

Performance & Impact Evaluation (P&IE) Annual Report, Year 1



at the UNIVERSITY of CHICAGO

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PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT EVALUATION (P&IE) OF THE USAID/UGANDA SCHOOL HEALTH AND READING PROGRAM

A. OVERVIEW

NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC), in partnership with the Panagora Group, is conducting a third party performance and impact evaluation of the School Health and Reading Program (SHRP). SHRP, as implemented by RTI, comprises of two separate activities:

- 1) Result 1: Improved Early Grade Reading and Transition to English
- 2) Result 2: Improved HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice

Result 1: Improved Early Grade Reading and Transition to English

For the Result 1 intervention, SHRP will focus on the nexus of language, pedagogy, and instructional materials to significantly improve students' early grade reading and P3 literacy scores, as well as bring to scale a "Ugandan led 'reading policy'" (RTI International, 2012, p. 1). The Early Grade Reading (EGR) intervention will be implemented at multiple levels.

- At the school level, the intervention will provide training to teachers in early grade literacy instruction using students' mother-tongue in P1-P3 and with a transition to English in P4;
- At the district level, instructional and assessment materials will be developed for P1-P4 in the students' mother tongue;
- At the national level, MOES systems and pedagogical and language framework will be strengthened to support mother-tongue based EGR and transition to English. Support will also be provided to strengthen policies related to reading, as well as increase advocacy for reading at multiple levels (e.g. student, teacher, school, district, and national).

Together, these interventions are expected to improve the instruction and learning environment of students and eventually lead to improved literacy skills.

In Year 1 of the intervention, SHRP worked in 4 local languages (Luganda, Runyankore/Rukiga, Ateso, and Leblano) in 11 districts. Throughout the life of the project, SHRP will be working in a total of 12 local languages (4 languages in the first year, 4 additional languages in the second year, and 4 additional languages in the third year). In Year 1, SHRP planned to intervene in 410 schools.

Result 2: Improved HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices

The Result 2 intervention's goal is to improve students' knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding HIV/AIDS. Improving HIV/AIDS education and health supporting attitudes and behaviors will be done by 1) improving MoES planning of the HIV prevention response; 2) improving coordination between MoES and other stakeholders; 3) supporting the school-level impact of HIV/AIDS education; 4) improving the integration of HIV/AIDS Education into MoES Investment Planning and 5) supporting programs and policies with data and research.

At the school-level, the intent of this intervention was to reach a subset 150 of Result 1 intervention primary schools, as well as an additional 50 secondary schools. The target student population of the HIV/AIDS intervention spans grades P4-P7 through S1-S4.

Over the past 12 months, the P&IE team has worked in close collaboration with RTI, the implementing partner (IP) to design and implement a rigorous impact evaluation and a performance evaluation, all within the framework of USAID’s Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation (CLA) Agenda.

We are pleased to submit to USAID/Uganda this Annual Report recording progress made on the P&IE project during its first year of implementation.

B. A SNAPSHOT OF YEAR 1 ACTIVITIES

Between October 1, 2012 and October 31, 2013, NORC and Panagora staff:

- ***Designed the impact and performance evaluation methodologies***, based on information gathered and agreements reached during numerous face-to-face meetings and phone calls with USAID and the IP. The final evaluation designs for Results 1 and 2 of SHRP were presented to USAID/Uganda in an Evaluation Design Report. Submitted to USAID in January 2012, this design report included evaluation questions, methodology, sample estimations and a detailed data collection plan for the impact evaluation; a performance evaluation approach and plan; and the data quality assessment approach that NORC proposes to undertake for all data collection activities directly associated with the evaluations.

Although the impact evaluation design was finalized and approved by USAID in early 2012, the changing realities in the field and associated adjustments in the implementation of Results 1 and 2 activities, as well as several problems encountered during data collection have meant that we have had to make slight adjustments to the original design. Throughout the past year, NORC’s Evaluation Expert and SHRP’s M&E Team Leader have been in close and frequent communication about the changes on the ground, as they arise, and mechanisms to minimize the effect of these changes on the evaluation design.

