

USAID Early Grade Reading and Math Project (RAMP)

Draft Program Description

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Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Background	3
3. Justification and Overview of Relevant Activities	5
3.1. Overview of Relevant Activities	6
3.1.1 EGRA/EGMA Research	7
3.1.2 Remedial Education Research.....	7
3.1.3 Cultivating Inclusive and Supportive Environments (CISLE) in Jordan’s Schools	7
3.1.4 Education Reform Support Program.....	8
3.1.5 Monitoring and Evaluation Partnership Project (MEP)	8
4. Project Goal, Objectives, Expected Results, and Activities	9
4.1.1 Gender	9
4.1.2 Syrian refugees.....	10
4.1.3 Disabilities	11
4.2 Results Framework.....	11
4.3 Project Goal: Improved reading and math skills for children in grades K-3, in public schools in Jordan.....	12
4.4 Project Objective: Institute reading and math learning methodologies, policies, and practices at the school, community, and government level that are pragmatic and equitable	12
4.5 Expected Results	12
4.6 Intermediate Results.....	13
5. Implementing Partners, Target Beneficiaries, and Geographic Focus.....	20
5.1. Implementing Partners	20
5.2. Target Beneficiaries	20
5.3. Geographic Focus.....	20
6. Implementation, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation.....	21
7. Project Sustainability.....	22
7.1. Financial Sustainability.....	23
8. Innovation	24

1. Purpose

The Early Grade Reading and Math Project (RAMP) is a five-year project beginning between September and December 2014 and will be implemented in direct collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) to institute reading and math teaching and learning methodologies, policy and practices, at the school, community and government levels that focus on improving learning outcomes for reading in Arabic and math in grades K-3 in Jordan. RAMP will also i) improve early grade reading and math learning materials that are integrated into every K-3 classroom in Jordan; ii) better prepare teachers and administrators to provide effective reading and math instruction through in-service and pre-service training, mentoring and supervision; iii) engage communities to participate in the education of reading and math for all children and hold schools accountable for results; iv) support the Government of Jordan's efforts to institutionalize early grade reading and math policies, standards and assessments.

2. Background

USAID has been active in Jordan's education sector since 2003 and bases its education assistance on priorities outlined in the Jordanian Government's Education Reform for the Knowledge Economy (ERfKE) program, which is a sector-wide strategy for upgrading and transforming the way Jordan's children learn. Over the past decade, USAID has been working with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to assist children and youth to acquire the necessary skills to be productive citizens. Without an adequate skill set, children and youth are not prepared to participate socially, economically and politically in a rapidly changing global environment. USAID has supported programs that work both inside and outside the school system to overcome these challenges.

The Government of Jordan's (GOJ) ERfKE program is a national priority guided by the following vision: *The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has the quality competitive human resource development systems that provide all people with lifelong learning experiences relevant to their current and future need in order to respond to and stimulate sustained economic development through an educated population and an educated workforce.* Inherent in ERfKE's components is improving the MOE's ability to address individual student needs so that they gain twenty-first century skills along with the core competencies that allow students to thrive, remain enrolled and benefit from school. The reforms support improving schools' ability to identify at-risk students, to engage parents more effectively in educational processes and to ensure the acquisition of basic literacy skills.

While access to schools (specifically Grades 1-10) is relatively high in Jordan (reported to be about 91 percent enrolment at the primary level by the World Development Indicators Index in 2013), with female enrollment surpassing male enrollment at all levels of education, the quality of education remains uneven. This situation is evident in the results of international tests. Jordan participated in the 2011 TIMSS (Trends in International Math and Science Study) and scored below the international benchmark (which is 500) with a score of 409 for eighth grade math (a decline from their 2007 score of 427). Girls scored significantly higher than boys on the

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test with an average of 420 whereas the boys' average was 392. Jordan also participated in the Program for International Assessment (PISA) in 2012 and the average score in reading for 15-year-olds was 399 points, compared to an average of 496 points in OECD countries. Girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 75 points (OECD average: 38 points higher for girls).

In support of USAID's Global Education Strategy,¹ which includes a goal of improving reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015, USAID funded a National Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in 2012 and found that the majority of Grade 2 students are not reading with fluency and lack the foundational literacy skills normally taught in first grade.² USAID also funded an Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA) at the same time and found that memorization—fine for procedural tasks—plays a large role in how Grade 2 students learn mathematics in Jordan, leading to a deficit in conceptual knowledge. A student needs to be able to use conceptual knowledge to perform more advanced math.

Concern over the 2012 EGRA/EGMA results has contributed to the MOE's interest in rolling out a large-scale early grade reading and math intervention. The MOE recognizes the need to improve the quality of learning in the early grades to provide students with the fundamental skills they need for improvements in learning throughout their academic career. Leaders within the MOE agree that intensive efforts in the early grades are necessary in order for Jordan to regain its status as the region's educational success story.

The results of the assessment, triangulated with research demonstrating both the importance of basic skill acquisition in the early years and the lasting gains from a kindergarten education, underscore the need to improve reading and math outcomes in the early years – specifically grades kindergarten (KG)³ to 3—for long-term success in the school system. This focus on basic skills acquisition links to another priority of the MOE, supported by the Jordan Poverty Alleviation Strategy, to provide universal KG education to its five-year olds. While the MOE has significantly increased access to KG in the past five years, only 56 percent of KG-aged children are being served by the public and private sector combined. Numerous studies, including a landmark study from Harvard University entitled "Project Star,"⁴ have shown that a quality KG education plays a significant role in learning achievement, school completion, and even earnings in adulthood.

¹ *Education: Opportunity Through Learning; USAID Education Strategy*. February 2011.
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACQ946.pdf

² *Student Performance in Early Grade Reading and Mathematics, Pedagogical Practice, and School Management in Jordan*. November 2012. Research Triangle Institute. The full assessment, including the instruments used, are available in full detail in both Arabic and English at the following website:

² <https://www.eddataglobal.org/countries/index.cfm?fuseaction=showdir&pubcountry=JO&statusID=3>

³ The MOE is in the process of establishing KG programs as part of the primary education cycle nationwide. Approximately 1,000 KGs have been established and they use a uniform curriculum developed with support from USAID.

