Technical Session 2:
Community Involvement and Parental Support

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Presentation Outline

• Early grades reading needs in Asia
• Improving children’s reading acquisition: what the research says
• The evidence base on the importance of home & parental involvement
  – Challenges to home & parental involvement
• Towards a solution: community action focused on children’s reading
• Initial results from reading programs incorporating parent & community action
• What can Ministries of Education do?
EARLY GRADES READING NEEDS IN ASIA
Early grade reading studies: Asia-Pacific

- A 2008 survey from India found that fewer than half of standard 3 children could read standard 1 level texts. (Pratham)
- An EGRA conducted in Timor Leste in 2009 with AusAID and World Bank support showed that 40 percent of children were not able to read a single word at the end of grade 2.
- In Cambodia, a World Bank-supported national EGRA in 2010 conducted among grade 1-6 students found that 33% were non-readers, and that of those who were able to read, 47% did not fully comprehend the text.
- In Vanuatu, a 2010 national EGRA conducted in English & French found that 37% of grade 2 students could not read a word in an English passage, while 25% could not read a word in a French passage.

(Source: PRATHAM, 2011 East Asia & the Pacific EGRA Conference documents)
In 3 countries, over half of children assessed at baseline could not read a single word when presented with a passage (except for urban population in the Philippines).

In 2 other countries, percentage of non-readers was not as alarming (Vietnam had 7% non-readers, Bangladesh had 12% non-readers).
• In Nepal, non-native speakers of the language of instruction scored significantly lower than Nepali speakers in letter identification and reading fluency.
Baseline: language & literacy

Philippines, grade 3

- Similar situation in the Philippines …
Baseline: language & literacy

Vietnam, grade 3

Figure 40. Average Fluency by Language and District

... and Vietnam
Baseline: Philippines

Philippines data showed that children with more books and adults who read to them at home had higher scores.
Baseline: Pakistan

Pakistan data similarly showed how strong literacy environments correlate with higher reading ability among children.
Baseline findings: Bangladesh

- Girls read significantly more words per minute correctly than boys.
- Across school types, children in Madrassas lag significantly behind their peers in Bangla fluency.
IMPROVING CHILDREN’S READING ACQUISITION: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS
The Many Strands that are Woven into Skilled Reading
(Scarborough, 2001)

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE
(facts, concepts, etc.)

VOCABULARY
(breadth, precision, links, etc.)

LANGUAGE STRUCTURES
(syntax, semantics, etc.)

VERBAL REASONING
(inference, metaphor, etc.)

LITERACY KNOWLEDGE
(print concepts, genres, etc.)

SKILLED READING:
Fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

WORD RECOGNITION

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS
(syllables, phonemes, etc.)

DECODING (alphabetic principle, spelling-sound correspondences)

SIGHT RECOGNITION
(of familiar words)

**Therefore:** We must directly address all five skills early.

Reading is complex. It is a cognitive, social and cultural activity. Its development leads to literacy, which is at once an individual competence, a social act, and a cultural tool (Wagner, 1993; New, 2001).

**Therefore:** We must link reading to life in content and activity.

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**Building on what research says on Reading**

The real, predictive power of motivation to read must be lit and sustained using child-centered and active learning approaches that ensure progress to and success in higher levels of education (Pang, Muaka, Berhnardt & Kamil, 2003; Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998). Ensuring children’s active participation in classroom sessions and via practice in the home is essential to learning to read.

**Therefore:** We must make reading active and fun.

Children’s literacy development happens in schools and homes, and requires materials. It depends on both teachers and parents (Goldenberg, 2001, Hood, 2008), and on finding the means to enrich the type and amount of reading materials in children’s lives. For optimally effective programming, parents and teachers must collaborate both inside and outside the school walls.

**Therefore:** We must address reading and reading materials inside schools and out.
• Greater **print exposure** results in more experience in word and sentence decoding and recognition and in reading comprehension, as well as ongoing exposure to new vocabulary (Hood, Conlon, & Andrews 2008).

• Both sheer **amount and the choice of reading materials** seem to make a difference (Wigfield & Asher, 1984).
“Home language and literacy experiences that lead to the development of key print concepts are plentiful among children who enter school prepared to learn to read. Joint book reading with family members helps children develop a wide range of knowledge that supports them in school-based reading. Parental help in the form of modeling good reading habits and monitoring homework is associated with gains in student achievement. Programs that assist families in initiating and sustaining these sorts of activities show positive benefits for children’s reading achievement.”

