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EdData II
Education Data for Decision Making

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Plus: Liberia

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Prepared by Medina Korda
RTI International, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, USA

About the presentation

- This presentation was prepared for the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) annual meeting, Charleston, South Carolina, March 25, 2009.
- The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) EdData II project is led by RTI International. Work in Liberia takes place under EGRA Plus: Liberia, EdData II Task Order Number 6, EHC-E-06-04-00004-00.
- Icons appearing on some slides in this presentation represent links to embedded files that are not available in the PDF version of this document. To obtain copies of the embedded files, please contact Medina Korda, mkorda@rti.org.

Presentation overview

- Why early grade reading
- What is EGRA
- From assessment to intervention –
EGRA Plus: Liberia
- Questions

Why early grade reading (EGR)

- The ability to read and understand simple text is one of the most fundamental skills a child can learn
- Without the ability to read, a child has little chance to escape the intergenerational cycle of poverty
- Acquiring literacy becomes more difficult as children grow older
- Children who do not learn how to read in early grades are more likely to repeat grades or drop out
- The gap between readers and nonreaders increases over time

Why EGR – Developing world

- Studies find low levels of reading in all developing regions, but Africa in particular
 - Guinea, Niger, Madagascar: No real reading until grades 5-6
 - Honduras, Panama, Uruguay: No real reading until grade 3 (and Spanish is easy, and these countries have no home-language issues)
 - Liberia, Kenya: No reading until grades 4-5

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EGR assessment

- EGRA is an individually administered oral assessment of literacy skills; takes about 15 minutes per child
- Unlike paper-and-pencil tests, EGRA can detect problems early
- It is inexpensive and can be used by teachers, Ministry of Education (MOE) officers, and parents
- Consists of 6-7 subtests (depending on a country's desires):
 - Awareness of how sounds work, knowledge of letters, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, recognition of words, recognition of nonwords, and dictation



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From assessment to intervention

- RTI developed research-based approaches to remedy critical areas in reading performance identified by the EGRA instrument
 - Teaching reading focuses on the big 5 skills: sounds, letters, reading, comprehension, and vocabulary
 - Developed scope and sequence for a whole year, with daily lesson plans following a simple instructional model
 - Accountability and support mechanisms: parental involvement, ongoing support and supervision, and regular EGRA assessments
- So far, interventions tried in
 - Kenya in 2008
 - Liberia – just started (early 2009)

Intervention in Liberia

- EGRA Plus: Liberia design:
 - Starts with assessment
 - Then assessment-based intervention
 - Through teacher-training, materials, constant measurement
 - Re-measurement at end and various points
- Targets 180 schools categorized into: control schools, Light Intervention schools, and Full Intervention schools
- Project timeline: October 2008–October 2010

Light Intervention, Full Intervention?

	60 Control Schools	60 Light Intervention Schools	60 Full Intervention Schools
EGRA Assessment	yes	yes	yes
School Report Card	no	yes	yes
Face-to-Face Teacher Training	no	no	yes
School-Based Teacher Support	no	no	yes
Teacher Reading Kits	no	no	yes
Student Reading Books (decodable)	no	no	yes
Informal Assessments	no	no	yes
Ongoing Project Support	no	no	yes



Typical lesson plan



report card example

A few more words on Full Intervention

- Teacher training focused on: Scope (what), sequence (when), and instructional model (how). (teacher kit)
- Student report card – informing parents about student performance and creating accountability for results
- School-based support: Monthly visits by trained Coaches to support teachers (8 times per year)
- Student decodable books: Closely tied to lesson plans
- Students required to read at home 20 minutes a day
- Building small libraries at schools (50-60 grade-appropriate books)
- (All developed in collaboration with local stakeholders)

Results

- Still too early to say anything about improved student performance since the intervention commenced in late January or in some cases mid-February 2009
- Baseline found that children in Liberia are low performers (similar to other countries where we conducted assessments)
 - Average number of correct words (cwpm) per minute in second grade was 18; in third, 28
 - To put this into perspective, if a child in the U.S. read less than 70 cwpm at the end of second grade, that child would be considered at risk

Challenges

- Teachers need a lot of training – There has been hardly any training during and after the war
- Most of the teachers are not qualified to teach
- Because of a strike, MOE decided to dismiss all of the volunteer teachers; more than 20% of EGRA teachers are volunteer teachers. All together, our intervention was delayed by more than a month
- Supporting some schools can be challenging given the far distances that need to be traveled

Questions

- Steve Walker
- Amy Jo Dowd
- Dianne Deker
- Medina Korda

Results of assessment in Liberia

Values for Liberia and US benchmarks

	Grade 2 Liberia	Grade 2 USA at-risk benchmark	Grade 3 Liberia	Grade 3 USA at-risk benchmark
Letter naming Fluency	64	NA for grade 2, only established for kindergarten, greater than 40 no risk	73	NA for grade 2; only established for kindergarten; greater than 40 no risk
Familiar word Fluency	14	NA	20	NA
Non-familiar word fluency	2	NA for end of grade 2; less than 30 considered weak in grade 1	4	NA for end of grade 3; less than 30 considered weak in grade 1
Connected text fluency	18	Less than 70 considered at risk	28	Less than 80 considered at risk

Sampling

- Intervention had to be cost-effective, which had implications for our sampling approach
- First, districts were selected proportional to public school population
- Then within each district, one school was picked at random, then 3 closest → forming one cluster
- For each district selected district (thus for total of 15 districts) we repeated this three times – for control schools cluster, Light Intervention schools cluster, Full Intervention schools cluster.

Sampling

15 districts chosen
proportional to
enrollment

The same
process was
repeated for
all 15 districts
selected