⁴ Chetty, R., Friedman, J., Hilger, N., Saez, E., Schanzenbach, D & Yagan, D. (March 2011). *How Does Your Kindergarten Classroom Affect Your Earnings? Evidence from Project STAR*.
<http://obs.rc.fas.harvard.edu/chetty/STAR.pdf>

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Though having access to school is important, it is equally important to provide students with a quality education experience and opportunity to learn while there. It is well known that a major factor for achieving student learning outcomes is how well the teacher carries out his or her role with effective materials. The MOE is learning that in Jordan, at all grade levels, the curricula and teaching techniques are not adequately preparing students to participate socially, economically and politically in the modern world. In part, this is due to the lack of a focused pedagogical training instructors receive prior to entering the classroom. Only those interested in pursuing teaching as a career in the early grades have the opportunity to study educational pedagogy and even then there are disconnects between the theory taught and the realities of classrooms. In the 2012 EGRA/EGMA, fewer than half of the teachers interviewed reported receiving pre- or in-service training in how to teach reading and mathematics in the early grades.

There are other factors that will affect the implementation of RAMP. The 2012 EGRA/EGMA noted that a third of all classrooms had no reading materials other than textbooks, and most students did not read at home. Community awareness of the value of education is low. Principals and education supervisors need training to do their jobs more effectively, yet staff turnover is endemic throughout the education system. Some schools' infrastructure is below the national minimum standard. Given the multitude of potential challenges, USAID is seeking interventions that use evidence-based practices to improve reading and math learning outcomes, coupled with more innovative approaches that will need to be tested on a pilot basis during the project's lifecycle.

USAID is the only donor currently focusing on the specific issue of improving early grade reading and math which contributes to a close working relationship with the MOE. USAID will help to pioneer this effort in partnership with the MOE, which has undergone multiple staff changes over the past few years. As a new area of focus, the program will be designed to build in research along the way to understand what works and does not work, and to learn from mistakes to make course corrections.

3. Justification and Overview of Relevant Activities

It is generally accepted that a child reads with comprehension when he or she can correctly answer 80 percent or more of the reading comprehension questions on a standardized assessment. The EGRA/EGMA found that on average 24 percent of the Grade 2 and Grade 3 students in Jordan were unable to read a single word of a story's text and because of this inability to read, were unable to answer any of the comprehension questions related to the reading passage. On the other end of the spectrum, approximately 20 percent of the students were able to read with comprehension. The EGRA/EGMA found that to begin reading with comprehension, Grade 2 students needed to achieve an oral reading fluency of at least 30 correct words per minute, and that those students who were reading with optimal comprehension had an oral reading fluency of 45 correct words per minute or more. The EGRA/EGMA found that only 13 percent of Jordanian students were able to read 30 correct words per minute, and that girls scored consistently higher than boys.

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The findings with respect to oral reading fluency and comprehension scores are not surprising given student performance on the foundational reading skill subtasks. On average, 26 percent of students were unable to respond correctly to a single item on the *Letter-sound knowledge* subtask, and 47 percent of students were unable to respond correctly to a single item on the *Invented word decoding* subtask. These subtasks assess the most foundational reading skills, and fluency with these skills is essential to becoming a strong reader.

EGMA assessed a progression of foundational skills that research has shown to be predictive of future success in mathematics. The subtasks can be divided into two groups: subtasks that deal with procedural knowledge and subtasks that deal with more conceptual knowledge. The EGMA found that although Jordanian students in general performed better on the procedural items, they were unable to use that knowledge in the conceptual items, where they did not perform as well. The Grade 2 students scored 84 percent for addition and 79 percent for subtraction on the *Addition and subtraction (level 1)* subtask—a task that assesses fluency with so-called basic addition and subtraction facts. Grade 3 students had similar results. However, in the corresponding *Addition and subtraction (level 2)* subtask, where they were expected to use the basic facts from level 1, Grade 2 students scored 53 percent for addition and 32 percent for subtraction, with 24 and 48 percent respectively unable to respond correctly to a single item on these parts of the subtask. For Grade 3 students, the results were very similar and did not show the benefit of an additional year of schooling.

These EGMA results suggest that memorization plays a large role in the way that children know and learn mathematics in Jordan. There is a clear trend that demonstrates that students do well on the items that rely on procedural knowledge—knowledge that can also be memorized—and markedly less well on the tasks and items that require fluency with and application of procedural knowledge (rather than memorized facts).

Finally, as part of the EGMA/EGMA, data was also gathered on socio-economic status of those surveyed, how effective school management practices are as well as how engaged parents are in their child's education. Years of school effectiveness research have shown that understanding these factors can be linked to student performance, and the combination of these school and student characteristics helps to explain why some schools are more successful than others. Jordan's MOE is highly centralized and school leaders have little decision-making power, limiting the effectiveness of school-based stakeholders. The survey results confirmed children who attended KG showed significantly stronger reading skills across all EGMA subtasks, but that there was no advantage on mathematics skill. Wealthier students with more engaged parents also performed better.

3.1. Overview of Relevant Activities

This section highlights ongoing USAID activities that are relevant to the RAMP program. They are activities that are expected to be integrated into and built upon with the new project as they contribute to the knowledge-base gained over the past year in Jordan with regard to early grade reading and math. These activities include:

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- EGRA/EGMA Research
- Remedial Education Research
- Cultivating Inclusive and Supportive Learning Environments (CISLE) in Jordan's Schools
- Education Reform Support Program (ERSP)
- Monitoring and Evaluation Partnership Program

3.1.1 EGRA/EGMA Research

In the wake of the EGRA and EGMA study in Jordan, the Ministry of Education (with technical support from USAID) embarked on a one-year research project. The research study involves some 12,000 children across nearly 300 Grade 1, 2 and 3 classrooms in 43 schools and across 12 education districts. The approach of the research is to first do an intensive textbook and supplemental materials review based on basic literacy and numeracy benchmarks, identify gaps in the curricula and/or textbooks, and provide support to the MOE's Curriculum Directorate to develop materials for bridging any existing gaps in the curriculum and/or textbooks. The MOE then introduced a short 15-minute routine into the daily reading and mathematics lesson. The purpose of the routine is to address the gaps identified by the EGRA/EGMA in the early grade reading and mathematics skills of Jordanian students and, at the same time, expose teachers to alternate teaching methodologies and approaches without asking them to change everything that they do at once.

3.1.2 Remedial Education Research

This activity expands upon the EGRA/EGMA research to develop additional student performance assessments or classroom-based diagnostic tools for use in the early grades. The assessments or tools will identify gaps in reading and math according to grade level, and will also provide a series of remedial activities and protocols for teachers to use to close this gap. The remedial activities will include the development of supplemental materials in reading and math for both teachers and students and targeted training for teachers in remedial education. These efforts are currently underway. Starting with the 2014/2015 school year, the research will be rolled-out in 40 schools. The schools will receive materials and refresher training to address remedial education needs. An analysis will be carried out after one year to determine how many students in remediation graduated out of remediation. Learning and dissemination workshops will be held to discuss progress and results.

