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## READING WITHIN REACH

Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation:  
Best Practices and Resources for Success

Webinar series presented by Reading within Reach  
(REACH) in collaboration with the Global Reading  
Network

June 2019

# Welcome!

- This EGR professional development series was developed by the **Reading within Reach (REACH)** initiative, which is funded by **USAID** and implemented by **University Research Co., LLC (URC)**
- REACH supports the **Global Reading Network (GRN)** to develop and share research, innovations and resources related to EGR programming
- For more information about REACH and the GRN, visit [www.globalreadingnetwork.net](http://www.globalreadingnetwork.net)



## *Webinar presenters*

- Alison Pflapsen, REACH Reading Program Specialist ([apflapsen@urc-chs.com](mailto:apflapsen@urc-chs.com))
- Amy Pallangyo, REACH Technical Advisor ([aawbrey@gmail.com](mailto:aawbrey@gmail.com))
- Aristarick Lyimo, REACH Training & Curriculum Specialist: ([alyimo@urc-chs.com](mailto:alyimo@urc-chs.com))
- Adrienne Barnes, Florida State University ([adriennebarnes76@gmail.com](mailto:adriennebarnes76@gmail.com))

## Webinar series goal, content and approach

- The purpose of this professional development webinar series is to **provide participants with evidence-based information, guidance and resources to support the design and implementation of effective EGR initiatives**
- Each session is focused on a key technical topic and includes a summary of **research, experiences and best practices to date**
- **Cross-cutting issues** such as gender equity, ICT and inclusive education are integrated throughout the different webinars
- Issues related to EGR program **monitoring, evaluation, expansion and sustainability** will be addressed as well
- **Opportunities for interaction and questions** will be provided throughout each webinar

## Webinar session topics and dates

- **Webinar 1** – Early grade reading programming: From Conception to scale (June 25)
- **Webinar 2** – Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading (July 10)
- **Webinar 3** – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment (July 17)
- **Webinar 4** – Language considerations in early grade reading programs (July 24)
- **Webinar 5** – Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs (July 30)

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## READING WITHIN REACH

# Early grade reading programming: From conception to scale

June 25, 2019

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM EDT



**Alison Pflepsen**  
*REACH*

*Reading Program Specialist*



**Amy Pallangyo**  
*REACH*

*Technical Advisor*

# Acknowledgments

- This presentation was made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- It was prepared by Reading within Reach (REACH,) which is implemented by University Research Co., LLC. (URC). Contract No.AID-OAA-M-14-00001, MOBIS#: GS-10F-0182T for the Office of Education (E3/ED).

## ***Suggested citation:***

- Pallangyo, A., & Pflapsen, A. (2019, June 25). Early grade reading programming: From conception to scale: . [Webinar]. In *Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success Training Series*. Prepared for USAID by University Research Co., LLC. (URC) under the Reading within Reach (REACH) initiative. Contract No. AID-OAA-M-14-00001, MOBIS#: GS-10F-0182T. Available at <https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/resources/early-grade-reading-programming-conception-scale>

A young girl with short dark hair, wearing a purple school uniform over a white collared shirt, is smiling broadly while holding an open book. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a brick wall on the left.

## Session objectives

By the end of this session, participants will know and be able to apply learning about:

- Importance of improving reading outcomes in the early grades
- Relationship between EGR and global efforts to improve education quality
- EGR programs and progress to date
- Cross-cutting issues (gender, equity, technology, etc.)
- Steps and considerations for developing, expanding and scaling an EGR program

## To share your questions and comments

- We will provide time throughout the webinar to address your questions and comments
- Please submit them in the “Chat” window, which we will monitor throughout the presentation