- ***Estimated sample sizes, drew samples and worked with the IP to finalize data collection plans for two rounds of EGRA and KAP surveys***. Our main objective in this effort is to ensure that the timing of data collection and sample sizes remain adequate to preserve the integrity and power of the impact evaluation design. In the face of implementation realities, we are encountering several

Box 1: Overview of the Impact Evaluation Design

Our proposed impact evaluation design for the SHRP activities is clearly detailed in the P&IE project’s Evaluation Design Report, submitted to USAID/Uganda on January 31, 2012. Below, we present a brief overview:

Design: Our impact evaluation uses a **mixed-method design** which uses both the random assignment of schools to treatment and control groups within SHRP intervention districts (experimental design) and the selection of matched comparison districts (quasi-experimental) in which SHRP is not operating. The experimental design allows us to isolate the effect of school-level interventions from district-level interventions, while the inclusion of non-intervention districts design allow us to measure the impact of the district level interventions and the combined district-school level intervention package.

Impact Measures, Result 1: To assess the effectiveness of SHRP interventions in improving early grade reading and transition to English, we are measuring changes in specific literacy skills - alphabets (letter knowledge and phonemic awareness), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and phonics - over time and across treatment and control groups. Data is being collected using the Early Grade Reading assessment (EGRA).

Impact Measures, Result 2: The goal of SHRP’s school health activities is to improve HIV/AIDS-related knowledge and life skills among teachers and students. The SHRP Results 2 team is using a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) survey to measure key HIV/AIDS indicators related to knowledge and attitudes about HIV transmission, HIV prevention and treatment, and sexual intercourse. Questions on sexual practices are also included for older students.

challenges to the IE design, many of them related to sample structure and size. See Section B for further details.

- **Conducted extensive data quality assessments (DQA) for two rounds of EGRA and KAP surveys.** For each round of data collection, the P&IE team reviewed and provided detailed feedback to the IP on all data collection instruments, both from the perspective of NORC’s role as evaluator and data quality reviewer; reviewed and provided feedback on enumerator training manuals; observed enumerator training and pilot test of instruments; travelled to a selection of districts to observe data collection activities. For the most part, we were able to provide timely feedback to the IP, who took the feedback into consideration, whenever feasible¹.



The P&IE Team’s DQA activities covered:
Evaluation Design
<i>Sampling:</i> sample size, selection (randomization process) of intervention schools, matching of comparison districts
<i>Data collection plan:</i> timing of data collection, selection of intervention/control in-district/control out-district schools for data collection
Data Collection Instruments
<i>Result 1 (Literacy) - EGRA tool;</i> Learner environment questionnaire; Teacher/Head teacher surveys; Classroom observation tool; School survey; CCT Monitoring Tool
<i>Result 2 (Health) - KAP survey</i>
Training and Data Collection Period
Enumerator and Supervisor Training Manuals
Field Quality Control Procedures
Enumerator/Supervisor training
Post-training pilot
Data Collection Field Report
Data Entry
Tangerine data entry template for all applicable tools
Data entry templates for other surveys using paper questionnaires
Datasets
EGRA data; Learning environment data; Teacher/Head teacher survey data; Classroom observation data; School survey data; CCT monitoring data
Description of achieved sample sizes, calculation of response rates with breakdown of disposition codes
Data documentation

¹ Detailed accounts of all DQA activities, including key observations and feedback, are described in two P&IE Data Quality Assessment Reports, submitted to USAID in June and October 2013.

- **Systematically observed and documented implementation activities as input to the performance evaluation.** Local P&IE staff observed training of trainers and teachers, language board meetings, and materials development workshops; and accompanied SHRP team members on support supervision field visits to monitor implementation of Result 1 activities. Observers recorded both positive and constructive observations in tools developed by P&IE. These observations will serve as input for the mid-term and final SHRP performance evaluation; they also form the basis for appreciative and constructive feedback to the IP in monthly CLA meeting between SHRP and P&IE team members. In addition, these observation activities, coupled with regular communication with SHRP team leaders have proven invaluable in keeping the P&IE team abreast of implementation progress, delays in the rollout of activities, and bottlenecks/problems in the field that have implications for the impact evaluation. Box 2 below lists the tools and reports that the P&IE team use to systematically track and record observations on project implementation.

