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Save the Children

READ Bangladesh: Final Report Fiscal Years: 2013-2018



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ABOUT READ

The Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development (READ) project is a five-year United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported project implemented by Save the Children International (SCI). READ began work in 2013 and supported 5,583 selected schools in 19 districts of Bangladesh by offering a range of activities including: reading instruction and assessment training for teachers, creating a print rich environment in classrooms, encouraging teachers to conduct reading ability assessments for students, providing leveled, supplementary reading materials for children, and creating the opportunity for children to have more time outside the classroom to practice and enjoy reading. These activities lead to improving the reading skills of targeted children in the selected districts.

DISCLAIMER:

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ACRONYM

AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer
DG	Director General
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
F	Female
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GPS	Government Primary School
IAT	Instructional Adjustment Tool
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M	Male
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOPME	Ministry of Primary Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NNPS	Newly Nationalized Primary Schools
READ	Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development
RIA	Reading Instruction and Assessment
SCI	Save the Children International
SMC	School Management Committee
SRM	Supplementary Reading Material
TLM	Teaching Learning Material
UEO	Upazila Education Officer
URC	Upazila Resource Centre
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Save the Children, in partnership with USAID, began implementing the READ Bangladesh Project with the objective of improving the reading skills of children in grades one through three. READ worked in partnership with national and local government entities as well as with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support an improved classroom environment and to foster a culture of reading in communities.

Recognizing that improving reading skills requires a range of inputs, both inside and outside the classroom, READ developed several key components to achieve program objectives: i.) reading instruction and assessment toolkits (RIA), ii.) Improving the classroom environment through print-rich materials, iii.) Tracking student learning through formative assessment using an instructional adjustment tool (IAT), iv.) Providing opportunities to practice literacy skills through leveled supplementary reading materials (SRM), v.) Enhancing the culture of reading through community reading camps, and vi.) Increasing opportunities to practice reading through information and communication technology (ICT) enhanced reading materials. Over the life of the project, these components provided participating schools and communities with evidence-based strategies to improve and assess crucial early grade reading skills including: letter identification, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

Result Highlights and Impact

After five years of READ implementation, **significantly more Grade 2 and 3 learners are now readers**—reading Bangla-language grade-level text with comprehension—45% of second graders were readers at baseline compared to 92% at endline and 74% of third graders were readers at baseline compared to 99% at endline. In other words the percentage of non-readers in intervention schools decreased from 55% to 8% for grade 2 and from 26% to 1% for grade 3.

Students in READ schools are more likely to be fluent readers than students in comparison schools. Students in READ schools have a greater oral reading fluency than students in comparison schools at endline. At the endline, comparison school students in grade 2 read 31 wpm compared to 49 wpm for the READ group. Third graders in comparison schools read 33 wpm compared to 65 wpm for the READ group.

Finally, all students in READ schools showed greater improvement in comprehension (both listening and reading) than students in comparison schools, and the difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Among second graders in READ schools, reading comprehension increased from 52% to 86% and for grade three students from 45% to 66%.

The following accomplishments have contributed to READ's success:

IR 1: Improved evidence-based, interactive early grades literacy instruction

- READ trained over 10,000 Bangla language teachers in grades 1-3 on effective language and literacy instruction.
- In collaboration with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), READ developed three important resource manuals for teachers and administrators including a Reading Instruction and Assessment (RIA) Manual and the Resource Book, Instructional Adjustment Tool for formative assessment tracking, and

an Academic Supervision Guide. These materials were delivered to all target schools and revised in Years 1 and 2 of the program to align with the Government's newly developed curriculum for grades 1-2.

- READ's key focus on academic supervision was of immense technical value. READ adopted an extensive process to make supervision of classroom teachers more functionally effective. With the assistance of experts from various divisions within the MOPME and MoE READ developed a three-day Supervisor's Training package and trained 4,641 administrators on effective coaching mechanisms.

IR 2: Increased use of early grade reading assessment

- READ piloted a formative assessment tool for use by teachers in grades 1-3 to assist with ongoing, regular formative assessment. The Instructional Adjustment Tool, as it became to be known, helped teachers identify which of the 5 key literacy skills students struggled in. The tool was developed in partnership with DPE, and training on this tool for teachers was conducted by DPE officials, supported by READ staff. 2 teachers from each READ school across 7 divisions were trained on this tool over the life of the project.
- To provide local and division-based government officials with a snapshot on how schools were performing on the formative assessments over the course of the year, the READ team developed student Reading Report Cards. This web-based tool was also used to engage parents of struggling students in an effort to increase support to those who need it most.