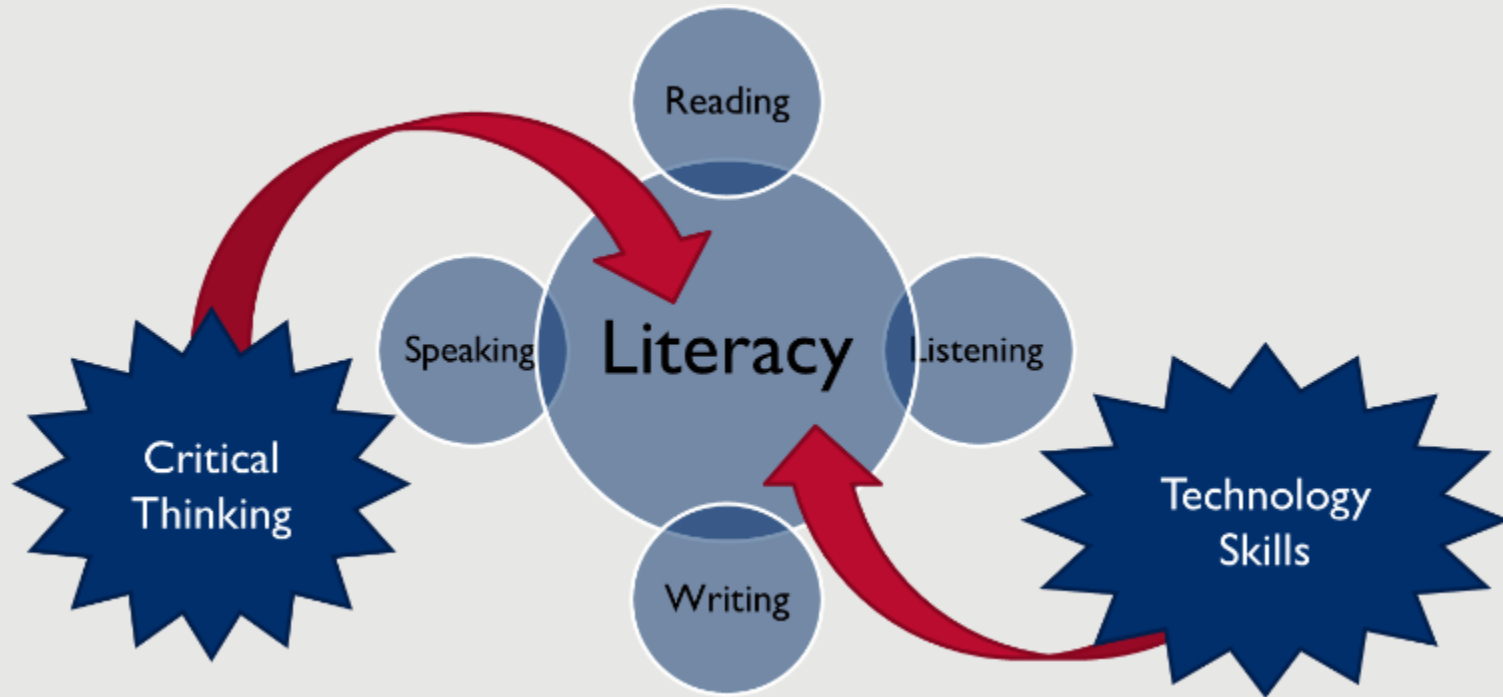
# Section I: EGR program progress and gaps



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## Relationship between reading and literacy



Literacy is the use of a set of skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, technology and critical thinking) to make sense of information received aurally (hearing) and in reading texts, and expressed orally (speaking) and in writing texts

EGR programs generally focus on improving reading, writing and listening skills

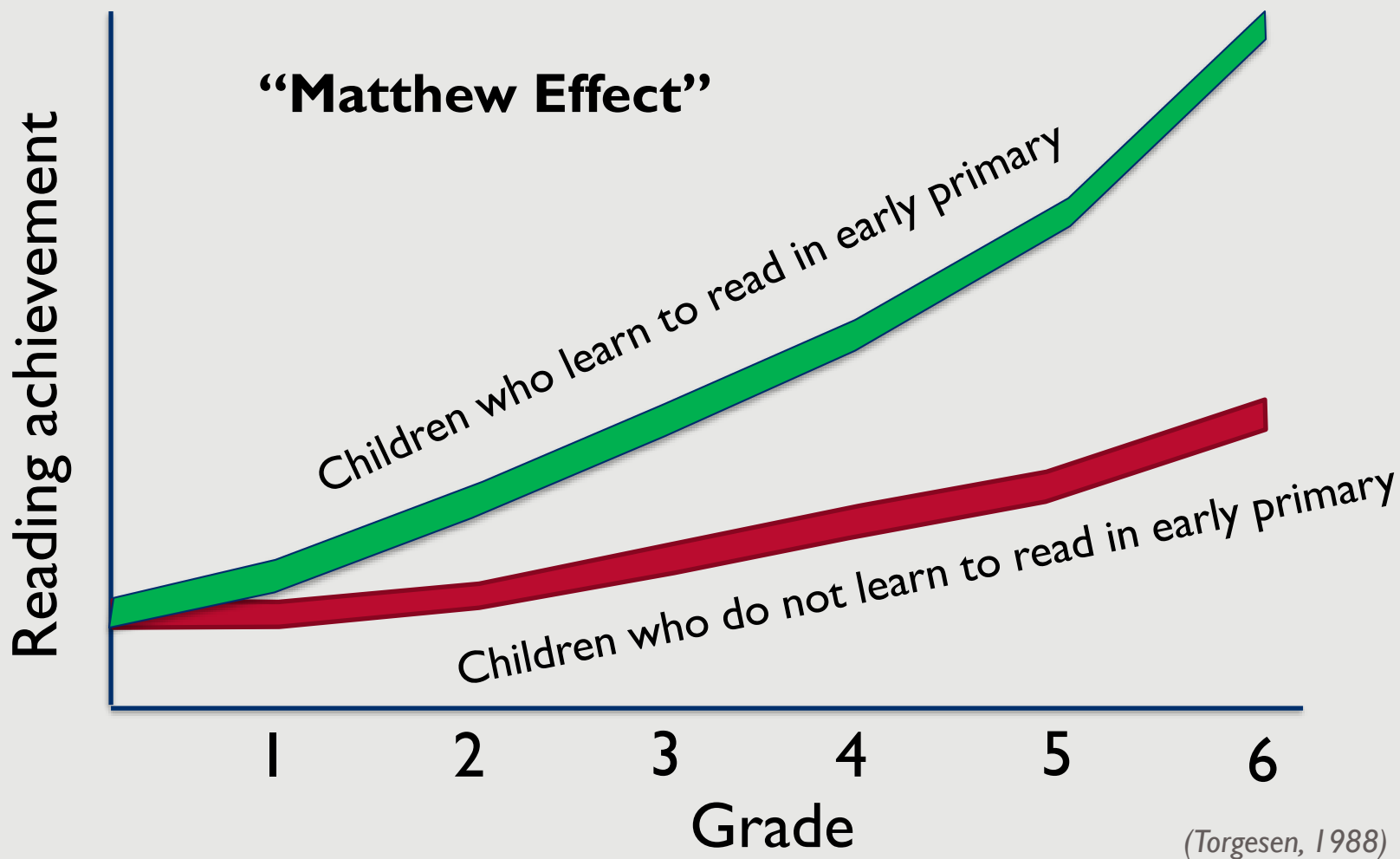
## Why focus on improving early grade reading?

- Evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the reading skills of children in low-income country contexts are extremely low (Gove, A. & Cvelich, P., 2011; EGRA Barometer)
- Reading is a critical skill that affects children's ability to learn other subjects, and ultimately succeed in school and beyond
- If children don't learn to read in the early grades, they fall further and further behind their peers who do learn to read early ("Matthew Effect," Torgesen, 1988)



Photo credit: RTI International, Malawi, MTPDS (USAID)

# Why children need to learn to read in early primary



# Early grade reading improvement: A global movement

- U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for quality education that leads to “effective learning outcomes” (United Nations, 2017)
- Since 2011, USAID has led efforts to improve education through improvements in literacy instruction and outcomes
- Other donor agencies working to improve reading include the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank and UNICEF

***Infographic: Early Grade Reading: A Foundation for Development***

**<http://bit.ly/EGRinfographic>**



# Why is USAID focused on improving early grade reading?

- Need to focus on what is happening in the classroom if we are to improve learning outcomes
- We know how to effectively teach reading in the early grades (Kim et al., 2016)
- Evidence indicates that the approaches USAID is supporting in low- and middle-income countries are working, though more needs to be done (Gove, Mora & McCardle, 2017; Kelly & Graham, 2018; USAID, 2018)



*Available at the Global Reading  
Network website*

# The READ Act

- The Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development Act became law in September 2017
- The legislation builds on current U.S. efforts to:
  - Ensure access to quality education for the 263 million children and youth around the world who are still not in school (one-third of whom live in conflict- and crisis-affected areas)
  - Improve the quality of education for those already enrolled in school
  - Build sustainability and country independence