Operationalized USAID Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) priorities through regular feedback discussions with the IP. To implement the CLA component of the P&IE contract, we provided performance feedback, drawn from the observation activities and tools discussed above, to the SHRP team on a monthly basis. The purpose of the monthly performance feedback session is to provide both appreciative and constructive feedback particularly on elements of performance where real-time feedback will engender learning and help to strengthen performance, ultimately leading to better outcomes.

The performance feedback is drawn directly from documented observations of events and activities, which are synthesized into feedback memos submitted to SHRP leadership prior to the monthly meetings. In addition to the monthly sessions, the P&IE and SHRP teams meet on a quarterly basis, following the submission of the SHRP quarterly progress report to USAID to discuss the content of the quarterly report and progress toward overall achievement of results; compare progress against detailed elements of the work plan; and review progress on PMP indicators,

To date, we have organized four monthly feedback sessions and one quarterly meeting.

The SHRP team has found the third party perspective on performance informative and useful. The P&IE team has obtained useful clarifications and insights into the

Box 2: Tools and reports used by the P&IE team for observing & documenting implementation activities

SHRP Events and Assignment Tracker. A management tool to ensure coverage of events by P&IE local staff. The tracker is updated regularly, based on updated activity plans provided to us by the SHRP team, and utilized for forward planning.

Observation tools. To ensure uniform and comprehensive information and reporting about all events attended by our country staff, we have developed six different observation tools: Materials Development Observation Tool; Monitoring and Support Supervision Observation Tool: EGRA and KAP; Training Development Observation Tool; Training Observation Tool: EGRA - R1; Training Observation Tool: HIV/AIDS - R2; Data Collection Observation Tool: EGRA and KAP.

P&IE document binder. To facilitate access and review of implementation progress, in particular in anticipation of the performance evaluations, all reports have been systematically organized as hard copies into a binder. This includes reports based on the observation tools, monthly reports produced by our local staff, and monthly and quarterly feedback memo sent to the SHRP team.

Monthly report. Our in-country staff prepares monthly reports, where they review the previous month's SHRP activities, generate a first draft of the feedback memo to RTI and plan for the month ahead. Monthly reports includes a summary of SHRP's activities observed; overall progress against the work plan & PMP; planned activities for the following month; and items/concerns for discussion/resolution/action.

implementation activities during the feedback sessions. We are pleased that this somewhat sensitive exercise is perceived as a valued and welcome opportunity to achieve its underlying purpose of improving performance and results achievement in real time.

C. RISKS, CHALLENGES, AND MODIFICATIONS TO THE IMPACT EVALUATION

During the past 12 months, several challenges/risks to the impact evaluation designs have emerged. Some of these risks have been resolved or mitigated, while others still remain to be addressed. We have described these challenges at great length in the two P&IE Semi-Annual Reports. Below, we present a summary of the challenges.