3.1.3 Cultivating Inclusive and Supportive Environments (CISLE) in Jordan's Schools

USAID recently awarded a grant to the Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA). The first track of the project uses a teacher training package and resource materials for a 5-day training program to build the capacity of teachers in delivering quality education to Syrian refugee students. These training materials include elements of how teachers can offer psychosocial support, and use interactive teaching pedagogies, effective classroom management techniques and academic and behavioral assessment strategies to enhance students' engagement and promote safe, supportive, healthy and inclusive learning environments in schools. The

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psychosocial and pedagogical training will be applied in 200 schools where large clusters of displaced Syrian refugees have been absorbed by the local communities. The second track of the project incorporates a two pronged approach to further enhance the capacity of teachers by cultivating Model Community Schools (MCSs) in 20 of the 200 schools from track one. The first strategy will integrate QRTA's Arabic Reading and Writing program by developing teachers' literacy training and language arts instruction to encourage Syrian students' engagement and participation in classroom activities. Reading clubs and literary activities centering on students ability to express themselves freely will address the challenging behaviors of post trauma. The Arabic Reading and Writing program aims to build the capacity of generalist (Grades 1-3) and Arabic Language teachers by introducing teachers to the most effective methodologies of teaching reading and writing skills to students. To promote the Arabic training program, the libraries in the MCSs will be enhanced with reading materials and resources that focus on Arab culture and identity as inclusive and supportive elements uniting Jordanian and Syrian students in the schools. Furthermore, Reading Clubs will be established in all the MCSs as essential components to promote authentic reading and expressive writing to enhance student engagement in the classroom as well as confront persistent challenging behavioral problems. Reading and writing activities are recognized as effective interventions involving children in learning tasks that help them to internalize basic concepts, values and skills necessary for their intellectual, emotional and social growth.

3.1.4 Education Reform Support Program

USAID has been supporting the Ministry of Education's reform efforts through its flagship education project, the Education Reform Support Program (ERSP), since 2009. There are two main components under ERSP that are pertinent to early grade learning: Early Childhood Education, and Professional Development. Through ERSP, USAID was able to improve the quality of early childhood education in public kindergarten classrooms through a multi-pronged approach that focused not only on building the capacity of teachers and principals to better meet children's needs, but also through engaging the parents, improving the physical environment of the kindergartens and building a quality assurance system at the Ministry of Education. Professional Development worked on establishing with the MOE a comprehensive professional development system including: induction, in-service and leadership. This program succeeded in institutionalizing at the Ministry of Education effective teacher and leadership programs. To ensure the sustainability of those efforts, ERSP trained and certified approximately 450 MOE personnel as trainers. ERSP has also played a very strong role in supporting the Ministry implement and operationalize its professional development Policy Framework. An overall operational plan of the policy framework developed by ERSP will help the Ministry realize what is entailed and required in the real implementation of the professional development policies; including incentives, standards and programs.

3.1.5 Monitoring and Evaluation Partnership Project (MEP)

USAID supports the MEP project to build the capacity of the National Center of Human Resource Development (NCHRD), a quasi-governmental agency, to carry out its mandate to conduct evaluation studies for supporting the Jordanian MOE. Efforts include building

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

monitoring and evaluation skills among NCHRD staff and improving coordination between NCHRD research and MOE policy. MEP supports a study on student assessments in Jordan which should be completed in March 2014. The study intends to examine all the different student assessments currently used in the Jordan education system to better understand various learning domains and educational consequences. MEP is also carrying out a student achievement gender gap study to assess whether the gender gap has widened over time. The study will explain why the gender gap exists and what can be done to close the gap.

4. Project Goal, Objectives, Expected Results, and Activities

RAMP's overarching goal is the improvement of reading and math skills for all children in Jordan in grades K-3 who attend public school. This is aligned with goal one of the Global USAID Education Strategy: improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015. The bulk of results within RAMP will be achieved through 2019. Based on trend analysis data from Egypt's Early Grade Reading project, USAID/Jordan has concluded that a goal of 75 percent of all grade 2 children in public schools reading at a rate of 30 correct words per minute, or better, is achievable over the lifespan of the project. Currently, 13 percent of all Grade 2 students read 30 correct words per minute or better. While this growth may seem unrealistic, evidence from multiple countries show that projects with focused goals, objectives, and activities, with high dollar per pupil funding, with commitment from the MOE, can result in extremely rapid development in short amounts of time.⁵ Within USAID/Jordan's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS),⁶ RAMP will specifically help the USAID/Jordan Basic Education and Youth Office contribute towards Intermediate Result 3.2: Quality of education services improved. Additionally, RAMP will be affected by three other cross-cutting considerations:

4.1.1 Gender: Jordan's CDCS includes a special Development Objective: Gender Equity and Female Empowerment Enhanced. For the purpose of RAMP, there are certain gender considerations that must be acknowledged. The most glaring gender disparity in the education sector is the higher teacher and student performance and more supportive learning environment in girls' schools relative to boys' schools in Jordan. Boys' schools suffer from a shortage of teachers, low teacher motivation and engagement, violence against students perpetrated by teachers, administrators and other students, vandalism, and a lack of parental involvement. Many K-3 public schools in Jordan are coed, and then gender-segregated starting in grade 4. Grades K through 3 present an opportunity to address and lay a foundation for preventing some of the issues that boys and girls face later in their school career. Another consideration is that girls in Jordan have less freedom in decision making about their lives and participation in activities outside the home. Belief in gender-segregated roles is strong among both girls and boys with many believing that male decisions should prevail.

⁵ USAID/Egypt and USAID/Liberia's reading interventions provide two case studies available at: <https://www.eddataglobal.org/countries/index.cfm?fuseaction=showdir&pubcountry=EG&statusID=3> and <https://www.eddataglobal.org/countries/index.cfm?fuseaction=showdir&pubcountry=LR&statusID=3>

⁶ Jordan's CDCS is available at: <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1883/CDCSJordan.pdf>

All interventions, regardless of their focus or specific objectives, will give consideration to gender disparities and the gender specific issues that need to be addressed during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Interventions will need to take this into consideration and should offer safe spaces for girls and boys to enjoy learning. Learning materials should also take advantage of opportunities to broaden attitudes toward gender. USAID/Jordan has seen that female and male schools require different levels of effort and often need varying intervention styles and approaches. For example, the impact of USAID-supported training on female teachers' skills, knowledge, attitude and demonstrated techniques is more visibly evident than that of male teachers. Female teachers performed better on both written exams and on a classroom observation rubric used to better understand teacher performance in the classroom.