Source: *Basic Education Coalition (BEC)*

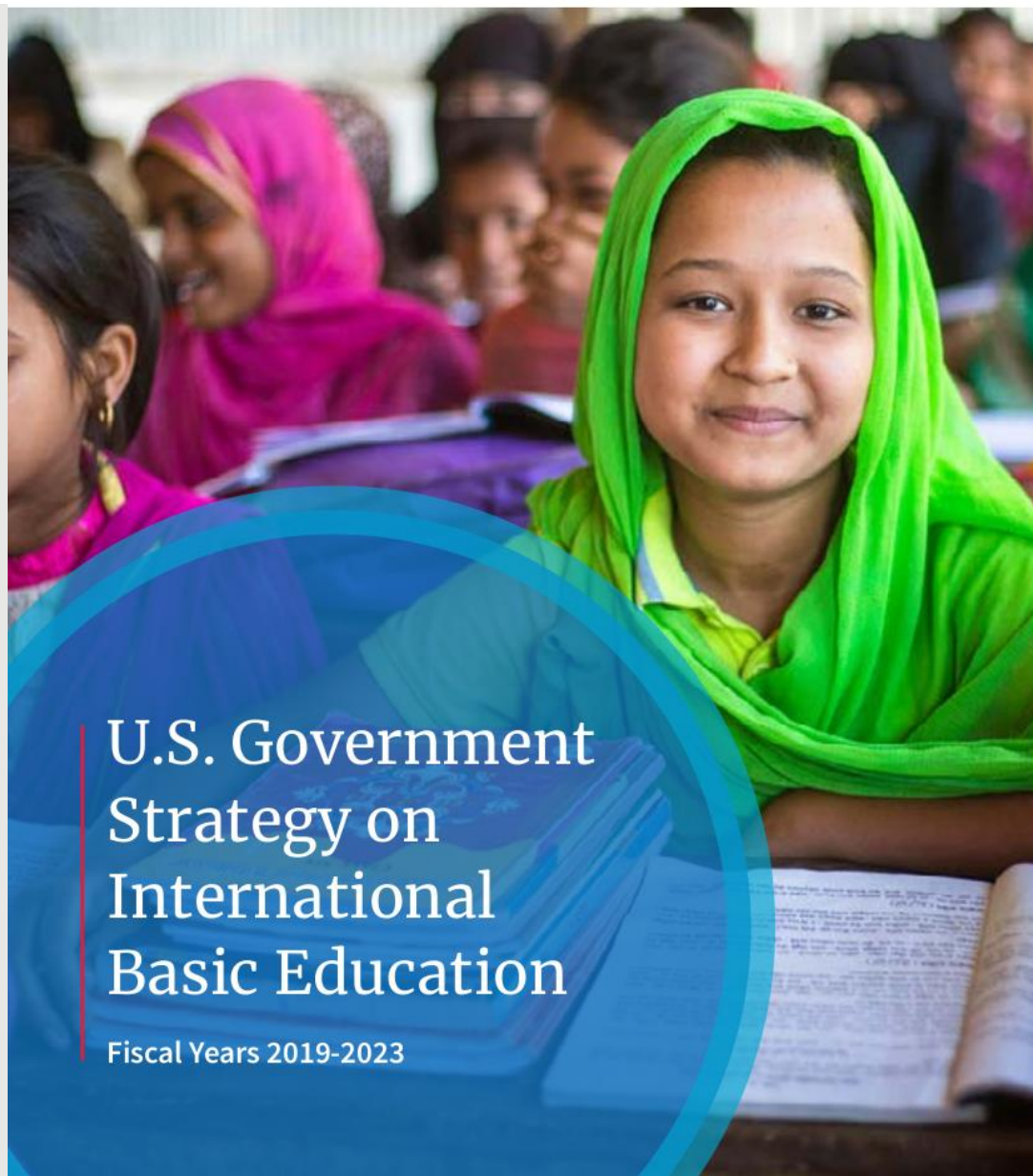


**The READ Act can be found here:**

<https://www.congress.gov/bills/115/congress/115th-congress/house-bill/601>

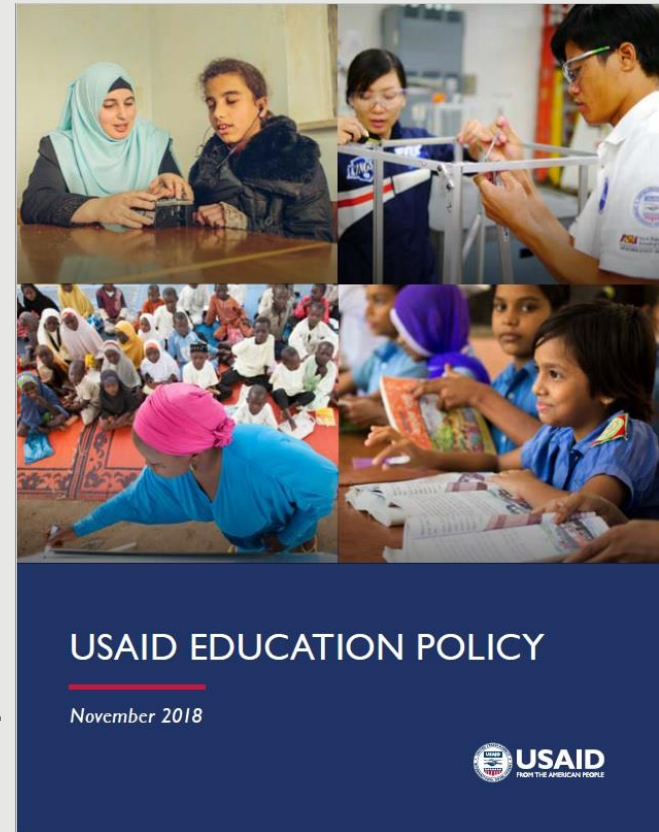
# U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education

- Supports READ Act and coordinates efforts across USG
- Two main objectives:
  - Improve learning outcomes
  - Expand access to quality basic education for all, particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations



# USAID Education Policy

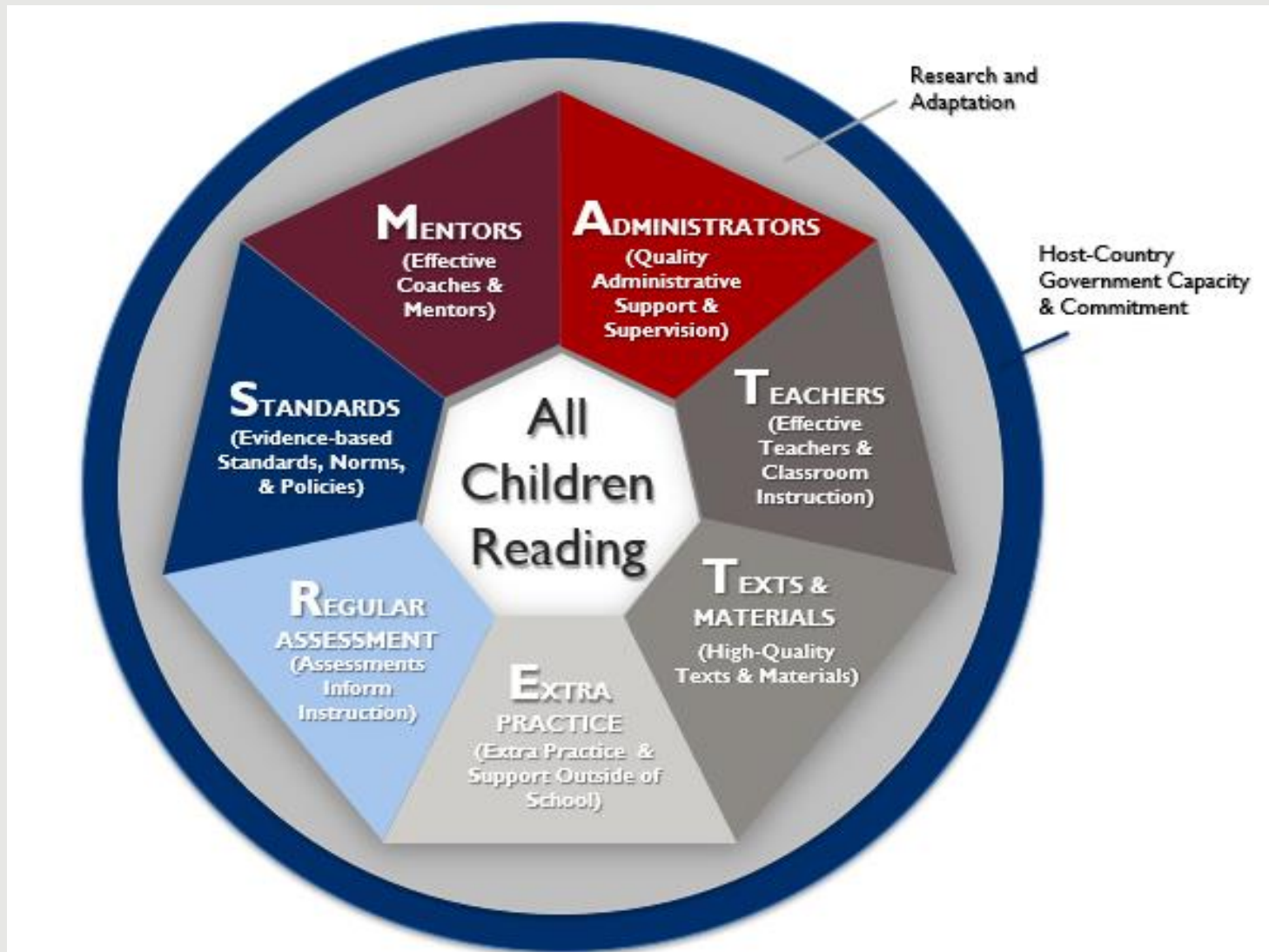
- **Marginalized and vulnerable children and youth** have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant and promotes social well-being
- Children and youth **gain literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills** that are foundational to future learning and success
- **Youth gain the skills 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



A Program Cycle and  
Implementation Guide  
accompanies the strategy



# Components of design & implementation: USAID Reading MATTERS framework





# Cross-cutting issues and approach to EGR programming

- USAID's approach to EGR improvement strives to be *inclusive and equitable* by providing all children, regardless of life circumstances or ability, an opportunity to learn to read. This includes:
  - Reaching **marginalized populations**
  - Taking a **gender-equitable** approach across all aspects of programming
  - Including **children with disabilities**
  - Supporting those in **emergency, conflict or crisis** situations
- Resources related to these topics have been integrated throughout the webinars