IR 3: Expanded provision and use of appropriate supplementary materials

- The children's literature market in Bangladesh is more developed than other countries in the region. Because of this, the READ team was able to collect 5,900 children's books in the effort to identify exemplars across genre and reading levels.
- A Book-Leveling workshop was held, attended and endorsed by experts in children's literature from DPE, NCTB, the National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE), Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research (IER), Dhaka University's Bangla Department and Language Institute, and BRAC University. Over the course of 2 workshops, a list of 155 titles was endorsed by NCTB and DPE to be used as supplementary reading materials for Government Primary Schools.
- To support minority language students, the READ team collected books in a variety of indigenous languages including Chakma, Marma and Tripura from a number of sources. Engaging closely with Hill Tribe Council, DPE, and NCTB, READ conducted two Book Leveling workshops, which resulted in thirty titles being selected for distribution to schools.
- READ's ICT team converted 69 story books to a digital format and made these titles available on the READ and DPE websites.
- Government of Bangladesh is committed to enhancing students' and teachers' use of computers in the primary grades. Helping to achieve this goal, READ digitized supplementary reading materials, teachers guides, and lesson plans and made these available on the READ and DPE websites. READ also went beyond its original mandate and created 4 apps to practice Bangla reading, which are available for free on READ and DPE's websites and can be downloaded on Google Play.

IR 4: Strengthened community support for early grade literacy

- Over the course of the project, READ established over 1,300 reading clubs in target communities. Over a three-month period in 2018, **66% of grade 2 and 3 students went from not reading to reading at grade level, due to the intense one on one support provided at the reading clubs.** Parent demand for reading clubs drove READ to organize

meetings with various stakeholders to identify ways to sustain community reading camp activities after phase out of READ, which has led to commitments for 526 community sustained reading clubs, supported by community members and READs PNGOs.

- In collaboration with IREX, READ revived 20 community public libraries through a series of training workshops to upgrade librarian's skills and the provision of age appropriate reading materials, digital content, and child friendly furniture.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Over its five years of implementation, READ has directly benefited 1.1 million students in grades 1-3 and improved students' reading performance, particularly in the critical skills of fluency and comprehension. Many READ-developed materials, including leveled readers, teacher guides, and children's digital reading materials have been adopted by DPE as shared widely through READ and DPE's websites. In reflecting on its experience in supporting early grades reading, READ identified the following key lessons:

1. Be flexible and willing to adapt.

The READ team has had to course correct and pivot on priorities multiple times over the life of the project. Being adaptive to donor and government priorities as well as the needs of the community allowed READ to deliver activities and results that supported GoB and MOPME, while still achieving the overall reading objectives of the project.

2. Use program monitoring and evaluation information to inform and improve the project.

READ developed a robust M&E system to collect, track, and analyze project data. This data management system was shared with MOPME, school staff, and administrators, and greatly improved efficiency across government primary schools. The READ team also used this data to inform programming, making adjustments to activities in the field as dictated by results from assessments, focus group discussions, and stakeholder surveys.

3. Use open and honest communication.

Despite challenges at various points of the project with key stakeholders, the READ team strove to be in constant communication with both GoB and USAID, including sharing shortcomings and challenges. This open communication allowed for issues to be resolved in a timely and constructive manner, in a spirit of genuine partnership.