- As a result of significant delays in implementing Result 1 activities, instructional materials were still being distributed to the first wave of treatment schools (Cluster 1 schools) as late as September/October 2013. Therefore, these schools have only benefitted partially from the Result 1 intervention: trained teachers. The first impact analysis, which uses endline data collected in October/November of 2013 will, therefore, only permit us to measure the impact of multiple rounds of teacher training, and not the impact of teacher training supplemented by instructional materials.
- SHRP does not plan to conduct the EGRA assessment in 2016, among second wave Result 1 schools (Cluster 2), which initiate treatment in 2014. This means that the impact evaluation for Cluster 2 schools will only be possible for P1 and P2 but not for P3. Given that Cluster 1 did not receive the full Result 1 intervention in 2013, Cluster 2 will be the only group that will have a chance to receive three years of full treatment from the beginning of their primary education. Eliminating an EGRA assessment in 2016 effectively eliminates this opportunity.
- Several problems that threaten the sample size for the Result 2 impact evaluation have emerged during the baseline data collection for the KAP survey. Namely, we have encountered problems in implementing the KAP survey in Cluster 1 post-primary schools due to a host of reasons, among them, delays in obtaining parental consent for borders, and resistance to data collection from principals and head teachers (because of exam prep, similar surveys already being implemented by other projects). These problems are impeding data collection in post-primary establishments and, as a result, could have serious implications for sample size and the representativeness of the post-primary school sample.
- Because of a shift in the focus of the Result 2 activities to primary schools, to reflect PEPFAR priorities, SHRP decided not to include post primary establishments in new treatment districts (Cluster 2 and after). Therefore, we will only be able to assess the impact of the Result 2 intervention on post-primary educational facilities for Cluster 1 schools, and this, only if aforementioned problems can be resolved to ensure a sufficient and representative sample of post-primary schools in the Cluster 1 sample. .
- Based on the most recent PMP, we note that the Result 2 intervention will no longer be conducted in Cluster 3 districts and schools. As a result, NORC will focus its evaluation of Result 2 on Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 schools.
- Given program implementation delays in Year 1, the academic term was delayed for one week in the Cluster 1 districts, where the IP is working in order to build in time to prepare and have teacher guides ready for the second training of teachers. Additional classes to compensate for the one week delay are not currently planned. An equivalent delay did not occur in the control district schools;

therefore, the academic year in those schools will be one week longer. We do not anticipate a visible effect, but it is worth mentioning how the reality of the program may affect the evaluation.

D. LESSONS LEARNED DURING YEAR 1

Designing and Implementing the Impact Evaluation

Throughout the design and implementation of the impact evaluation, P&IE and SHRP team members have adopted a collaborative approach. Discussion about the impact evaluation design, sample size, and



data collection plans took place while the IP was still in the process of finalizing the SHRP implementation plan. As such, we were able to build evaluation design requirements – randomization, out-of-district controls - into the implementation process from the start. A common and deep understanding between the evaluator and implementer about the implementation and the evaluation requirements has created an environment in which information is shared freely and potential problems are identified and discussed while there is still time to make adjustments to minimize threats to the impact evaluation design, while respecting the realities on the ground.

Laying the Groundwork for the Performance Evaluation

During the past year, the P&IE team has been laying the groundwork for the midterm and end-of-project performance evaluations, which we will conduct in 2014 and 2016. In lieu of limiting the PEs to interviews and observation conducted at two distinct points of time during the life of the project, the P&IE team is observing SHRP implementation activities on an ongoing and continuous basis, recording implementation progress, deviations from implementation plan, and problems and bottlenecks encountered in the course of project implementation. These observations are an important part of our CLA activities with the IP, as described below. However, they also lay the foundations for an in-depth performance evaluation that takes into consideration implementation realities throughout the entire life of SHRP. This approach also ensures that the performance evaluators have a deep understanding of the project being evaluated.

Operationalizing USAID’S CLA Agenda

Our goal during the first year of the project was to design and implement an effective process for third party observation/monitoring and performance feedback that helps enhance performance in real time. This is a very new concept and USAID/Uganda is pioneering it. We have developed an approach that the implementing partner views positively as one that offers them something of value and use. The feedback, provided within two weeks following each month’s observed activities, allows the SHRP team to integrate the feedback quickly in terms of performance timelines (months not the years which has been the norm in third party performance feedback).

We have noted that an appreciative approach to the feedback is critical to success, so that the implementing partner hears positive feedback as well as constructive criticism. Providing the feedback in writing but also taking the time to have a conversation about it is important. While the in-country staff articulate the performance feedback based on their observations, having the whole P&IE team involved in the discussion of the feedback memo with the SHRP leadership helps elevate the importance of the process, and maintain focus on content and integration of the feedback into SHRP activities.

The ongoing observation of project implementation and discussion of implementation progress and performance with the implementing partner has also been critical for identifying possible threats and risks to the impact evaluation, allowing us to make adjustments to the sampling and evaluation designs, as needed, to mitigate these risks.