(Improving the Reading Achievement of America’s Children: 10 Research-based Principles. Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement/CIERA, University of Michigan, 1998)
IMPORTANCE OF HOME & PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: THE EVIDENCE BASE
Parental involvement has a positive effect on children’s achievement even when the influence of background factors such as social class and family size have been taken into account.

Children of parents with the poorest grasp of literacy and numeracy are at a substantial disadvantage in relation to their own reading and math development compared to children who have parents with good literacy/numeracy.

Parental involvement with children from an early age has been found to equate with better outcomes (particularly in terms of cognitive development). What parents do is more important than who they are for children’s early development – i.e. home learning activities undertaken by parents is more important for children’s intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income.

Children growing up in homes with many books get 3 years more schooling than children from bookless homes, independent of their parents’ education, occupation, and class.

(M.D.R. Evans, J. Kelley, et. al. Family scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations. 2010)
Challenges to home & parental involvement in Asia

• Compared to western contexts, not all parents are literate
• Few books and other resources available in the home for children to practice reading
• Parents unaware of the whys and hows of helping children to improve their language/literacy development
TOWARDS A SOLUTION: COMMUNITY ACTION FOCUSED ON CHILDREN’S READING
Parent & Community Awareness—Raising Focused on Children’s Reading

• Speaks to parents’ aspirations for their children—every parent wants their child to learn, and the foundation for all learning is reading

• Helps to build school-community accountability and responsibility

• Creates demand for effective inputs and interventions to support children’s reading
How do we involve parents & communities through Literacy Boost?

• Introductory community meetings
  – Share results of baseline reading assessments
  – Explain Literacy Boost options & activities
  – Secure parental support and participation
  – Identify additional community resources (e.g., oral traditions, volunteers, venues for activities)
Community-based “Book Banks”

- Expands the range of print materials that children can read beyond school textbooks
- Builds children’s enjoyment and motivation to read
- Helps to establish an appreciation for print and a culture of reading in the community
How do we involve parents & communities through Literacy Boost?

• Assist in materials creation for Book Banks and Reading Camps
• Serve as community-based Book Bank custodians
Volunteer-run activities with children

• Provides additional support and positive models for children learning to read
• Extends time-on-task for reading through activities outside the classroom
• Supplements rather than replicates the reading instruction that happens in school
How do we involve parents & communities through Literacy Boost?

• Tap and train community volunteers—youth, literate adults, PTA leaders, keepers of oral traditions—to conduct language & literacy activities with children
  – Reading Camps: after-school or weekend community reading sessions
  – Story Time activities
  – Reading Festivals
Volunteer-run activities with parents

- Explains the importance of reading to children’s learning and the role families can play
- Provides clear and concrete ideas of simple, everyday things parents can do to support children’s reading development, even if they are not literate themselves
How do we involve parents & communities through Literacy Boost?

- Parenting sessions/Community Reading

Awareness workshops on how to:

- Engage their children in rich oral language practice through everyday activities
- Ask their children to read to them
- Read to/with their children if they are literate
- Create simple literacy materials and establish home reading corners
INITIAL RESULTS FROM READING PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE PARENTS & COMMUNITIES
Pratham: Read India results

• Pratham partners with village communities and government school systems to bring about improvement in basic learning levels across the country. Between 2007 and 2008, Pratham's Read India campaign was active in almost half of India's villages reaching close to 30 million children during the year.

• J-PAL South Asia conducted a rigorous evaluation of Read India impact. Villages, and associated government schools, randomly allocated to three alternative interventions. Each intervention involved a different combination of village volunteers, teacher training, monitoring support and teaching-learning materials:
  – Intervention 1 included teacher training, monitoring and support, supplementary learning materials for children and village volunteers (who worked after school hours to provide extra attention and teaching to lagging behind children).
  – Intervention 2 included teacher training, monitoring and support, supplementary learning materials for children but no volunteers.
  – Intervention 3: in this intervention, only supplementary learning materials were distributed to schools (This intervention was done in Bihar but not in Uttarakhand).
  – Additionally, in one group of villages—the control group—government schools received no Read India support.
Pratham: Read India results

• In Bihar there was also an evaluation of a summer camp for the month of June 2008. Here teachers were paid for an extra month’s work to give remedial education to children who were lagging behind academically, supported by school-based unpaid village volunteers.