Selection of implementing partners for all activities will include criteria to assess their ability and expertise to address gender challenges. Applicants will be required to describe how their interventions will include appropriate and effective approaches to reducing gender gaps and ensuring high levels of coed, cooperative participation in project activities. Monitoring plans will be required to include gender-sensitive indicators. Applicants are asked to demonstrate best practices in promoting gender equality and female leadership at the project level and through their own organizational structures and staffing.

4.1.2 Syrian refugees: The Syrian crisis has had a profound impact upon the public school system in Jordan given that 80 percent of the refugee population resides in host communities⁷. The GOJ has granted access to free primary education to all Syrian refugee children which has exacerbated the existing overcrowding in high population density areas, particularly in Northern Jordan, and declining quality. It is estimated that 120,000 Syrian refugee students are now enrolled⁸ in Jordanian public schools. According to the MOE, this number has doubled since the beginning of the year and is expected to reach 200,000 by the end of 2014. Schools with high numbers of Syrian students often have double shifts to accommodate Syrians, with Jordanians attending morning shifts and Syrians the afternoon shifts. This effort has shortened the total time in schools for students in the double-shifted schools.

Syrian students that are enrolled in Jordanian schools have often lost up to three years of school and are behind academically, and are unfamiliar with the Jordanian curriculum. They have also suffered traumatic events and may need additional counseling and psychosocial support. This evolving situation will clearly affect RAMP and will need to be taken into consideration throughout the implementation of the project. RAMP will be expected to not only be inclusive for all students regardless of nationality, it will make every effort to promote cultural awareness, understanding, and

⁷ Consult UNHCR for up-to-date data: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

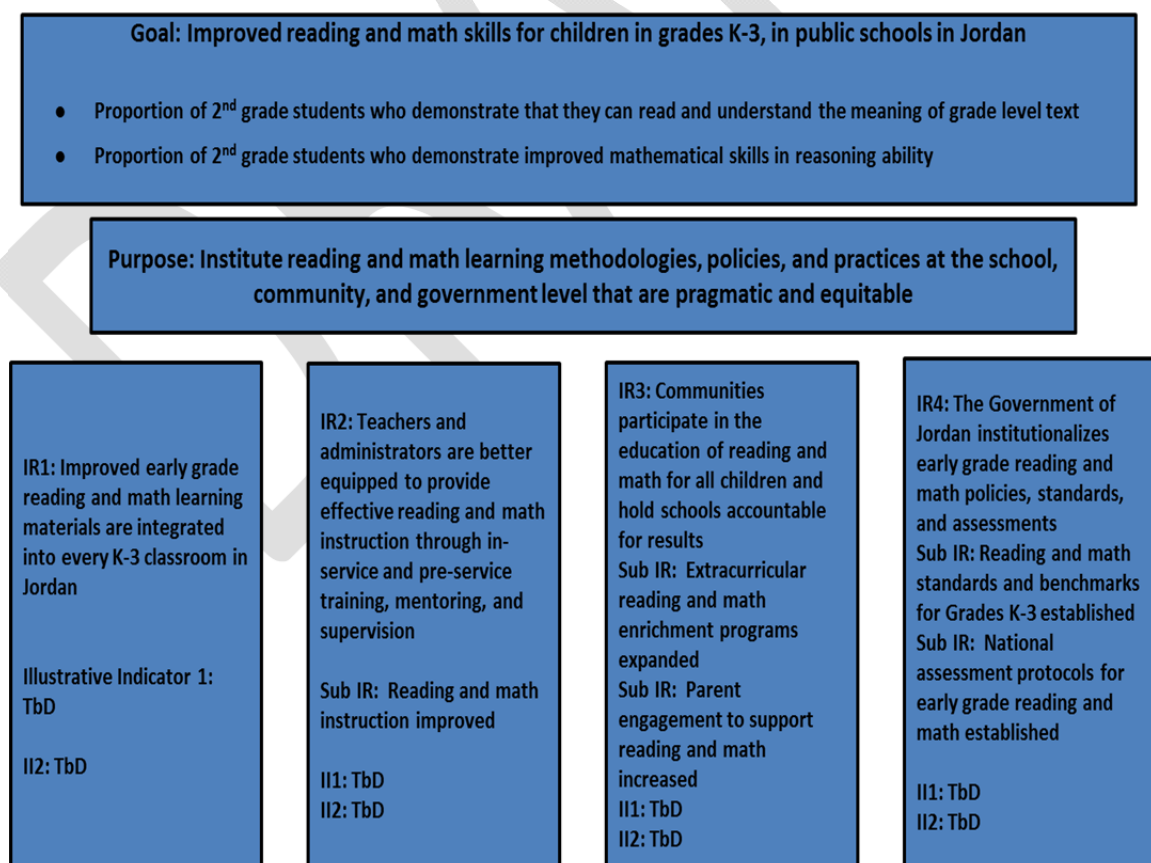
⁸ The lack of data on actual attendance, however, makes it difficult to know the precise impact of the refugee population on the public school system.

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acceptance. Activities that safely involve the parents of children living in the same community can be one such way at both including community members and defusing community tensions between Syrian refugees and Jordanian citizens.

4.1.3 Disabilities: USAID/Jordan's Basic Education and Youth Office has a priority to target underserved groups, including people with disabilities (PWD). It will work to minimize unintended consequences, including an increase of burden on people with disabilities at the different levels of the education system. USAID/Jordan aims to ensure that all curricula, materials and training are promoting teaching techniques known to be inclusive for all students, including those with disabilities. Every effort will be made to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities in this project. Furthermore, a disability inclusion plan specifically delineating how the project will address barriers for people with disabilities relevant to the project and ensure equal access and disability inclusive development practices will be required. Similar to gender considerations, all interventions, regardless of their focus or specific objectives, will address disparities with CWD during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages. Interventions will consider the various forms of disability (visual, hearing, mobility, etc.) and propose interventions to improving the curricula, school services (e.g. sign-language services), teacher training on disability and inclusion, and the learning environment.