BACKGROUND

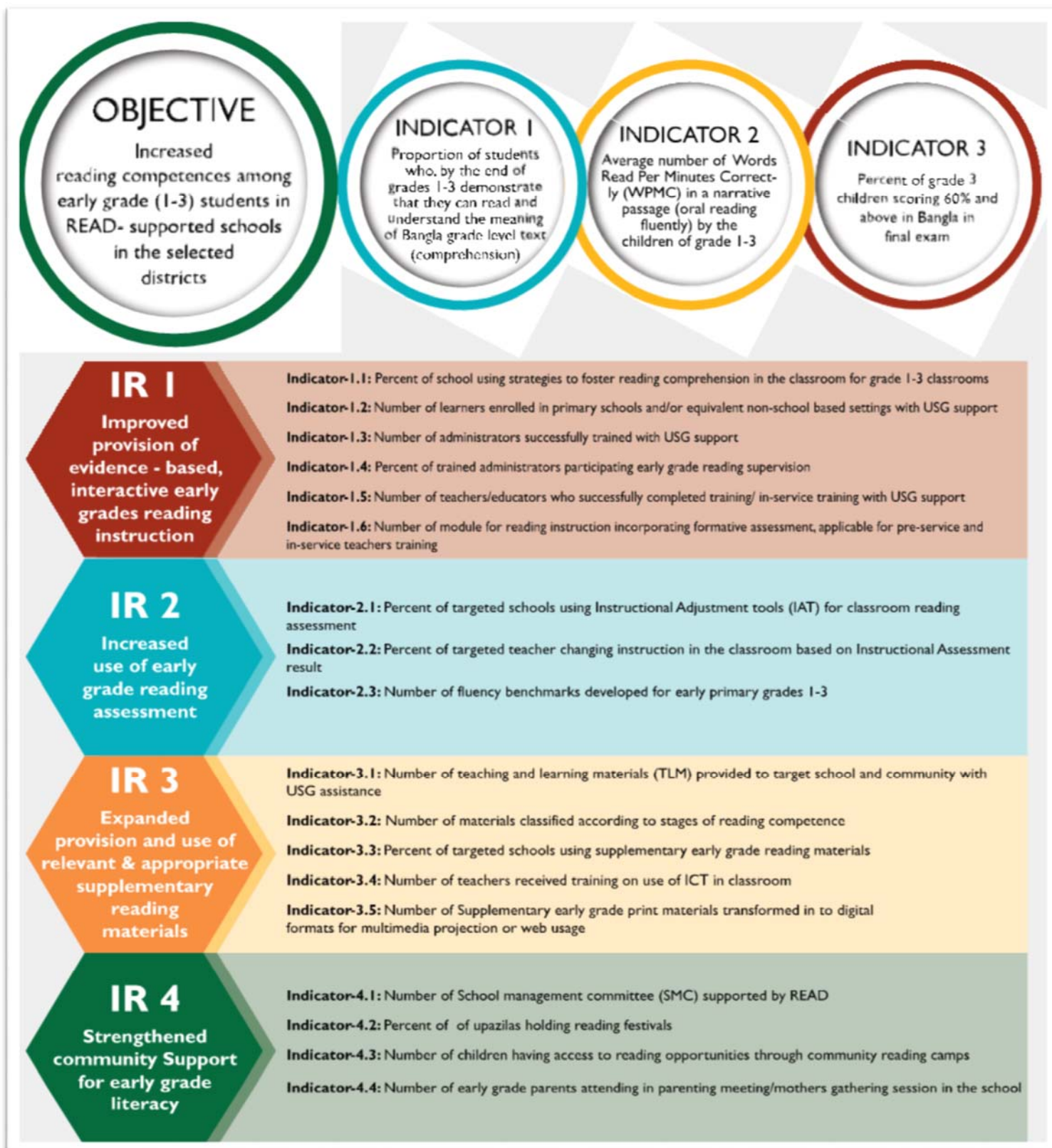
Despite remarkable achievements in primary education—especially in access, enrollment, completion and gender parity—at the start of READ, Bangladesh was, and in many areas still is, lagging in improving the quality of education in the early primary grades. An area of specific need was supporting all teachers to teach children how to read. A national survey conducted by the government in 2011¹ identified that a third of grade three students did not meet the reading standards for Bangla. A subsequent survey conducted in 2013² indicated little improvement in reading competency.

By the end of Grade 3, only 67% of students in Bangladesh had achieved grade level competency in Bangla. Two years later, by the end of Grade 5, only 33% of students achieve the desired competency [National Student Assessment, 2011]. An earlier study underscored the challenges and implications of failing to support children in grade one. In *Keys to Literacy*, Lyon, G Reid (1998) indicated a 90% probability that a child will remain a poor reader at the end of the fourth grade if the child is a poor reader at the end of the first grade. However, Reid also observed that 90%-95% of poor readers could obtain average reading skills with early intervention. READ, the READ results framework, activities and desired indicators and results were designed and developed to respond to this context.