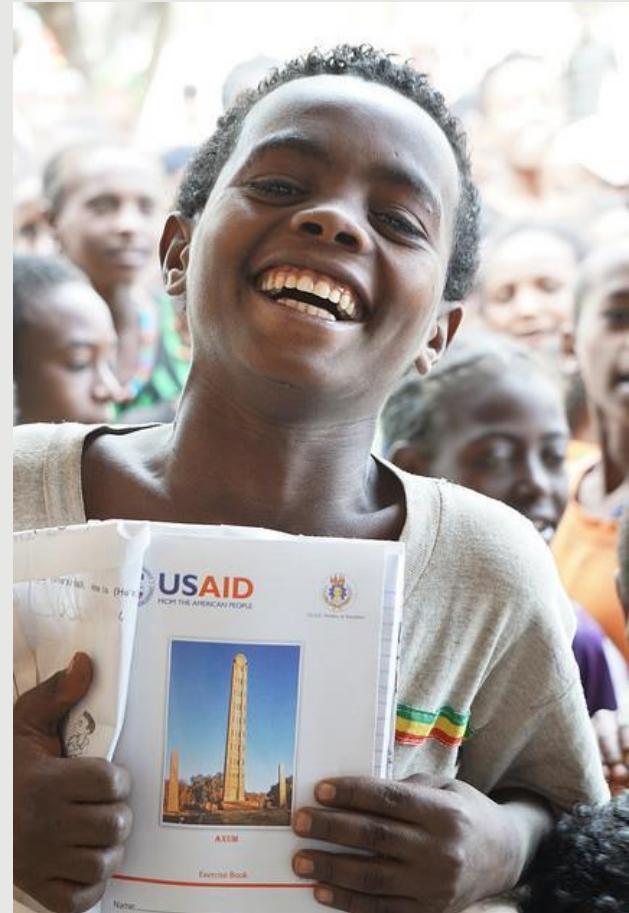
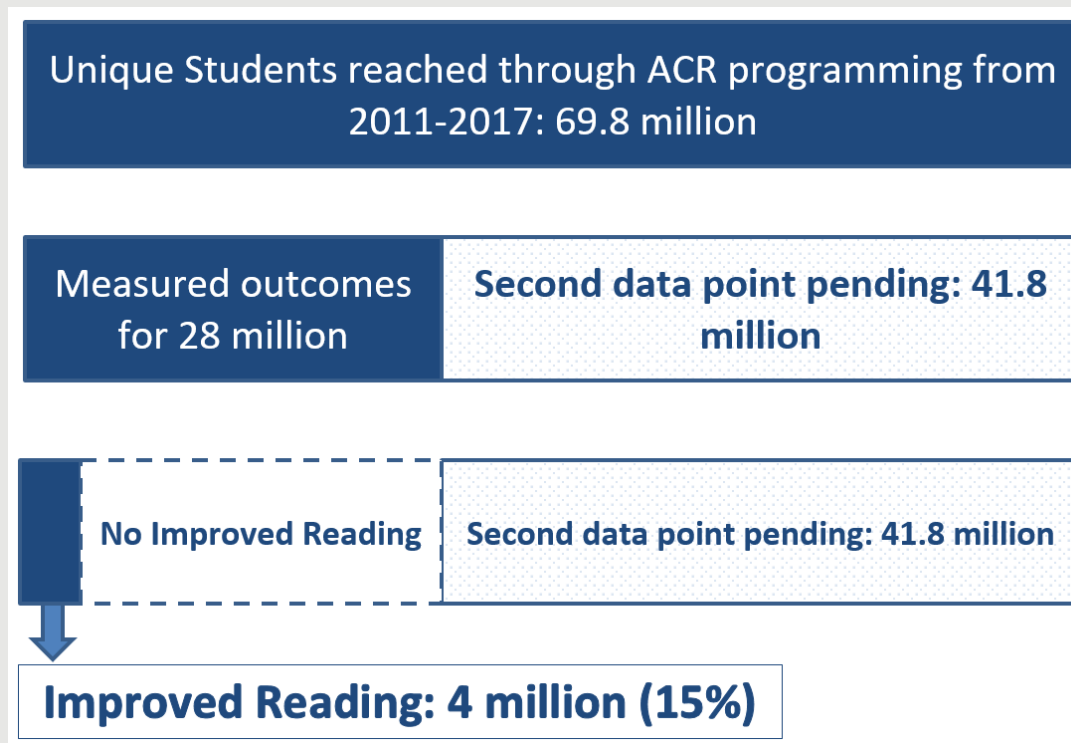


Photo credit: USAID (Ethiopia)

# What have we accomplished so far?

## Number of improved readers



Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2016). 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy Progress Report. Retrieved from [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2011-2015\\_ProgressReport\\_r13\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/2011-2015_ProgressReport_r13_Final_WEB.pdf)

# ACTIVITY

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your experiences and ideas

- Consider your own early grade reading work:
  - What progress are you seeing? What approaches are leading to these successes?
  - What gaps are you seeing in EGR programming? Why do these gaps exist? What ideas do you have for addressing them?

# What are the gaps?

- **Design and planning**

- Activities did not always reflect context
- Lack of clear causal pathways backed by evidence

- **Instruction and skills**

- In practical terms, gains were small

- **Resources for teaching and learning**

- Delays in production

- **Continuous professional development**

- Lack of evidence of effectiveness between activities and outcomes
- Implementation and staffing challenges



## What are the gaps? (continued)

- **Cross-cutting issues**
  - Found in a small number of activities; evidence largely non-existent, though interventions related to gender issues were most successful
- **Community engagement**
  - Small amount of quantitative evidence showed only minimal effects on student learning
- **Monitoring and evaluation**
  - Support for Ministry M&E systems generally unsuccessful
  - Packaged activity design did not allow for evaluation of specific components
  - **Cost-effectiveness of specific aspects of an intervention unknown**
- **Scale up and sustainability**
  - Evaluations **“showed little evidence of government ability to take over reading interventions”**



# Section 2: Key steps for developing a quality EGR program



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# Essential characteristics of effective programs

Leadership

Collaboration

Communication

Evidence-based  
approaches

Quality  
assurance

Other?



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**Which of these characteristics has been critical to your program team?**

# I. Assemble a planning and design team

- Collaborative and comprehensive planning that involves government, technical experts and diverse stakeholders:
  - Improves the quality of programs
  - Increases the likelihood that a program will have broad stakeholder support
  - Will save time and money down the road



Photo: Nigeria RTI International, Nigeria RARA (USAID)

## 2. Conduct a “literacy landscape assessment” and background research

- An in-depth understanding of the context is essential to inform program design, expansion and sustainability
- Information gathering and research across a range of topics is needed



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**REACH is developing a Literacy Landscape Assessment Toolkit to provide detailed guidance on this topic**

# ACTIVITY

## Review Handout I: Research to conduct and information to gather when designing an EGR program

Respond to the following questions in the Zoom chat window:

- For which topics did you gather information? How did you gather it? How did it inform program design?
- What information didn't you gather that you wish you had collected?