4.2 Results Framework



4.3 Project Goal: Improved reading and math skills for children in grades K-3, in public schools in Jordan

The project will aim to improve teaching and learning processes that result in more students mastering reading and math skills. Primary areas of focus will include improving teaching and learning materials, improving teacher training systems so that teachers are more effective in their jobs, increasing community participation in support of reading and math, and ensuring that the GOJ institutionalizes relevant policies, standards, and assessments that have proven to work. MOE capacity to oversee and use data for analysis will be strengthened so that knowledge gained in this project can be transferred to other areas of reform. The project will aim to test interventions and to create innovative solutions for overcoming barriers to learning outcomes in the early grades.

4.4 Project Objective: Institute reading and math learning methodologies, policies, and practices at the school, community, and government level that are pragmatic and equitable

The focus on improving reading and math results allows for a multitude of stakeholders to work collectively to achieve results that are sustained, and can serve as a building block for other school-based reform efforts. There is also room to tackle equity issues and to be sure that efforts are within the manageable interests and budgets of the MOE. Though there are fundamental principles for teaching reading and math backed up by evidence-based research, that does not mean that a one-size fits all program is acceptable. Attention to how to make interventions effective for a range of students in certain contexts will be needed, including refugee children, children with disabilities, etc. Ultimately, the MOE, schools and communities will better understand how to use data and assessments to adjust interventions so that challenges are overcome whether on a national level or at the community level. At the school level, teachers will have access and be fluent in more granular assessments of their students, knowing precisely which sub-skills within math and reading their students are excelling and/or struggling in, as well as strategies to adjust their teaching based on their assessments. At the national level, the MOE will have tools to test a sampling of schools within the Kingdom, to better understand school progress year-to-year in improving early grade learning outcomes. Traditionally, USAID has used EGRAs and EGMAs to assess reading and math learning; however, Applicants are encouraged to think through more cost-effective ways for the MOE to assess student learning to improve long-term sustainability.

4.5 Expected Results

The overarching goal will be measured by the following standard indicators according to the USAID Education Strategy:

- Proportion of 2nd grade students who demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text;
- Proportion of 2nd grade students who demonstrate improved mathematical skills in reasoning ability;

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

- Number of learners receiving reading and math interventions at the primary level

USAID is committed to measuring the learning outcomes of students at its highest level of result and impact. RAMP will be measured in terms of student outcomes in reading and math. First and foremost, regular, institutionalized, reading and math assessments will be used to monitor progress and compare to baseline results to measure project effect and to track areas of weakness.⁹ These assessments will be conducted by a third party in the initial phase, with capacity building provided to teachers, counselors, administrators, and supervisors so that they may assess students independent of an outside organization.

Overall impact will need to be understood, but there will also be a need to carry out experimental and non-experimental studies to understand certain interventions and their usefulness. An emphasis will be placed on using research to better understand the usefulness of certain activities before they are scaled up. Research on progress during scale up will also be needed to monitor whether the quality of interventions is being compromised during expansion.

Additionally, teacher assessments for monitoring student progress in the classroom will be developed and used to better attend to student learning needs. An important aspect of the assessments is that they will be analyzed to make informed decisions about activities, as well as shared with communities so that school performance is well-known among parents. Ultimately, awareness of and support for the importance of reading and math will be gained throughout Jordan, as will measured improvements in student learning outcomes in these subjects.

What follows is an overview of the four intended areas of focus for RAMP. Each Intermediate Result includes a brief description of its intent, as well as *illustrative* activities and *illustrative* and *standard* indicators to measure the four Intermediate Results. The descriptions, activities and illustrative indicators are by no means prescriptive or comprehensive. Due to the ambitious nature of the intermediate results, it is anticipated that Applicants will use innovative management structures so that partners have the most relevant staff available for their respective areas of responsibility.

4.6 Intermediate Results

In order for children to demonstrate improved reading and math skills, several intermediate goals will need to be achieved. It is important to note that the bulk of assistance linked to this project will be to support the capacity of the MOE to implement, monitor and make informed decisions about how to improve reading and math learning. Community-based activities are to build local organizational capacity to do the same. Though each of the Intermediate Results listed below have their own respective results and illustrative indicators, they will need to be closely coordinated. For example, all of the materials developed need to be aligned directly to

⁹ While EGRA/EGMAs have been used by USAID/Jordan in the past, there are several reading and math assessments available for use, and USAID/Jordan does not wish to prescribe a specific assessment methodology at this time.

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

national standards by grade for reading and math, and need to be linked to appropriate training. In addition, applicants are encouraged to think of the following illustrative activities as pieces of a holistic reading and math ecosystem which is interconnected. A holistic reading and math ecosystem is one where all inputs are connected to one another: in-service trainings should directly connect to the teacher manuals being used, which should directly connect to leveled learning materials and readers. These materials should directly connect to potential materials for parents who can reinforce reading and math strategies in the home. Illustrative activities listed below are not exhaustive, and are expected to be refined, expanded upon, and added to by applicants.

- IR 1: Improved early grade reading and math learning materials are integrated into every K-3 classroom in Jordan. Improving reading skills includes improving instructional materials for daily instruction as well as improving remedial instructional materials for those students not performing at standard level. Materials will be expected to be comprehensive so that they are all connected toward achieving the same learning results, and they will also need to be tested after being developed for their effectiveness. Wholesale and specific adjustments to the various materials will be expected. Materials, in addition to textbooks, could include supplementary lessons accompanied by structured lesson plans; supplementary reading materials, such as leveled fiction and nonfiction readers; teacher aids such as posters, and manipulatives. Innovative ideas to test for learning effectiveness for materials will be expected.

Illustrative activities may include:

- Work with the MOE's material development team to make adjustments to reading and math curricula according to student reading and math learning needs and MOE standards. These adjustments may include introducing the phonics approach more consistently and revisiting the scope and sequence for instruction for reading lessons and adding modules that help to deepen conceptual knowledge of mathematics.
- Work with the MOE to develop the design criteria for the teacher guide and make adjustments as needed based on assessment feedback.
- Provide technical assistance to the MOE in the development of student workbooks in reading and math by grade level.
- Develop supplemental reading and math materials according to grade level, in partnership with the MOE and private sector, for use in the classroom.
- Work with the MOE and relevant partners to develop remedial learning materials to address the early grade learning needs of Jordanian and Syrian refugee students.
- Ensure that all materials are designed to meet reading and math standards by grade level.
- Ensure that all materials are gender sensitive and include positive portrayals of children with disabilities.

