BOD/2011/05—DOC 05

Meeting of the EFA FTI Board of Directors

Kigali, Rwanda, 18-19 May 2011

FULFILLING THE SPIRIT AND LETTER OF EDUCATION FOR ALL: A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN EFA FTI DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTNERS

For Decision/Input

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to receive input from the EFA FTI Board of Directors on a strategy that aims to improve learning outcomes by giving to interested EFA FTI developing country partners targeted advice that is based on state-of-the-art knowledge about increasing the effectiveness of instruction quickly and without great expense.

2. Background

The Board has made it clear that quality and learning outcomes are important objectives. In a decision made at its meeting in Washington, DC in May 2010, the EFA FTI Board of Directors decided that "the Board agrees that for the time being all six EFA goals – including *learning needs*, life-long learning, adult literacy and *all aspects of quality of education* – will be eligible for financing" (BOD/2010/05-02). It also decided that "the overarching results framework will have a focus on outcomes in the basic education cycle" (BOD/2010/05-02). In addition, other international donors and EFA FTI Partners, such as the United States Agency for International Development, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and the World Bank have put learning outcomes at center stage in their agendas. A similar interest has awakened with various developing country partners. These efforts currently have no clear source of support and there are no agile mechanisms to make them more effective.

3. Decision Requested

The EFA FTI Board of Directors is requested to approve the following decision:

> **BOD/2011/-05-XX – Quality Strategy:** The EFA FTI Board of Directors endorse the Strategy for Quality Improvement for EFA FTI developing country partners as described in BOD/2011/05--DOC 05 and which is aimed at assisting developing country partners improve learning outcome indicators, both current and under refinement in the Results Framework.

4. Executive Summary

The learning and quality imperative is pressing. Using assessments such as Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS), and Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS), researchers have determined that the median child in poor countries has learning outcome levels comparable to that of the child at the 5th percentile of the learning distribution in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. It is also known that these problems start in the earliest grades. Assessments of reading in many countries find that in some of the poorest countries as many as 50% of children cannot read at all even as late as grade 3 or 4, thus wasting their potential and undermining their right to education.

Some EFA FTI developing country partners and donors have started initiatives to use reading, in the early grades, as a sharp point of entry into lifting learning outcomes in a manner that is clear and measurable, and which can produce a sense of forward movement and optimism regarding learning outcomes. There is a need to provide technical support to these activities that is targeted at the situations in the low-income countries where the EFA FTI works, and also to generate enthusiasm for deepening and broadening the activities. The activity proposed here would be deployed at various levels, and would be aimed at solving five technical bottlenecks. Deployment would take place at global and regional levels and would be aimed at mutual information sharing but also, importantly, firming up commitment on a clear agenda. The largest activity would involve supporting Local Education Groups (LEGs) in implementing actions (including many that are already started) to sharply boost learning

outcomes. In technical terms, the activity proposes to demonstrate that children can be well-embarked in reading after one year of instruction (actually, 100 days of instruction), and that this approach can be generalized to a whole country within about three years, if there is political will.

Five areas are targeted for support:

a. securing the time and time management for focused reading and mathematics instruction;
b. vastly and massively improving teacher capacity to teach reading through special lessons and increased training and support;
c. improving the basis of mother tongue instruction;
d. using and demonstrating much more inexpensive and high-productivity textbooks for reading; and
e. disseminating and using appropriate assessment techniques in the early grades that can be used to support teachers but also enhance community and policy-maker involvement.

The effort would also seek to involve other partners such as UNESCO or the UNESCO Institute for Statistics., possibly using the proposed Global and Regional Activities (GRA) approach, discussed with the Board previously (BOD BOD/2010/11-8, based on November 2011 document entitled “THE EFA FUND STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONAL DESIGN”).

For a full description of the background and the idea, please refer to Annex 1.

5. Next Steps

The next steps will be to constitute the necessary funding to support this work by assembling cost elements from within existing EFA FTI Secretariat budget. The work would be done by a small team within the EFA FTI Secretariat. The team would be part of a set of networked consultants, LEGs, and developing country partner staff working in the countries themselves. The EFA FTI Secretariat will create the core, and will identify LEGs where action is already incipient and will strengthen and support this action. It will also encourage action in LEGs where action is welcome. Practical experiences in catalyzing work through networks of strong consultants already exist, and are a lower-cost way of getting work done. The work will be actively managed by two Lead Education Specialists at the EFA FTI Secretariat, for whom this agenda is central.

