STARTING THE DIALOGUE AMIDST CRISIS: A CASE STUDY OF CONDUCTING A NATIONWIDE EGRA IN AFGHANISTAN

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RESOURCES, SKILLS, AND CAPACITIES IN EARLY GRADE READING IN AFGHANISTAN (RSC-EGR)

• EGRA
• School Management Effectiveness and Safety Survey (SMES)
• Reading Materials Inventory
• Potential Public-Private Partnerships Evaluation
• Ministry Institutional Capacity for Reform Assessment
RSC-EGR EGRA OVERVIEW

• Among Largest EGRAs Worldwide
• 34 Provinces, Plus Kabul City
• Dari and Pashto Languages
• 1,265 Schools
• 30,000+ Students
• 196 Assessors (87 of 196 from PEDs)
• Phonemic Awareness
• Letter Sound Recognition
• Non-Word Reading
• Oral Reading Fluency
• Reading Comprehension
• Listening Comprehension

• Student Survey
• Parent/Shura Survey
• Principal Survey
• Teacher Survey
• School Inventory
CONFLICT AND SECURITY

- Shifting Security Conditions
- Racial and Tribal Tensions
HOW DOES THIS AFFECT OUR WORK?
CONFLICT-RELATED CHALLENGES

- Shortage of Reliable Information
- Schools Located in Unsafe Areas
- Travel and Oversight Limitations for Expats, STTA, International Partners
- Threats to Local Staff and Partners due to Perceived Cooperation with International Organizations
- Emotional and Physical Toll on Implementers, Stakeholders, Students
SAMPLING & SCHOOL VERIFICATION

• Incorrect and Insufficient EMIS Data
  • Limited availability of accurate school-level demographic information
  • Lack access to certain areas

• Complicated School Demographic Information
  • Cold/Warm Weather Schools / Flooded areas
  • General Education (GE) and Community-Based Education Centers (CBEs)
  • Accelerated Learning Schools
  • Ghost Schools
  • Boys’, Girls’, and Combined Schools
SAMPLING ISSUES

» Types of Students Available for Assessment
  • Out of date information
  • Grade levels or gender within a selected school often differed from what was denoted in the EMIS data
  • Often only one grade was present in schools—especially CBEs

» Fewer schools and students than anticipated
  • Original sample design assumed schools included two assessment grades: 2 and 4 in warm school provinces and 3 and 5 in cold school provinces.
  • Lower attendance and enrollment rates than anticipated

» Language of Instruction.
  • Current EMIS database does not provide any information on the LOI in Afghan schools
SAMPLING STEPS TAKEN

» Established additional partnerships with other donors in the education sector
  • Generated additional lists of CBE schools
    • Provided replacement schools when randomly-selected CBE schools were ghosts, closed, or included non-target grades

» School visits to verify information, reality
  • Identifying and verifying school-level demographics
  • LOI information was collected as part of the school verification process and confirmed and finalized during the operational data collection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>CBE (n)</th>
<th>GE (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G3</th>
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TABLE 2. NUMBER OF SCHOOLS RETAINED IN PRELIMINARY ANAYLTICAL EGRA SAMPLE - PASHTO, BY REGION, SCHOOL TYPE AND GRADE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>CBE (n)</th>
<th>GE (n)</th>
<th>Total (n)</th>
<th>G2 (n)</th>
<th>G3 (n)</th>
<th>G4 (n)</th>
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ADAPTATION OF EGRA TOOL

» Low Local Capacity and Need to Introduce New Concepts
  • Lack of National Standards or Definition for “Reading”
  • Unfamiliarity with Reading Skills and Methodologies

» Need to Ensure Inter-Rater Reliability when Training Assessors Nationwide

NUMBER OF CORRECT ANSWERS, PHONEMIC AWARENESS

see notes

Grade 2-3
Grade 4-5
ADAPTATION OF EGRA TOOL

» Engage Government Throughout Process
  • National MOE and Provincial Education Directorates
  • EGRA Tool Adaptation Working Group
  • STS Training Packages
  • Training of Master Trainers

» Shift to a Single, Kabul-based Assessors Training
  • Change from Original Plan to Conduct Regional Trainings
PILOTING AND DATA COLLECTION

» Limitations of International Staff to Observe, Provide Feedback
  • Determine Sample that is Representative but Safe to Collect
  • Ability to Observe and Ensure Reliable Data Collection, Conduct Spot-checks

» Use of Technology in Regions
  • Carrying Tablets into Unsafe Regions
  • Data Uploading Process
DATA COLLECTION

» Scheduling
  • Inaccessibility of schools due to the security situation
  • Data collection delays and extensions
  • Data collection team school visits cut short due to outbreaks of fighting nearby
  • Partially completed EGRA and/or SMES assessments
DATA COLLECTION

» Pilot
  • Central Training and Limited Pilot

» Partnership with National and Provincial Education Experts
  • Provincial Education Directors (PEDs)
    • Provided up-to-date assessments of the security status of each school

» Plan for Variation of Data Collection Timing
  • Build in time for replacement school visits, repeat visits when safer
  • Replace schools in areas where reach was completely prevented
    • Avoided conducting the classroom observations in Helmand and Kunduz due to ongoing hostilities during some time periods
  • Provide paper-based versions of assessment tools to all teams
  • Tablets built with ability to save and upload assessments when Internet/3G available
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>Projected Number of Sampled Schools</th>
<th>Actual Number of Schools Tested</th>
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<tr>
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<td>CBE (n)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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+ Projected sample as reported by Chemonics to STS on January 7, 2016; original projections did not disaggregate by schools’ Language of Instruction (Dari or Pashto).
SHARING RESULTS

» Dissemination of Data in Insecure Areas
  • Limitations of Expatriate Long-Term Experts and Short-Term Consultants
  • Reliance on MOE and PED Staff to Disseminate

» Politicization of Results
  • Generalizable to National Level vs. Disaggregate to District Level
  • Expectations of Ministry and Options for Use of Data Results
  • Ability to Draw Conclusions from Data Gathered in Conflict Settings
RESULTS—DARI AND PASHTO

» Some mastery of the mechanics of reading:
  • Basic phonemic awareness and letter sound identification skills, as illustrated by low zero scores on these tasks
  • Current ability already constitutes a foundation upon which future instruction can be built

» Marginal decoding skills:
  • Higher zero scores found on the decoding (nonword reading) task, especially in Grade 2
  • Ability to apply foundational skills to new situations is limited

» Boys’ and girls’ performance are comparable for the “mechanical” reading tasks of phonemic awareness, letter sound fluency, and non-word reading

» Grade 2 girls score slightly better than boys on ORF and comprehension.
LESSONS LEARNED

» Importance of Partnership with Ministry and Local Education Organizations/Directorates
  • Communication and Sharing, Capacity Development

» Partnership and Coordination of Information with Other Donors, Implementing Partners

» Build in Time to Account for Access Issues
  • Consider Population and Regions Targeted

» Consider Alternative Data Collection Methods
  • Conscientious of Profile of Teams

» Training and Dissemination Methods when International Staff Movement is Limited