Standard and illustrative indicators may include:

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- Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided with USG support.
 - Materials approved and distributed by GOJ.
 - Number and percentage of classrooms with adequate supplies of reading and math materials (disaggregated by type-textbooks, decodable readers, leveled fiction and non-fiction text).
 - MOE develops reading and math materials based on standards for grades K-3.
 - Number and percentage of classrooms with libraries for use in daily instruction.
- IR 2: Teachers, supervisors, counselors, and administrators are better equipped to provide effective reading and math instruction through in-service and pre-service training, mentoring, and supervision.

Technical assistance for support to three types of teacher training will be provided: in-service, and two types of pre-service (induction training and university-based training). Existing primary school teachers will receive formal training sessions accompanied by in-classroom mentoring and support. Training content will draw from fundamental reading and math concepts as well as from experiences with the current pilot interventions and activities to provide teachers with the knowledge to use sound instructional strategies and practices to improve students' reading and math skills. Teachers need to become familiar with the materials at each grade level that they will be using during training because teachers need to be able to use them properly to be effective. Special importance will be placed on continuous assessment using simple tools to track student progress and to adjust instruction accordingly. Supervisors providing in-classroom mentoring will provide teachers with ongoing, and immediate feedback to hone their pedagogical practices.

Until teacher preparation programs are strengthened and Jordanian universities are producing graduates that are prepared for the classroom, USAID envisions continuing its support to the Ministry of Education in providing induction programs for new teachers assigned for the early grades (K-3rd Grade). The Ministry, with its trained and certified trainers, is well situated to continue the delivery of the foundation modules of the induction program to all newly assigned teachers, and USAID wishes to provide more specific training to teachers who will be teaching in K-3 with emphasis on teaching reading and mathematics.

RAMP will support efforts at the Ministry of Higher Education and a number of Jordanian universities to improve the existing teacher preparation programs (Early Childhood Education and Classroom Teacher programs). These efforts will include assessment and improvement of the curricula, strengthening the practicum element of the programs and achieving better alignment with the Ministry of Education professional development policies, competencies and standards. The aim is to eventually have well prepared teachers who are hired and can immediately be effective teachers at Ministry of Education schools upon graduation from university- eliminating the need to enroll in any induction programs prior or as the academic year starts. These efforts need to be governed strategically at a policy level through a dynamic and focused Policy Steering Committee that includes USAID, the project, the relevant

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

ministries, the participating universities, and others as seen appropriate.

All of the training modules developed, modified and supported with this program will take gender needs into consideration as well as ideas for how to include topics on being sensitive to disabilities and guidance for working with children with disabilities. Also, teacher awareness for how to be more effective for closing learning gaps for students below standards will be learned through the remedial education modules. Technology innovations to improve teacher training and absorption of information will also be expected to be tested; and integrated into ongoing teacher and administrator trainings if they prove to be effective. Technology has also proven to be effective in USAID’s pilot for data collection and monitoring on the part of supervisors, and could be further explored and/or expanded upon.

Illustrative activities may include:

- Provide technical assistance to the MOE to support improved in-service teacher training activities. An emphasis on shifting away from *what* children learn (which encourages memorization) toward *how* children learn will be needed to emphasize the importance of understanding, application and reasoning as part of the learning process.
- Support the MOE to develop training modules for teachers on how to use assessment tools more effectively in the classroom.
- Work with the MOE to support teacher capacity to use assessments more effectively so that they are used for informing teaching approaches.
- Support the MOE to carry out training of trainers workshops to introduce new in-service and pre-service induction training materials.
- Increase the number of teachers in the early grades who receive specific training on early grade reading including the component skills of reading, starting with the critical phonological awareness skills and including alphabetic principles, morphology and use of context clues.
- Increase the number of teachers in early grades who receive specific training on early grade math including number identification, quantity discrimination, missing-number identification, word problem solving, addition and subtraction, shape recognition, and pattern extension.
- Support the MOE to provide training modules that address remedial learning for vulnerable Jordanian and Syrian students in reading and math for targeted teachers.
- Provide the MOE with technical assistance to support pre-service induction training for primary school teachers seeking certification that reinforces early grade reading and math concepts.
- Work in partnership with the MOHE to design early grade learning concepts and practices and integrate into existing coursework, particularly in reading and math, for Faculties of Education.
- Informal mentoring activities at the school level are initiated, so that teachers quick to “master” the trainings can mentor teachers in the same school, providing feedback and advice.

Standard and illustrative indicators may include:

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

- Early grade reading and math teacher training modules developed and/or revised by the MOE in accordance to standards
 - Remedial education teacher training modules developed and/or revised by the MOE to assist students below standards
 - Inclusive education modules developed and/or revised for in-service and pre-service teacher training
 - Materials developed to assist teachers and teacher trainers at an appropriate level for the target audience
 - Percentage of trained teachers correctly using materials in their classrooms
 - Number and percent of teachers able to identify levels of achievement and interventions needed at the student level
 - Number and percent of teachers trained using continuous reading and math assessment tools to improve reading and math instruction
 - Number and percent of teachers using teacher guides and learning materials correctly
 - Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who successfully completed in-service training or received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support (disaggregated by direct and indirect)
 - Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who successfully completed pre-service training with USG support (disaggregated by direct and indirect)
- IR 3: Communities participate in the education of reading and math for all children and hold schools accountable for results. There is some evidence¹⁰ that increasing community- and household-level engagement in reading and math strategies contributes to success in learning outcomes in schools. In addition to the school-based interventions, there will also be activities to support community-based interventions that contribute to better performance in schools. Parents play a role in their children's learning progress, and this project will make them more aware of how to support learning through evidence-based and innovative ideas. This component will also carry out research to better understand which types of interventions have an effect on helping to better prepare a child for school-based learning in Jordan. In other words, which reading and math activities outside of the classroom reinforce classroom practices and messages most effectively?

Community-based events will also advocate for and highlight the importance of reading and math and share with families ideas for how to support their children's development of these skills (such as reading stories to children). Communities and parents should also become more aware of and hold schools more accountable for reading and math performance among students. Ideas for how to effectively achieve these goals should be generated from community members, as well as be based on good practices. Working with community-based organizations to sustain activities will also be an important aspect of this component.