6. Costs and Sources of Funding

The cost of the activity is expected to be relatively low, as the idea is to provide support to developing country partners and donors who are already embarked in such early grade reading efforts. The funding will be constituted out of the "quality" component of the existing or planned EFA FTI Secretariat budget (some of which is partially funded by a grant from USAID), in addition to which the EFA FTI Secretariat is expected to use the Global and Regional Activities approach within the Education for All Fund.

7. Contact

Board members and others with questions on these matters are invited to contact the Global Good Practices Team Coordinator, Luis Crouch, at: lcrouch@educationfasttrack.org.

ANNEX 1: FULFILLING THE SPIRIT AND LETTER OF EDUATION FOR ALL: A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN EFA FTI DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTNERS

Overall, this strategy aims to improve learning outcomes by giving to interested EFA FTI developing country partners targeted advice that is based on state-of-the-art knowledge about increasing the effectiveness of instruction.

In the EFA FTI experience, schools in low-income countries mainly succeed in teaching the few students who are better off rather than those who are average or below average. There has been little effort to synthesize and disseminate knowledge that will mitigate the instructional problems of low-income countries. The strategy proposes to close the knowledge gap.

To do so, the EFA FTI Secretariat proposes to develop a "Quality Team" composed of technical specialists specifically dedicated to this purpose. Following consultations with stakeholders, the team would identify those developing country partners interested in improving specific classroom-related conditions. Reading is of foremost importance, followed by mathematics.

A reading strategy has been developed which aims at teaching basic literacy to practically all students using local languages within a few months (e.g., 100 days). This strategy would be made available to countries, and adaptations can be made if they are based on rigorous research and evidence of results in other countries or in pilot projects. Teachers would be trained through methods partly based on observational learning and would be rewarded through various results-based schemes if they succeed. To obtain materials that are affordable and sustainable, studies and policy recommendations will be carried out with respect to textbook improvement (perhaps using supplementary reading books) and textbook management (financing, production, logistics).

To promote instructional effectiveness and other quality-related topics to various stakeholders, a technical communication knowledge management strategy has been developed. It would assemble content and deliver it through means that are suitable for various categories of stakeholders. The strategy includes much emphasis on performance measurement and will focus on institutionalizing early-grade measures of reading and math proficiency. Special emphasis will be placed on enhancing the performance of girls who are in low-income circumstances.

The Urgency for Results and the Invisible "Knowledge Gap"

In March-May 2010 about 20,000 participants played the online game EVOKE, sponsored by the World Bank. To help denizens of low-income countries, the players created a vast number of potential solutions. Some were directed at improving education. One player, for example, proposed to offer through cloud computing "new tools that are powerful, mobile, cheap, easy to learn, easy to use, and soon will be ubiquitous." The player clearly assumed that students in low-income classrooms would have the prerequisite skills necessary for using these tools: high-rate reading fluency and math automaticity, good language command, lots of background knowledge to understand text quickly, and teachers who would show up and teach these skills.

However, in early-grade reading fluency tests, almost no lower-income countries approximated the average speed needed to understand simple text (Abadzi 2011). In countries such as The Gambia or Mali

over 90% of the students could not read a single word. In poor countries, the median child has the level of achievement of children at the 5th percentile of the distribution in high-income countries. This happens because in many low-income countries the chain linking enrollment to learning outcomes is broken in multiple places. Instructional time is poorly used, textbooks are chronically scarce or not based on research evidence, poorly paid teachers are supposedly supervised by inspectors who do not show up and managed by principals who assume no instructional responsibilities. In these information-deprived circumstances, teachers may interact only with the few students who keep up. Thus, only the lucky or particularly devoted may benefit from schooling. The rest may drop out or even graduate illiterate. Education *for "all"* implies that regular schools should teach basic skills not only to those who are better off, but to practically everyone, except perhaps special education cases. There is evidence that even in resource-poor environments, the broken chain can be fixed, so that all children learn. Furthermore, to justify continued financing by donors, relatively quick and tangible results *for all* must be obtained from educational investments.