### 3. Conduct an education system mapping and capacity assessment

- A thorough understanding of the education system and actors is necessary to inform project and procurement design
- This includes:
  - Institutional and individual roles and responsibilities vital to EGR improvement
  - Current capacity and needs of the education system



*Photo: World Education, Cambodia (USDA McGovern-Dole Food For Education)*

## 4. Develop (refine) approach and activities

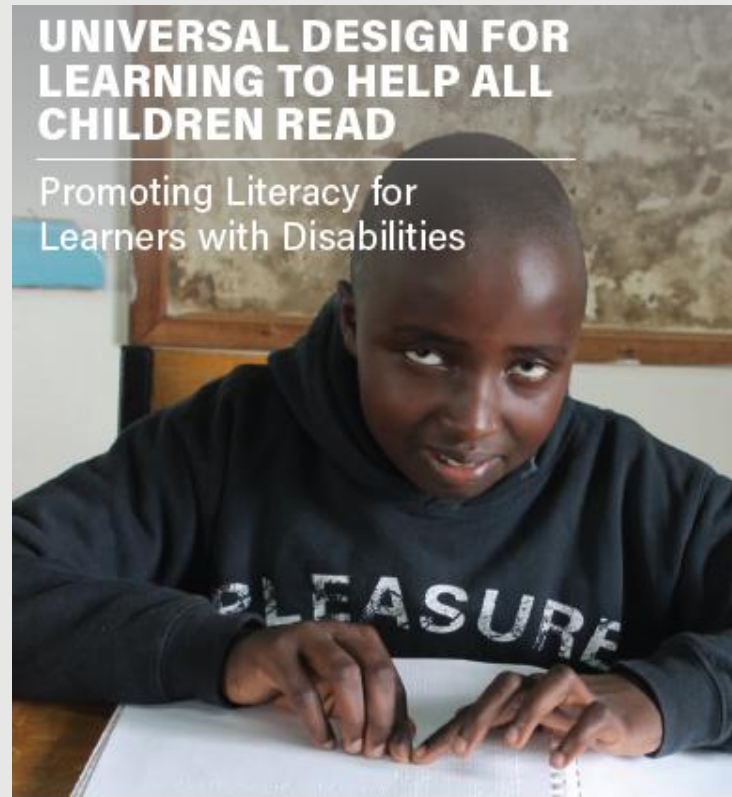
- Meaningfully engage all relevant stakeholders throughout planning process
- Identify objectives
- Develop theory of change and results framework
- Design *context-specific* approach and activities *based on relevant, evidence-based best practices*
- Align components and activities
- Consider cost
- Field test/pilot specific approaches



Design with scale up  
and sustainability in  
mind!

## 4. Develop approach and activities (continued)

- Integrate cross-cutting issues including: gender, equity and inclusion, conflict and crisis
- See resources at the end of this presentation for more information on cross-cutting issues, which will also be addressed in subsequent webinars



Consult the resource *Universal Design for Learning to Help All Children Read* on the GRN website

## 4. Develop approach and activities (continued)

Agreement among stakeholders on these critical issues is needed to inform EGR program approach, activities and budget:

- ✓ Objectives, targets and indicators
- ✓ Languages to be used for reading instruction
- ✓ Skills to be taught and instructional approach
- ✓ Copyright and licensing of materials – *Register for GRN webinar on this topic to take place June 27 and July 18!*
- ✓ Materials to be developed and procured
- ✓ How program resources and results will be shared, and with whom
- ✓ How equity and inclusion will be integrated in the approach, activities and resources

## 5. Develop budget and staffing plan

- **Conduct cost analysis**

- Gather and analyze information on costs including: EGR materials (initial vs. recurring), professional development, transportation, office space, etc.
- *See USAID resources on cost analysis and reporting*

- **Develop budget in tandem with technical approach and activities**

- Consider: Geographic location of programming; number of schools, languages, teachers and students; personnel to implement program (number, profile)
- Budget for monitoring, evaluation and research

### **Staffing considerations**

- Sufficient to *successfully* carry out the proposed work
- Possess the *required skills and knowledge*
- Provide professional development opportunities and support to staff and gov't counterparts

## 6. Develop monitoring, evaluation and research plan

- **Develop MER plan *at the same time as program is designed***, including all technical experts (e.g., both reading and M&E specialists) in the process
- Design reading program in such a way that the **relative impact of different components and activities** can be isolated, as appropriate and needed
- **Embed research into program plans**: e.g., field tests, longitudinal studies, small-scale qualitative research

### Key considerations

- Track fidelity of implementation
- Develop metrics for government capacity, sustainability
- Assess cost-effectiveness of activities
- One size does not fit all! Different MER approaches and instruments will be needed

# ACTIVITY

- Think about the Key Steps to Develop a Quality Program shared just now and reflect on your own experiences.
- **In the Zoom chat window, share a brief story of your own experience related to one of these steps.**