¹⁰ See "A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement" for several such examples <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

Illustrative activities may include:

- Identify and support innovative and well-known practices for the development and roll out of community-based activities that support reading and mathematics development (e.g. bookmobiles¹¹).
- Engage relevant stakeholders and build capacity to carry out activities that support reading and math development effectively at the community level.
- Provide community-based organizations with advocacy training, volunteer mobilization techniques training, summer programming options and other types of assistance that support the development of reading and math in the community (ex. teaching parents the importance of reading to children).
- Develop a national public reading campaign using available and effective technology.
- Support the development of extracurricular and home- and community-based activities and competitions that support reading and math development.
- Test community- and household-based interventions to understand their effectiveness on student learning in the classroom.
- Support local development of storytelling opportunities and other campaigns that emphasize the importance of reading and math.
- Develop a radio show which engages parents in their children's reading and math learning where parents are held accountable as well as increasing the amount of time the child is spending on throughout during the day.
- Develop a nationwide story competition for teachers where winning teachers are publicly recognized/ awarded for their contribution to the development of stories promoting reading and math learning.

Standard and illustrative indicators may include:

- Number of PTAs or similar 'school' governance structures supported
 - Number of local organizations using USG-assistance to improve internal organizational capacity
 - Number of community-based organizations (CBOs) receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions
 - Numbers of community action groups formed and active
 - Percent change in organizational capacity assessment scores of USAID-assisted community-based organizations
 - Percent increase in the number of community-based enrichment activities
 - Number of participants in community-based enrichment activities
 - Percent increase in opportunities outside school to practice reading and math
 - Numbers of innovative ideas and actions coming from communities and jointly implemented between communities and schools
- IR 4: The Government of Jordan institutionalizes early grade reading and math policies,

¹¹ See <http://www.fhi360.org/projects/jordan-drive-read-dtr> for more information

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

standards, curricula, and assessments. Working hand in hand with the MOE to improve reading and math instruction and practices in all schools will need to be based on appropriate guidelines, standards, benchmarks and policies. Policy dialogues based on the data generated from the project will feed into these processes, thus it is important for central and regional level MOE staff to be engaged in project research. USAID will lead all policy dialogues, with RAMP partners playing key supporting role(s). Developing policies and standards for each grade level should be engaging and include key stakeholders outside of the MOE as well such as teachers' unions' representatives. Systematizing how student learning results and how to monitor student progress will be essential. Continuous assessment will help to refine standards, policies and practices.

Illustrative activities include:

- Mainstream IR1 and IR2 activities pertaining to the development of learning materials; teacher training and mentoring; and assessments into the MOE to ensure sustainability.
- Create a financially sustainable assessment tool for yearly monitoring of progress in early grade reading and math.
- Create and/or build upon existing non-financial incentive models for teachers, supervisors, and counselors to effectively implement early grade reading and math activities.
- Increase principal and district pedagogical advisors understanding of the concepts for how to improve early grade reading and math.
- Work with the MOE to improve principal and advisor training so they support new teaching methodologies and practices, and are able to communicate the rationale behind these changes in teaching style to the community and parents.
- Work with the MOHE to integrate effective reading and math pedagogy into existing university-level curriculum for teachers in grades K-3.

Standard and illustrative indicators may include:

- Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve primary grade reading and math programs or increase equitable access
- Percent increase in reading and math instructional time mandated by MOE policy or directives
- Standards and benchmarks for Grades K-3 established in reading and math with USG assistance
- Number and percent of MOE staff trained on reading and math concepts
- Number and percent of MOE staff trained on using standards and benchmarks
- Policies created and adopted based on the research, results and best practices related to the early grade reading and math surveys and subsequent interventions
- Transfer of policy directives into actionable items reflected in plans and priorities of the GOJ at the national and local levels
- Transfer of policy to school level including an increase in students' scores on

early grade reading and math assessments

5. Implementing Partners, Target Beneficiaries, and Geographic Focus

5.1. Implementing Partners

RAMP will work in partnership with the MOE and MOHE, as well as with community-based organizations, parents, parent-teacher associations, and Jordanian NGOs and is expected to foster good working relationships among these groups. USAID will lead the relationship process at the Ministerial level, with RAMP partners supporting USAID at the more technical levels within the GOJ. The Ministry level staff will be the primary partners in this effort, and the goal is for them to be able to take over and sustain activities by the end of the project. The MOE will need cost feasible solutions to sustain efforts. It is important to engage key stakeholders throughout the process of implementation to develop mutual understanding of project component purposes and results, as well as to improve collaboration and results and to ensure sustainability of successful activities. The MOE has begun to carry out revisions in early grade reading and math materials and the project will build off the existing resources in country, including at the community level as well. The project can help encourage full participation of parents and community members and foster a proactive PTA that understands the benefits of its investment for the children and the role that they can play in improving their children's reading and math skills.

5.2. Target Beneficiaries

RAMP- J will benefit public school students, teachers, mentors, counselors, supervisors, principals, parents, communities, teacher trainers, and field directorate and central MOE and MOHE staff. By the end of the project, it is expected that all public school students in grades K-3 in Jordan, approximately 300,000 according to 2013 MOE figures,¹² will receive improved reading and math instruction. In addition, private school students and teachers will indirectly benefit from the project through curriculum improvements at the school and university level, pre-service training, and the revised policies, standards, and assessments under IR4. Outside of the school system, parents and community members will benefit from direct opportunities to become more engaged in school-based activities, as well as in support for community-based initiatives. Students with disabilities as well as students needing remedial education will also benefit.

Selection of beneficiaries for training should always be based on a strategic approach to the overall project to facilitate implementation and sustainability of the capacity building efforts.

5.3. Geographic Focus

RAMP will have a national focus and is expected to reach all public MOE schools in all Governorates in Jordan. The implementation plan for IR1, IR2, and IR3 shall ensure that roll-out of program activities occurs equitably between the northern and southern governorates. The

¹² Though in reality higher due to the influx of Syrian refugee school-age children.

national scope of the project will include working in communities that are hosting Syrian refugees and responding to the situation by double shifting schools. This context adds dimensions to programming that may need to be taken into consideration, such as the need for remedial reading and math programs given the loss in years of schooling, tensions in communities given the situation as well as the impact of double shifting schools which cuts into the total hours a child is in class.

6. Implementation, Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

RAMP will be implemented using a phased-in approach based on evidence-based data to inform progress, which by year three of project implementation will result in national-level roll-out of activities integrated into all public school classrooms in grades K-3. Phasing in of schools and/or grade levels will be necessary for implementation to ensure fidelity, as well as provide the implementer room to course-correct if activities are failing to meet their milestone objectives. In addition, another benefit of phasing-in will be that it will be a less financially burdensome than starting a national program in year one.