How to bring about relatively quick changes? The EFA FTI must act in a role that was not originally considered. When the Partnership was set up in 2002-2003, the following four gaps were seen as needed to fill for success: *data, policy, capacity, and financing*. With time it was found that donors and governments had overestimated the competencies of poor students. It is also now clear that the data and capacity gaps are not just relative to quantitative knowledge around enrollment, or management capacity. Thus, it is clear now that information needed to help children learn in school is the most important gap of all. To get results the EFA FTI Partnership must **close this knowledge gap.**

This strategy aims to improve learning outcomes by giving to interested EFA FTI developing country partners targeted advice that is based on state-of-the-art knowledge about increasing the effectiveness of instruction quickly and without great expense.

The EFA FTI and Other Experiences

Other organizations would have been expected to assume this role, but for various institutional reasons, this exact capacity has not been developed in UN umbrella agencies. Thus the EFA FTI Secretariat has assumed the role. Starting in December 2010, it has carried out consultations with at least 18 academics, literature reviews on topics of methodological efficiency, and production of technical content in simple language for the staff of donors and governments. Two reading pilot projects were started with advice from the EFA FTI Secretariat, in Cambodia and in The Gambia (see Sub-Annex). Other partners such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), as well as developing country non-governmental organizations (NGOs), also have reasonably well-evaluated experiences of a similar type.

The strategy of improving quality through evidence-based improvements of instructional delivery and learning outcomes is being expanded. Broad outlines are offered for actions to be taken in 2011-2015. The necessary tasks have significant complexity and magnitude, and the challenges are also significant. All governments consider quality important, but their responses in the past have been often insufficiently strong and precise. Country sector plans contain statements about learning outcomes, but the specifics linking instructional variables to them are missing. Also, certain specific budgetary resources may not be sufficient after access-oriented inputs are provided.

However, time is of essence. As this document is being read, children enrolled at considerable donor expense are dropping out illiterate. Concerted efforts and types of investments must be made that have not been made before. If methods are effective the effects could "snowball'', as various countries and civil society organizations learn through systematic dissemination and south-south exchanges. Thus the potential payoff for implementing this strategy is significant.

The outline of this document is broad. Specific operational strategies have been produced on the topics of reading, technical knowledge dissemination, assessments, and teacher training. Included in this document are also the institutional arrangements needed within the EFA FTI Secretariat to bring this about.

Moving Forward on a Strategy to Improve Learning Outcomes, 2011-2015

The EFA FTI does not implement any activities in developing country partners. It may only initiate dialogue and offer advice to countries willing to receive it. Thus the strategy and priorities discussed herein must become embedded in an institutional context and be adopted as an EFA FTI Partner initiative.

Affirming Institutional Linkages with Donors and Governments on Technical Knowledge

The first step would be to consult, interact, and establish ownership among the various stakeholders. This can benefit from the preparation for a Global and Regional Activities program that the EFA FTI Secretariat is preparing in order to fund activities for Local Education Groups. To determine demand for various initiatives and activities, the EFA FTI Secretariat is carrying out extensive *consultations with Developing Country Partners*. These will be conducted through surveys and video- or audio-conferencing in April-May 2011 by the Global Good Practices cluster of the EFA FTI Secretariat. Partners will have the chance to ask, understand, suggest, modify, and decide on the best quality-oriented advice to be provided to developing country partners. A preliminary survey was carried out in the summer of 2010, and the activities provided herein to a large extent agree with identified priorities.

To obtain broad institutional support, extensive communications on technical issues have also taken place with donors and NGOs in 2010. A particularly strong interlocutor has been USAID, which adopted some research areas proposed by the EFA FTI. It has made quality and reading in particular a pillar of its education strategy and offered to the EFA FTI Secretariat US $2 million for monitoring and knowledge management. The collaboration with the World Bank spans from measurement issues with the Human Development Network Education Department (HDNED) to dissemination for task managers in Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. NGOs such as Save the Children, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, or Room to Read often consult with the EFA FTI Secretariat on technical matters. These will continue in 2011 and beyond. Some technical discussions have been carried out with DfID staff and are foreseen for UNICEF. A collaboration in knowledge sharing is also underway with UNESCO in Paris as well as the International Bureau of Education (IBE).

