able to do.*

### **Oral Reading Fluency with Comprehension**

Oral reading fluency is a measure of overall reading competence: the ability to translate letters into sounds, unify sounds into words, process connections, relate text to meaning, and make inferences to fill in missing information (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006). Students are given 60

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<sup>16</sup> Dubeck, P. (2017). *Complements to the Early Grade Reading Assessment*.  
[https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/10745\\_EGRA\\_Subtasks\\_brief\\_02-15-17\\_r5.pdf](https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/10745_EGRA_Subtasks_brief_02-15-17_r5.pdf)

seconds to read an original Somali story that has been written at Grade 2 level of difficulty using grade level vocabulary, as quickly and correctly as they can. Reading comprehension questions that correlate to the amount of text a student reads in one minute follows the oral reading passage. For example, of the five allotted reading comprehension questions, if a student only completes one sentence of the text in 60 seconds, they may only receive one question. The reading comprehension activity is not timed.

*Rationale: As skilled readers translate text into spoken language, they combine these tasks in a seemingly effortless manner; because oral reading fluency captures this complex process, it can be used to characterize overall reading ability and gives meaning to all other data captured from other EGRA subtests. These final two subtests provide transparent data related to grade-level benchmarks and are key to designing effective strategies to address any gaps in literacy attainment.*

## Sampling

Sampling can be done multiple ways, and the method selected may be based on constraints, such as distance between schools, budget limitations, and time restraints. In any survey, for researchers to be able to make reliable generalizations about an entire population in a country, they must select a sample that represents the entire population in terms of demographics such as number of people in a region, languages, or gender. Thus, for the Somalia 2018 EGRA survey, reasonable inferences should be made about the students in the entire country from information in the data set of the sampled ABE schools.<sup>17</sup> Thorough consideration of which schools will be sampled should guide the final development of the EGRA tool so that the data will be externally valid for anticipated applications. We recommend that sampling considerations be done early in the process, since it is essential for finalizing the budget envelope required for the program.

## Conclusion

Conducting the EGRA in Somalia will be a significant undertaking and requires careful oversight. In particular, as referenced in the Somali EGRA timeline, proper budgeting, sufficient human resources and ample time must be allocated in order for the EGRA to be conducted effectively.

The *EGRA Toolkit, Second Edition* offers in-depth advice and detail that will support the proposed timeline and augment the initial approach to include every support mechanism needed. In addition, RTI also developed *Guidance Notes for Planning and Implementing EGRA*, which provides step-by-step instructions on involving partners, planning for data collection, and the overall logistics affiliated with an EGRA study.<sup>18</sup>

The Somalia EGRA Timeline (submitted in September 2017 to UNICEF Somalia), in concert with this Executive Summary, the EGRA Toolkit and Guidance Notes are sufficient guides to take the next step towards data collection in 2018.

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<sup>17</sup> RTI International and International Rescue Committee. (2011). *Guidance Notes for Planning and Implementing EGRA*. <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/guidance-notes-planning-and-implementing-egra>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

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