¹ 2011 National Student Assessment for Grades 3 and 5 National Report, government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh Directorate of Primary Education, 18 December 2014

² 2013 National Student Assessment for Grades 3 and 5 National Report, government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh Directorate of Primary Education, 29 December 2012

Results Framework



Goals and Objectives

To enhance early grade reading skills in Bangladesh, Save the Children implemented the Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development project, a USAID-funded primary education intervention from 2013 through 2018. The project aimed to improve reading skills among Grades 1, 2 and 3 children.

Learning to read affects all aspects of children’s education. By ensuring a strong foundation at the beginning of school, the expectation is that fewer children will repeat grades or drop out in the primary cycle, and a higher proportion will complete school with the solid primary school skills – such as literacy - which are critical life skills in today’s world.

READ incorporated evidence-based practices that emphasized capacity and sustainability. It focused on four areas of intervention: 1) teacher education and continuous professional development; 2) reading assessment; 3) increased availability of reading materials, and 4) increased opportunities for reading in the community and support from community members/institutions (see Figure 1 Results Framework).

Technical Approach

In order to achieve positive change in the primary education system in Bangladesh, READ adopted a comprehensive approach to develop and cater program interventions for enhancing children’s reading skills in the early grades in order for all primary school children to attain expected learning outcomes and competencies.

Save the Children developed a unique partnership through close collaboration with the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME), along with its various line divisions and Primary Training Institutions (PTI) to successfully implement program activities in government primary schools (GPS). To allow for continuous feedback and input from GoB, READ created an advisory committee for the project, at the national level, thus ensuring ownership from national experts for the program interventions which has strategic interest of future prospects. READ also partnered with six renowned national NGOs to implement the program at the field level (see Table I Stakeholder Roles and Engagement). In addition to the advisory committee, READ established other groups to oversee and provide feedback on various components of the projects (See Figure 1. Working Groups Created under READ).

Working Group /Committee for READ
1. Reading Advisory Committee
2. Academic supervision Sub-committee
3. ICT in Education Sub-committee
4. Story Book Selection Committee
5. M&E Technical Expert Group

Figure 2. Working Groups Created Under READ

Over time, READ established relationships with a broader range of government actors such as: Bangla Academy, Institute of Education and Research – Dhaka University, Bangla Department – Dhaka University, Language Institute Dhaka University, National Book Development Center and the Department of Public Libraries and Ministry of Information, including the Access to Information (a2i), a critical partner in the project’s ICT in education activities.

Table I. Stakeholder Roles and Engagement

KEY STAKEHOLDER	IMPLEMENTATION ROLE AND ENGAGEMENT
Save the Children	Lead implementing agency for overall program design, coordination and collaboration among the key role players.
DPE under MoPME	Lead policy and strategy entity directing on joint planning, designing and decision making of official Instruction for government officials (from national to field level).
NCTB, NAPE, PTI, URC	Technical Assistance support to adopt, develop and endorse modules, guidelines, tools, materials. Also support for conducting Teacher Trainings and other capacity building.
Six National NGOs	Implementing Partner to rollout the program activities in the field, including primary schools and communities
GPS, NNPS and Administrators	Change Makers. Bringing change in teaching and learning methods, assessment, supervision.
School Management Committee and community	Supporting role to make the implementation smooth and support sustainability.

READ’s technical approach focused on enhancing reading competencies of students in grades 1-3, by equipping the Bangla language teacher and their administrator with technical training, relevant tools and materials. Community engagement, especially of School Management Committees (SMCs) and parents, monitoring children’s reading progress through formative assessments, and provision of supplementary materials and increasing the opportunity to practice literacy skills outside of school rounds out READs program framework.

As mentioned earlier, Save the Children’s comprehensive partnership with partner NGOs, DPE and other GoB departments & institutions was critical for the project’s success. SCI undertook deliberate steps to engage stakeholders in each phase of the project. Selected key partnership efforts are described below.