Team-building in the EFA FTI Secretariat for Quality-oriented Technical Knowledge

In 2010, the technical activities aimed at improving quality of education were carried out by a single technical specialist nearing retirement. The EFA FTI Secretariat would expand this role through a Quality Team of 5-7 staff and consultants, working full-time or part-time on the relevant tasks. The team would

aim to locate and integrate technical knowledge suitable for improving instruction in the schools of low-income countries, disseminate it effectively to various stakeholders, and follow up activities of interested developing country partners on quality issues. It is important to note that the team would work only with interested countries where there was expressed interest on the part of LEG members, and would aim to create local capacity to move forward. The track record of this kind of activity, in working with countries who have already expressed interest, and not engaging in supply-side, top-down initiatives, is good—the team would continue with this track record. The priority issues would be:

- Improving basic skills outcomes (primarily reading, but also mathematics).
- Preparing, managing and disseminating technical knowledge to various audiences on how to do this.
- Ensure high gain for girls' in particular, where they are behind boys in learning outcomes – a topic that cuts across FTI's interest in supporting girls' education in general, but in this case specifically with learning outcomes.

Specific areas for advice on how to improve quickly would be:

1. Sharply improved techniques for teaching early literacy and possibly mathematics, using specific and tailored lesson plans.
2. Ensuring highly effective reading or mathematics books, that are research-based and cost-effective.
3. Paying more attention to mother tongue instruction in reading, with transition to national languages (in countries where this is a problem).
4. Measuring, assessing, and reporting on learning outcomes in reading in the first few grades, including accountability measures that could be linked to finance.
5. Ensuring sufficient time devoted to reading instruction per se.

It is important to note that these items have always been on the agenda, but their implementation has been insufficiently strong and sharp, and insufficiently informed by practical evidence on what really works. Also, to save time and avoid prolonged debates, it is proposed that, if necessary, some of the "space" needed for these activities can be created as a special dispensation for now, with a view to full scale up as evidence accumulates.

The EFA FTI Secretariat Quality Team should have to show results. To maximize harmony and efficiency, the team must be well integrated within the function of other teams in the EFA FTI Secretariat. After engagement in each country or with each donor, assessments would be requested about its effects from clients. An overall evaluation would occur at the end of 2015.

Activities and Priorities for Quality Improvement in EFA FTI Developing Country Partners

Because only low-income countries are eligible to join the EFA FTI, the challenge and the need arise to provide knowledge and advice on issues that affect them particularly. Probably no other organization

with the funding size and mandate of the EFA FTI has focused exclusively on the needs of low-income students. As the following sections show, the issues and their interrelationships are complex and far-reaching. To fulfill the spirit and the letter of the Education for All initiative, however, it is important to deal with these issues in some way. If the EFA FTI Secretariat cannot directly do so, other donors and institutions must be found and prepared for the task.

The priority topics and strategies to follow are in the sections below.

Improving Basic Skills Outcomes (Initially Reading, Subsequently Mathematics): Summary

This section summarizes the actions that are needed and also touches on a few cross-cutting themes. Each subsequent section highlights some of the technical issues and details.

Reading has constituted the main thrust of the strategy, content, and dissemination activities (see Annex 2). A new learning paradigm is proposed for teaching low-income students effectively, called *"literacy in 100 days."* It broadly consists of the following evidence-based processes:

- Gradual, phonics-based instruction whenever possible in local languages, starting in grade 1 and extending to illiterate students of higher grades.
- Optimally developed but reasonably priced and available textbooks aimed at automaticity for almost everyone in grade 1; and in effective "elaboration" for subsequent grades.
- Brief but systematically-provided corrective feedback for all students (even for 30 seconds per day).
- Scripted lessons to help teachers use time optimally and provide planned content efficiently.
- Division of the school year into short-term modules to help teachers maintain proximal goals and motivation.
- Teacher training, at least partly through observational learning, particularly for critical lower-grade behaviors.
- Effective and frequent supervision, if possible through distance technology-oriented modes.
- Results monitored relatively reading fluency and similar quicker, cheaper, smaller tests.
- Results-based financing whenever possible at country level.