**What steps do you feel need more attention to inform ongoing implementation and (re)design?**

1. Assemble a planning and design team
2. Conduct a “literacy landscape assessment” and background research
3. Conduct an education system mapping and capacity assessment
4. Develop approach and activities
5. Develop budget and staffing plan
6. Develop monitoring, evaluation and research plan



# Section 3: Planning for successful scale up and self-reliance



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## Scale up and self-reliance: An overview

- **Scale up** refers to the expansion of a program or innovation, usually in terms of its size and beneficiaries
- **Self-reliance** in the context of EGR programs typically means the integration of sustainable program components into the national, government-supported education system, without external financing



*Photo: Creative International, Yemen Early Grade Reading Approach (USAID)*

- ✓ Scale up and self-reliance do not necessarily happen simultaneously
- ✓ A program can be scaled up without becoming self-reliant

# Characteristics of effective scale up

- **Planning scale up from the outset** ensures that scale up is possible, by not implementing strategies that will not be scalable
- **Leaders and champions** legitimize and support the innovation being scaled up
- **Genuine collaboration and coordination** takes place across diverse actors
- **“Flexible adaptation”** – Approach to scale up adheres to effective core characteristics of the pilot while incorporating modifications necessary to be successful at scale
- **System capacity** exists to carry out implementation “at scale”
- Plan for scale up pays attention to **cost-effectiveness and resource planning**
- **Data and performance tracking used to build evidence and inform scale up**

Source: DeStefano, J. & Healey, H. (2016). Scale-up of Early Grade Reading Programs. RTI International. Available at <https://globalreadingnetwork.net/eddata/task-order-15-data-education-programming-asia-and-middle-east-depame-scale-early-grade>

## EGR scale-up efforts

A review of efforts to scale up EGR programs in 10 countries—Cambodia, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Philippines and Rwanda—provides insight into EGR scale-up efforts to date (DeStefano and Healey, 2016):

<b>Successfully scaled-up programs were:</b>	<b>Challenges that constrained successful scale up included:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>context-specific</b></li><li>• <b>featured collaboration</b> between funders, implementers and government</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>lack of government capacity</b> to carry out implementation at scale</li><li>• <b>insufficient enabling conditions</b> to institutionalize EGR program components into the education sector</li></ul>

**Any others you would add?**

# EGR improvement framework for scale up

- The early grade reading program scale-up framework and checklist (**Handout 2**) integrates relevant aspects of existing approaches to scale up
- It takes into consideration the fact that EGR improvement efforts are usually funded by external donors, with the aim of being scaled up nationally and integrated within a country's overall education system

## **Handout 2: Early grade reading program scale-up framework and checklist**

The framework reflects three key aspects of EGR program scale up:

- The core components of the program that will be scaled up, or **ingredients for success**
- The approach and plan for scale up, or the **roadmap for success**
- The enabling environment, or the **conditions for successful scale up**

# ACTIVITY

- **Review Handout 3: Considerations and conditions for scale up and sustainability**

**For each of the issues described by the presenter, reflect on your own experience and respond to the Zoom polls:**

- Is it something your program has **deeply considered** and integrated into your design? (If yes, in what ways?)
- Is it something your program has **only minimally considered** and integrated?
- Is it a **big gap** in your program/plan for scale up and sustainability?

## Key takeaways

- ✓ Approach and activities should be a result of a **collaborative process**
- ✓ The design should be **evidence-based**
- ✓ Design should be grounded in what is likely to be **scalable and sustained**
- ✓ Activities should be **aligned and appropriate for the context**
- ✓ Cross-cutting issues should be **integrated**
- ✓ **Design and MER** should go hand-in-hand and be an **iterative process**





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# To contact the presenters:

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**Alison Pflepsen**  
*Reading Program Specialist*  
**REACH**  
[apflepsen@urc-chs.com](mailto:apflepsen@urc-chs.com)

**Amy Pallangyo**  
*Technical Advisor*  
**REACH**  
[aawbrey@gmail.com](mailto:aawbrey@gmail.com)

**Global Reading Network**  
[grn@urc-chs.com](mailto:grn@urc-chs.com)



Thank you for attending the “Early Grade Reading Program Design and Implementation: Best Practices and Resources for Success” webinar series!

Session presentation materials and handouts may be downloaded from the “Tools and Training” category at:

[www.globalreadingnetwork.net](http://www.globalreadingnetwork.net)

# Upcoming webinars

## **EGR Program Design and Implementation Series**

- **July 10** – Resources for teaching and learning early grade reading
- **July 17** – Key EGR skills and strategies for effective instruction and assessment
- **July 24** – Language considerations in early grade reading programs
- **July 30** – Continuous professional development in early grade reading programs

<https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar>



## **Other webinars of interest**

- **June 26** – Adapting EGRA to include sign language (presented by USAID)
- **June 27 & July 18** – Open licensing of education materials (presented by REACH/GRN)

<http://bit.ly/EGRAsignlanguage>  
<https://www.globalreadingnetwork.net/news-and-events/calendar>



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