1. Stakeholders Engagement in teacher training on Reading Instructional Assessment (RIA)

The READ technical team provided overall technical guidance for designing, piloting and rolling out the teachers’ training on Reading Instructional Assessment Strategies. The DPE provided valuable technical and strategic support throughout the process of designing, planning and conducting training. The DG-DPE, along with 4 Directors, a Deputy Director, and 2 Education Officers, took part in designing the Reading Instructional Assessment Module. Additional staff including PTI & URC Instructors, Curriculum Specialists, and textbook content specialists, also provided support in implementing Reading Instructional Assessment workshops. Workshops were co-located within the URC premises, thus furthering the goal of embedding trainings within the government structure.

2. Stakeholder Engagement for Print-rich Materials

The READ technical team led the coordination and designing of print-rich materials in close collaboration with the DPE and URC instructors. The Operational Guidelines for print-rich materials were developed by the READ technical team, shared with relevant MoE staff for feedback, after which production,

procurement and distribution of materials commenced. SCI and its network of partner NGOs ensured that schools received the materials and they were appropriately displayed in the classrooms. The field level DPE Officials made classroom visits and provided follow up support. Save the Children provided technical oversight during classroom observation, local DPE Officials (UEO, AUEO, URC) extended monitoring visit, while partner NGO staff supervised and monitored the meaningful use of print-rich materials in the classroom.

3. Stakeholders Engagement in Instructional Adjustment Tools (IAT)

The Instructional Adjustment Tool (IAT) was developed to track children's reading progress in the classroom. In collaboration with DPE experts, a rigorous process was followed in developing the tool and cascading the training to classroom teachers.

Save the Children facilitated the IAT development process through a series of efforts. These included conducting an IAT Development workshop and Field Testing. Representatives from DPE and experts from NCTB and NAPE extended their support in the IAT development workshop. After necessary adjustments of the tool and guidelines in response to the field test, SCI arranged teacher training on the IAT and conducted sessions in collaboration with DPE and partner NGOs to develop Core trainers. Subsequently, partner NGOs coordinated with local government, education officials and school authorities for teachers' training in the field, where URC Instructors served as key resources. The partner NGO technical staff monitored and supervised training and ensured regular data collection under the overall backstopping of the READ M&E team.

4. Stakeholder Engagement in Supplementary Reading Material

At the inception phase of the project, the READ technical team reviewed 5,900 children's literature titles developed by different organizations. DG-DPE, along with relevant experts from his office, attended the workshop. PTI instructors, members of the Curriculum Wing of NCTB, Professional experts from IER, NAPE, and the Language Department of Bangla Academy also extended their technical support during the workshop and beyond.

Most importantly, NCTB and DPE authorities endorsed 155 titles as supplementary reading materials to be distributed to READ schools. A review and approval committee worked in this regard. The regional and field level partner NGO staffs had horizontal and vertical coordination for effective use of the materials for early graders. The READ Central had technical backstopping to the partner NGOs for effective use of the supplementary reading materials in the field. Local DPE Officers (UAEO) provided supervision and monitoring support during field visit.

5. Stakeholder Engagement in Community Reading Camp (CRC)

Building on USAID's and SCI's experience with Community Learning Initiatives, READ offered technical guidance in designing the Community Reading Camps (CRC). Save the Children also developed CRC implementation guidelines. Technical staff of PNGOs worked with SCI in designing, piloting and rolling out activities along with materials.

In the final year, READ also developed and applied diagnostic tools to assess the gaps and problems of individual children, through partner NGOs in the field. Partner NGOs had to mobilize the community to organize and implement the CRC program. Over time, they also facilitated the discussions with SMCs and the local government to mobilize their support /resources for continuing the program after project phase-out.

6. Engagement of Key stakeholders ICT in Education

READ's ICT in Education was used by the GoB's program to easily access and effectively use multimedia in classrooms. To this end, the READ technical team delivered ICT in Education interventions to selected model schools, with multimedia facilities with two key objectives: (i) *Provide 3 days of additional training to primary school teachers (those who received government's 12 days training) and (ii) Develop a range of e-content for beginning readers, aligned with the NCTB curriculum.*

ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

READ incorporated evidence-based practices that emphasized building the capacity of schools and local implementers thereby increasing the sustainability of key interventions. READ was guided by the following four Intermediate Results (IR) and their respective indicators:

- IR 1: Improved evidence-based, interactive early grade literacy instruction
- IR 2: Increased use of early grade reading assessment
- IR 3: Expanded provision and use of appropriate supplementary materials
- IR 4: Strengthened community support for early grade literacy

In order to reach the above Intermediate Results, Save the Children along with its partner NGOs collaborated extensively with DPE and NCTB. To this end, READ rolled out coherent implementation mechanism under each of the four (4) IRs throughout the life of the project, with planned and structured activities.