An important ancillary topic is *remediation for those falling behind*, including out-of-school children returning to school. Very little research has been carried out on this topic, and strategies have been rarely explored. The Quality Team would commission literature reviews and encourage pilots in interested countries.[1]

[1] One aspect of knowledge management is a country-level communication and information program with respect to accountability for learning outcomes. Brief videos (e.g., of 15 minutes) have proved extremely useful in countries where they have been done (i.e., in Peru and Nicaragua). Ideally, one could be done in each country and transmitted through the local

A question arises on how to *prioritize countries for advice on reading improvement*. The EFA FTI Partnership has 44 countries, many of which have poor outcomes in early grade reading and mathematics. The Quality Team would encourage countries to avail themselves of the knowledge, and it would provide technical assistance if invited to do so. Given the number of developing country partners, it is important to set priorities. Those that demonstrate greater interest and have organizations that actively support similarly effective methods could receive priority attention (e.g., ongoing early literacy efforts that are rigorous and evidence-based, particularly active LEGs with an interest in learning outcomes).[2] On the other hand, it is also important to avoid over-focusing on countries that already have ongoing efforts, and to lend assistance to those where work is most incipient.

EFA FTI Secretariat staff invited by such countries would undertake missions, observe classrooms accompanied by local inspectors and directors, collect video evidence, study textbooks and test scores, make widely attended presentations with the evidence, and offer options. Then the staff would follow up with additional communications and missions to facilitate implementation of effective instructional methods. Some mission travel may be supported by the World Bank or other donors.

The EFA FTI Secretariat will also communicate with wide audiences of stakeholders regarding methods and strategies likely to bring results on basic skills (e.g., presentations at the Brookings Institution, UNESCO, the Center for Global Development, Comparative and International Education Society conferences, World Bank brown-bag lunches, or full-day seminars). An effort could be made to reach out to the education departments of interested universities in the target countries. Beyond the broad awareness-raising events that have been done in the past, future events ought to promote targeted messages on effective methods. These should be delivered by specialists with documented expertise on the specific topics and beneficiary types under consideration. Such quality control would increase the probability that funding by various philanthropists and NGOs has a maximal effect on low-income students.

Given the widespread problems of reading, little discussion has been thus far devoted to *mathematics*. A literature review undertaken by the World Bank in 2008 will be updated by a neuroscientifically-oriented review that will attempt to define a few clear variables for assessment and follow up (such as magnitude processing). The review, scheduled for spring 2011, will inform on guidelines for mathematics textbooks and methods, particularly for grades 1-3 and will eventually result in pilots for interested countries.

Realistic Availability of Textbooks and Instructional Materials

Field reports and evaluations often show that low-income students largely lack textbooks. The books may be procured but may not arrive to schools, or they may be too expensive for students to afford.

media. The local media would also serve in the dissemination of literacy test findings through appropriate cultural expressions. The EFA FTI Secretariat's communications team could help interested Local Education Groups to launch a communications initiative.

[2] Potential candidates for priority action under these criteria would be Liberia, Nicaragua, The Gambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Mali, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. However, there are many organizations providing literacy in these countries, and some of them may use viable methods. Under such circumstances, the EFA FTI Secretariat might best devote its resources elsewhere.

This is a large and complex issue that involves markets, governments, and the private sector. The donor community has often signaled the need to act, but no institution has assumed this role.

The EFA FTI Secretariat could take the lead and explore the many and complex issues related to textbook production, procurement, distribution, and sale. It is hoped that additional donors may be able to help, such as the World Bank. Existing studies on *costs, logistics, and distribution* of textbooks would be located and reviewed. Given the urgency of action, strategies would be developed with the help of knowledgeable professionals (e.g., from the publishing industry). The textbook-related actions will be developed in greater detail after further discussions with stakeholders in 2011. Although the EFA FTI may assume some leadership, governments and donors with significant financial influence will have to follow through. Rather than attempting to work on the entire problem of textbooks (all subjects, all grades, all aspects), advice could be offered on the entire problem, but focused efforts would be made with early reading or mathematics books, to keep the specifics consistent with the teaching and learning aspects mentioned above.

On the technical aspects of textbook production in local languages, advice to EFA FTI developing country partners would aim at greater utilization and learning. Issues may include:

- Guidelines and examples for the fast production of *low-cost, local-language textbooks* that will efficiently teach reading, potentially "shell" textbooks to be filled by content in local languages rapidly.
- Development of glossaries and dictionaries between formal and local languages, where needed.
- Piloting sustainable electronic devices for reading instruction (e.g., teachermate in Rwanda).
- Supporting interactive radio wherever infrastructure exists.