USAID requires an implementation plan that phases in schools in a way that a) scales up gradually to not burden the MOE; and b) uses scientific testing of different activities to find the most cost-effective ways to improve early grade student reading and math outcomes in Jordan. As part of the implementation, experimental, quasi-experimental, and non-experimental research techniques will be used to monitor progress. The research will be varied and appropriate for the level of information needed. For example, not every intervention will require randomized control trials with counterfactuals in order to progress and make adjustments as interventions move to scale. There are opportunities and challenges for all types of research and decisions about which types of research need to accompany which aspects of the project being implemented should be discussed and analyzed with the MOE throughout the project to build their capacity to link research to reform implementation. Topics such as problems with sample attrition, insufficient precision, limits of generalizability and limits on understanding mechanisms should be part of the discussions. The end goal is to build in an approach *with multiple research opportunities*, so that the relative impact of various activities can be measured, whether against a counterfactuals or relying on existing data to find an answer to outstanding research questions. This approach will allow USAID to understand scientifically which activities are most cost-effective for improving the reading and math skills of early grade learners, and will be vital to the sustainability of RAMP long after USG support has ended.

USAID/Jordan has learned from the experience of other USAID missions the crucial importance of communicating why a phased-in, randomization plan is being done, to avoid any ill-will on the part of the Government or of communities initially assigned to be part of the control group. One technique that has shown to mitigate this potential negative reaction is greater transparency in the randomization process, with MOE stakeholders, both central and local, invited to watch the actual randomization take place, ensuring there are no claims of favoritism. Clearly research and data collection need to be well coordinated in the project.

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

The implementation plan will also include an exit strategy to demonstrate how activities will be sustained. In a sense, the exit strategy for the project is a work plan for the MOE, MOHE and community-based organizations to continue their work on improving reading and math results in the early grades and increasing of awareness for the importance the focus on these efforts as well as continuing to engage key stakeholders on the subject to monitor progress.

A monitoring and support system will be needed to realize the multiple objectives of the project. Given the desire to use research and data to drive implementation choices, there will need to be a strong monitoring and evaluation system in place. Reports of monitoring visits by the project staff will be collected and synthesized to assess challenges, problems and successes and then consolidated reports will be submitted to USAID. The monitoring system shall include ways to monitor curriculum experts, teacher trainers, and teachers involved in the project and innovative primary grade level reading and math curriculum design approaches, programming, etc. and share lessons learned with other stakeholders such as the MOE, donors, schools and community-based organizations, families, and among non-project communities. Data collection and verification strategies will be needed to ensure reliability and accuracy of progress towards expected results. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders in monitoring efforts to assure that monitoring and evaluation systems are as cost-effective as possible will be required. Further, a project baseline will be needed and the data needs and indicators will be agreed upon at the commencement of the project.

7. Project Sustainability

In addition to the improved reading and math outcomes among early grade students, a primary objective of USAID is to build stakeholders' ability to carry out the work and build off it in the future. The targeted beneficiaries, in particular the MOE, need to be able to identify problems and devise local solutions by the end of the project. A one-off training or workshop on sustainability does not ensure sustainability. Furthermore, uncertainty over government commitment and lack of an explicit plan for transferring responsibility put education projects' sustainability/initiatives at risk. Other aspects that affect sustainability are:

- If there is no official agreement among stakeholders or plan to maintain the results of the project interventions/initiatives;
- Frequent staff turnover at the MOE school levels result in interruption of project activities and decelerate the momentum generated;
- Transfer of core personnel (teachers, curriculum experts, etc.) affect maintaining the skills and knowledge acquired through the project;
- If training materials are not made available for future reference; and
- If orientation for new staff on the overall project principles, objective, practices/process and understanding that foster sustainability do not exist (if new staff assume responsibility without catch-up training on project activities).

Sustainability needs to be achieved through building the capacity of local actors to continue the work begun in the project. The project will focus on building essential skills of key actors in the education system to produce results in the short-, medium- and long-terms. Innovative ideas

Pre-Solicitation – For Industry Comments Only

for building capacity beyond workshop-based learning are welcome. Project needs and activities will be led by the MOE and other stakeholders, so capacity-building activities need to be relevant and put into practice immediately. It will also be oriented toward strengthening existing systems and practices. A participatory process should be embedded throughout the project to generate the buy-in required to ensure sustainability.

RAMP will need to do the following to contribute to the success and sustainability of the project:

- Develop an effective organization and management in-service structure/system;
- Plan activities at a regional level such that district-level supervisors can have control over their own development;
- At the MOE level, foster sustainability through the design and implementation of policy that integrates the principles and practices of the project into everyday MOE work plans;
- Work with the MOE to allocate adequate recurring budgets to support and sustain in-service activities at the MOE for training, supervision, equipment maintenance, etc.;
- Establish a system of accountability through supervision and evaluation;
- Establish an incentive system such as recognition and certificates or points that will have implications for promotions or position upgrading;
- Strengthen the capacity of MOE staff to actively participate in developing new curriculum materials -conducting needs assessment, training, carrying out follow up support; and
- Assign capable and responsible personnel (coordinators, supervisors, school principals) for organizing trainings and analyzing curricular materials; etc.

RAMP will draw from stakeholders to identify and document best practices of the project to provide for sustainability and to scale up a primary grade level reading and math program. The technical assistance provided should build the capacity of the Jordanian MOE to develop similar learning materials appropriate for primary classroom instruction and teacher training that are focused on helping students learn to read and do math.

7.1. Financial Sustainability

As critical part of sustainability is to ensure that the MOE has the financial resources available to take over and scale up activities once the project has ended. Financial assessments better understand the affordability of interventions will be carried out with education planners at the MOE. RAMP partners will need to map out costs for various interventions before they are launched so that they are clear about what costs they will be able to absorb once the project ends. The project will have built-in exit strategies that allow the MOE to absorb project costs through a phased approach agreeable to the MOE before the start of the project to ensure the MOE commitment and ability to absorb such costs and thus sustain project results. The project will also take advantage of other projects that offer an opportunity for a multiplier effect and interaction between interventions.

8. Innovation

USAID encourages applicants to be innovative in their approach to a potential partnership. Innovation can include science and technology, local partnerships, and creative methods of helping RAMP achieve its objectives. For an outline of USAID innovations, consult USAID/Forward¹³.

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¹³ <http://www.usaid.gov/usaiddforward>