• Key Findings:
  – Significant impact on learning levels in Hindi and math for the summer camp in Bihar. These gains were still visible even at the end of two school years.
  – For activities during the school year, the intervention which had teacher training, monitoring, materials and village volunteers (who worked with weak children after school) showed significant learning improvement in Bihar.
  – However, for most of the interventions that relied entirely and only on teachers in the regular school year, there was little or no impact on learning levels, relative to the control group.
Nepal Year 1 Results

- Analyzed start and end of school year reading assessment scores among a matched sample of grade 2 children in 16 LB and 4 control schools (n=214)
- Language of assessment: Nepali (the LOI), but instructions given in children’s L1
- Showed that students from LB schools showed significantly higher gains in key skills than comparison schools at end of year
Literacy Boost IMPACT: 1 year

Nepal. Grade 2 reading and math skill gains, year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Literacy Boost</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letters identified (% of 36)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency (wcpm)</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy (% points)</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension (% points)</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy (% points)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Save the Children
Pakistan: Year 1 Results

- Analyzed end of year reading scores for a matched sample of students from 10 LB schools and 5 comparison schools in Allai in 2009 & 2010 (n=190)
- Both groups benefited from a larger education project that included SHN and generic teacher training
- Only LB group received reading-focused interventions, Pashto language materials and community activities in support of reading
- At baseline, comparison schools significantly outperformed LB schools. How did they do after a year?
Pakistan: Year 1 Results

Figure 2: Endline Reading Skills Scores by School Type with Benchmark

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Literacy Boost</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts about Print</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Identification</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pashto fluency</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pashto accuracy</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu fluency</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu accuracy</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Diagram showing literacy scores for different concepts and languages for Literacy Boost and Control groups.]
Pakistan: Yes, they can decode, but did they comprehend?

Figure 7. Percent of Students in each School Type Answering Pashto Comprehension Questions after Reading Text to Self

Literacy Boost students averaged 2.79 answers correct in Pashto passage reading, significantly higher than comparison school students who averaged 2.21 answers correct (p=0.013).
Pakistan: Yes, they can decode, but did they comprehend?

In Urdu, Literacy Boost school students answered 2.16 questions correctly on average, significantly higher than comparison school students whose average was 0.96 questions correct (p=.000).

Figure 9. Percent of Students in each School Type Answering Urdu Comprehension Questions after Reading Text to Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Literacy Boost</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baseline</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endline</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pakistan: Did girls benefit from Literacy Boost?

Figure 10: Girls' Reading Skill Gains by School Type

- Literacy Boost girls at baseline demonstrated more limited reading skills than comparison girls in concepts about print, letter knowledge, and accuracy and fluency in both Urdu and Pashto. Yet at endline, girls in Literacy Boost schools showed significantly higher learning outcomes in these skills.
Grade 3 CAP Gains by HH Members Reading to Student in Pakistan

Gains in Concepts about Print Questions Answered Correctly

- No change in # of household members reading to child (55%)
- Someone began to read to child (35%)

% of sample in parentheses; N = 190, R = 0.2
Significantly Greater Gains with Book Borrowing and Reading Camp Attendance

Urdu comprehension gains by sex, reading camp and borrowing frequency = once per week

Pakistan 2010
Grade 3 Accuracy Gains by Diversity of Print in Household in Pakistan

% Point Gains in Accuracy for LB Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% point gain in accuracy score</th>
<th>Pashto</th>
<th>Urdu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of sample in parentheses; Pashto: N = 186, R = 0.33; Urdu: N = 188, R = 0.16
WHAT CAN MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION DO?
Identify structures & opportunities for parent and community engagement

- What role can existing structures such as PTAs or SMCs play to support children’s reading?
- How should school leaders—principals or school directors—deliberately engage with parents, NGOs and civil society to expand children’s access to reading materials & opportunities?
- What support can local governments and/or local business enterprises provide?
- How can student organizations be involved?
Communicate the urgency of action to a broader range of stakeholders

- Use the power of data to mobilize parent, NGO, local government and local enterprise support for reading
- Beyond identifying the problem, propose simple, actionable solutions
- Link children’s reading to parent, family and community aspirations
Engage parents & communities with results in mind

• Establish the urgency of the need through baselines, and communicate clear targets for improvement and change

• Provide regular progress updates—continually using data and evidence to drive action
Strengthen education policies that build parent & community engagement

- Should official/mandated PTA roles and responsibilities be reviewed so that it includes a focus on children’s learning?
- Is there space for local government advocacy to get policy or budget support to sustain community engagement focused on reading?
- Are there incentives that can be provided to businesses who support early grade reading?
In summary…

• Parents and communities are:
  – a foundational plank in children’s language and literacy development
  – a key resource in the effort to improve children’s reading
  – crucial advocates and partners in children’s learning

• Schools and ministries of education can engage parents and communities in multiple ways to reduce gaps and ensure equity in children’s learning outcomes
Thank you for this opportunity!

• For more information: 
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