Results-based Financing

For interested developing country partners, incentives could be provided to motivate teachers to make all students literate. These would include intrinsic incentives as "cash on delivery" financial incentives distributed to the schools or teachers who succeed in meeting certain reading standards (e.g., teaching all their students to read at least 45 words per minute by the end of grade 2; achievement would be independently verified through arrangements that must be developed). Incentives may also make it likely for teachers to use the methods taught in training in order to bring about the desired effects. One pilot is being financed in Mali through Hewlett Foundation, and its outcomes could help guide future development.

Results-based financing has become popular, as a topic of discussion, since it can presumably increase government motivation, but the lines of reasoning are so far unclear. Rewarding an agency (such as a Ministry) with funding is not the same as rewarding humans. A research review carried out in the summer of 2010 suggests that employees are most effective if they feel autonomous and attain a state of autonomous extrinsic motivation (an update is being prepared). The research suggests that for a high-level extrinsic incentive to work, an intrinsic incentive plan would be needed to make employees carry out the necessary work. They would become more competent at work if held accountable on attainable, proximal goals. Plans would be needed for such interventions and governments would receive more

specific advice. These concepts will be developed further in 2011-12. Nonetheless, the whole arena of results-based financing can be linked to reading outcomes or, at the very least, the measurement of reading outcomes.

Knowledge Management of Technical Content and Dissemination to Various Audiences

Consultations with the LEGs through the preparation for Global and Regional Activities program have highlighted important areas where knowledge is needed. Knowledgeable staff would be particularly needed to support the advice that the EFA FTI Secretariat will give to interested developing country partners.

In this section we are concerned with knowledge regarding pedagogical issues, or issues that could directly impact on teaching and learning. The knowledge management needs are extensive, and a separate document has been formulated on this topic. Stakeholders who could benefit from state-of-the art technical knowledge about directly pedagogical issues would include Ministry staff, local education groups, teacher trainers, teacher unions, and individual educators in developing country partners. Another group of stakeholders includes donor staff. Training needs to be delivered through means that will make it memorable to stakeholders of various types and through media that are suitable for their needs (from local and international conferences to e-courses).

Much of the needed material exists in various forms and must be prepared for dissemination. The EFA FTI Secretariat cannot develop organized courses but would assist in the development of audiovisual content to suit the needs of various countries. An organization such as the World Bank Institute (WBI) or UNESCO's Institute of International Education and Planning (IIEP) must take charge of organizing training. Conferences and south-south contact can be facilitated through the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) or similar infrastructure in other organizations.

To support effectively the activities of the Quality Team, audiovisual content must be prepared soon, given the multiple technological challenges of developing country partners. The Quality team would initiate the activities, provide quality control, and indicate the priorities to the institution that will prepare the work.

Teacher Training: Evidence-based Capacity Development for Local Educators

The typical methods used in pre-service and in-service or even in distance education have given limited results in the case of educators with limited academic knowledge. Many problems have been identified in studies; lecturing or even group interaction does not change behaviors, the content may not facilitate instruction, and training may be too short. Even when teachers would like to remember and carry out the needed activities, their limited command of little-known prerequisite material may cognitively overload working memory and result in lack of performance or avoidance (a literature review and preliminary strategy are under revision).

Training in effective means to teach reading is crucial. Developing country partners would be asked to prepare strategies and train all teachers in grades 1-3 within a year if possible. Interested governments would have the opportunity to adapt materials from suitable countries and plan.

To improve outcomes, the main elements of the strategy would focus on training teachers of the first three grades. Scripted lessons (discussed above) would relieve teachers from having to develop content and methods they may not initially understand well. An important body of research also points to the power of observational learning. It is possible that audiovisual means may prove effective for the adoption of new behaviors. Also goal-oriented imagery and planning on how to execute may increase efficiency. The methodology has good scientific evidence for various populations, but it has not yet been used extensively for teacher training in low-income countries. The method has significant technical requirements, such as the ability to edit video clips by computer and to project through small portable projectors during training courses. However, the technological challenges are being overcome. A promising pilot was underway in Liberia in March 2011; more detailed implementation plans will be developed on the basis of lessons learned.

Aside from instructional behaviors, teachers in low-income countries often have deficiencies on subject-matter competence. It would be important, for example to improve teachers' math knowledge, and automaticity so that they could calculate with less mental effort. In addition to organized training, means such as cell phones or low-cost computers could be used. A number of similar initiatives are underway in various countries. Collaboration is underway with researchers from institutions such as Carnegie-Mellon University and technology initiatives that are followed by USAID.

To develop interventions for teachers and supervisors, it would help to specify through additional research the incentive structure pertinent to low-educated teachers. As mentioned earlier, a preliminary literature review was carried out in 2010, and work will continue to specify and operationalize significant variables for experimentation.

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

To monitor performance changes and evaluate the outcomes of various interventions, a regular program for measuring reading and math achievement ought to be institutionalized in developing country partners. Achievement tests are needed that are valid and reliable for the lower grades. They should show progress through at least the primary and the lower secondary grades in important subjects. Their scores should be intuitively comprehensible if possible. They should also be quick and inexpensive to set up and to score every 2-3 years, and they should not overly tax the limited psychometric capabilities of low-income countries. If possible, they ought to provide some means of comparison with other countries, though this feature is not indispensable.

A plethora exists of international comparison tests at the primary school level, but most fail to fulfill the above requirements. For the upper primary grades, there are international comparison tests in French, English, and Spanish, such as the Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs (PASEC), Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ), Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación (LLECE), as well as in the languages of countries participating in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Studies (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS). There are also country-level achievement tests, and public examinations.

For the early grades, one-minute oral reading fluency tests have been used in at least 50 countries given worldwide, by governments, nonprofits, and individual academics. Many were given as part of the Early

Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)[3] (details are available in Abadzi 2011). Due to the complexities and cost of this battery, there is an increased use of Aser ("effect"), instituted by the Indian NGO Pratham. The test classifies students as readers at the letter, word, sentence, paragraph, or story level. Because it takes less time and is administered in homes, considerable data can be collected in all grades. Yet another potential candidate as a group test is "wordchains", a three minute group test where students separate connected words; this does not work in all scripts.

The Global Good Practices Team would develop plans for a consistent line of testing that can track the progress of students in reading and, if possible, in mathematics through at least the first nine years of schooling. One means for doing so would be to test students simultaneously with various instruments, such as PASEC, reduced EGRA, Aser, wordchains. Thus relationships between these tests can be developed, and be potentially used to predict likely scores of one test from another. These would help countries make decisions without excessive expenses and effort in the future. The EFA FTI would not necessarily recommend any particular approach, but would ask for the use of an approach that is cost-effective and research-based.

Specifically for early grade reading and mathematics assessment, an **All-Grade-Reading Fluency test** may be designed. It could consist of letters, words per minute, and "shallow" comprehension questions. Administration could also include a mathematics test, such as a two minute magnitude processing test under experimental development (a literature review has been commissioned on this topic).

Given reading delays and a perennial shortage of textbooks, students continue to read slowly in secondary and even tertiary education. Fluency tests for the higher grades have been rarely piloted in low-income countries. The reading fluency of students in the upper primary and the secondary grades must also be assessed through longer and more complex oral reading tests, for which there is published methodology. It must become part of a comprehensive testing plan.

The international comparison tests are regularly conducted by specific organizations that develop them, but oral reading fluency tests have no institutional base. The EFA FTI Secretariat will make efforts to find an institution willing to carry them out on a regular basis or to monitor the scores obtained at country level. For this and other testing issues, a more detailed paper will be written on the testing options and issues to be followed.

Monitoring efforts aside, few countries have made changes on the basis of the standardized tests. Efforts should be made to interpret this phenomenon and find solutions. Presentations and technical assistance may help governments identify realistically actionable issues given the results of oral and written reading assessments.

Assessments of Instructional Time Use

Many countries hope to assess the effects of interventions such as textbooks on reading and academic knowledge, but such assessments are not possible unless instructional time is measured. Considerable research has already been carried out in the measurement of time loss at various levels. Surveys have

[3] EGRA is a battery of 8-9 subtests, many of which are used for screening English-speaking dyslexics. It requires about 17 minutes per child in individual administration. Reports and data are available at eddataglobal.org.

been used for school-level time losses and teacher absenteeism, and observation instruments have been used for time use at the classroom level (see H. Abadzi "Absenteeism and Beyond, 2008, World Bank).

The most relevant and quantitatively robust instrument is the **modified Stallings Classroom snapshot**. It has been used extensively, but the EFA FTI Secretariat may make some revisions and prepare a cadre of professionals who can teach its administration and scoring. Technical assistance ought to be sought from the Latin America and Caribbean Human Development Department (LCSHD) of the World Bank and from academics who have worked on similar instruments.

Improving Girls' Performance

In low-income countries, girls often score less well than boys. Problems and limitations differ in various parts of the world. Girls may face issues of security, lack of uniforms, shoes or sanitary napkins, iron deficiency, limited parental investment in school supplies, early marriage and pregnancy, and cultural prohibitions against schooling. The variety of the problems makes it difficult to create overarching policies and take global actions.

Given the girls' added societal burdens with puberty, quality of education in the early years is crucial. They ought to learn more and get promoted in grades rather than be held back until they enter puberty and become subject to various limitations. However, activities to improve girls' performance intersect with quality issues for all students. Thus, it is difficult to undertake targeted actions to help girls and young women specifically to perform better.

Nevertheless, potential remedies to consider are scholarships of sufficient value to enable purchase of basic supplies (very often scholarship amounts are trivial), financing trusted persons to escort girls in areas where this is a problem. Aside from the above ideas, more consideration is needed on how to act in the EFA FTI Partnership.

Role of Global and Regional Activities (GRA) Funding

The Global and Regional Activities funding, within the Education for All fund, has been previously discussed with the Board. This facility will fund specific work in knowledge development, knowledge-sharing, development and assistance to replicable activities to provide a demonstration effect. The activities would be implemented by Supervising Entities within countries, and would be crafted in response to a set of Requests for Proposals issued by the EFA FTI Secretariat. The idea is that, in response to identified needs, Supervising Entities would make applications for funding to carry out activities in knowledge sharing. Examples of such activities could be providing the local LEG with some support in how to improve mother tongue literacy in a country, or how to produce less expensive early reading books, and so forth. One particularly important and intriguing option is to induce assessment organizations to improve the assessment of early reading via application to the GRA. This is a technical area where the input of experts such as those at the SACMEQ and at the Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASECT), which are, roughly speaking, the regional assessments for much of the respective regions of Africa (largely Southern and Eastern Africa and French-speaking West Africa, respectively) would be welcome for technical reasons but also for dissemination and legitimacy reasons.

Role of Key Partners, in particular UNESCO

While the EFA FTI Secretariat, through the GRA, can fund knowledge sharing and can be catalytic about how to apply knowledge to deliver results, the highest authority with the mandate to create targets and goals remains UNESCO. Developing greater partnership with UNESCO around the assessment of educational quality and learning outcomes in particular, and getting countries to mutually commit on educational quality, is a goal worth exploring with UNESCO. One of the factors that has facilitated world-wide movement on access is the existence of goals built around completion, the net enrollment rate, and other such indicators. The existence of something similar, and its dissemination amongst countries, is something that UNESCO is uniquely qualified to do. It is possible that the same GRA funding could be used to cement a good collaboration with UNESCO to produce learning goal indicators that countries could subscribe to, and that would have the imprimatur, convening, and mutual-mandate authority that UNESCO could bring to it.

ANNEX 2: INITIAL STAGE OF QUALITY-ORIENTED STRATEGY: JANUARY – DECEMBER 2010

A strategic plan was developed in 2010 (first draft in March 2010), and its activities have been largely carried out. Briefly these were:

- Identifying knowledge resources: Engaging informally with about 18 academics-professors and implementers who *understand the principles that must guide various interventions* and can advise on various methods and issues.

- Commissioning three low-cost literature reviews from known scholars and recent PhDs on priority topics, shepherding and reviewing the products, and using the information in presentations and in providing advice to developing country partners.

- Researching, authoring, and disseminating multiple documents on learning-related issues, including two-page reports on learning topics and a paper on social learning research for teacher training applications.

- Authoring a paper on monitoring indicators for reading fluency, revising it multiple times, and preparing it for publication in the Development Economics Vice Presidency (DEC) Policy Working Paper Series.

- Dissemination of findings to universities, donor agencies, and the World Bank through a series of workshops, responding to enquiries and needs of staff from various donor agencies and governments, and leveraging contacts to explore opportunities for implementation and funding in various countries.

- Initiating piloting of specific reading methods in interested developing country partners (notably Cambodia, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Papua New Guinea).

- Facilitating the development of an Early Child Development strategy by a consultant and updating the literature on adult literacy.