IR 1: Improved Evidence-based, Interactive Early Grade Literacy Instruction

Under this IR, the READ team strove to **strengthen teachers' skills in teaching children** how to read, use formative assessment data to track student progress and guide instruction, and develop a plan to support those students who need extra help. The following achievements supported this result:

- 10,223 (F 65%) Bangla language teachers were trained on reading instruction and assessment. The training focused on the five components of reading that are at the core of READ approach. Thus, it helped to build Bangla teacher capacity to better teach early grade reading. This has been a critical strength of the project, when making instructional changes in their teaching learning method, to enhance the reading competencies of the children.
- 7,855 (61%) Bangla language teachers were provided with a refresher training, focusing on findings from the IAT and highlighted areas in which children struggle. (See Table 2 below.)

Table 2. Teachers Trained on Reading and Assessment

Training of type	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Basic Training on Reading Instruction and Assessment - 5 days	1,312 (F 56%)	2,034 (35%)	226 (F 59%)	3,848 (F 67%)	2,800 (F 69%)	10,223 (F 65%)
Refreshers Training on Reading Instruction and Assessment (3 Days)		2,510 (F 56%)	3,033 (F 62%)	662 (F 65%)	1,650 (F 65%)	7,855 (F 61%)

- The standard pronunciation of Bangla letters was an ongoing concern for DPE, with many different variations on pronunciation of the same letter being used by teachers. READ, in partnership with Bangla Language experts from Bangla Academy, hosted a workshop in Year 2 of the project to address this problem. The workshop resulted in the creation of an audio guide of standard Bangla letter pronunciations.
- Students who speak minority languages in Bangladesh struggle to learn the language of instruction. To address this, READ worked with language experts from three language groups commonly spoken in READ target schools to discuss how elements of Mother Tongue- Based Multilingual Education can be incorporated into their training. The consultation enabled READ to integrate four key considerations into the design of a sustainable reading intervention in Khagrachhari district as well as the creation of an audio guide of standard pronunciations in three minority languages.
- READ developed decodable supplementary reading materials with scripts for indigenous children through two workshops, where 43 high potential writers and illustrators from indigenous communities attended the workshop.
- READ promoted and supported print rich environments to create joyful learning environments. READ developed prototypes of print materials for classrooms through two workshops. It systematically introduced 17 hand-made and 16 printed materials to decorate all READ-related classrooms, and to support lessons with colorful and stimulating examples. Almost 99% of beneficiary schools were equipped with print rich materials, and 94% of teachers used teaching and learning materials in their classrooms. Materials created for the print-rich environment drew enormous attention from the GoB central and field level administrators.
- READ distributed 1,162,039 Teaching and Learning Materials to classrooms, which included leveled supplementary reading materials, primers, and language game alphabet cards.
- Resource materials were developed in close partnership with NCTB and DPE. READ produced three important guides which were shared with teachers and administrators and used throughout the life of the project. These included:
 - Reading Instruction and Assessment (RIA) Manual and Resource Book
 - Instructional Adjustment Tools (IAT) for formative classroom assessment
 - The Academic Supervision Guide

READ's key focus on **academic supervision** was technically and strategically valuable to schools, teachers and students. The project adopted an extensive process to make supervision functionally effective from an academic point of view. A Supervision Training was developed through a workshop held in July 2014, with the help of experts from DPE, NCTB, NAPE, PTI, URC, UEO, Assistant and Head Teachers, SCI, and partner NGO staff. Accordingly, READ adopted a cascade approach to train the administrators through a basic and a refresher training.

Over the life of the project, a total of 4,641 (F 31%) administrators developed their academic supervision capacity, along with a coaching strategy focused on guided self-reflection and instructional adjustment. Furthermore, 2,103 (F 29%) teachers received refresher training as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Reading Focused Administrators' Training on Academic Support

Academic Supervision Training	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Basic Training on Academic Supervision (3 days)	762 (F 17%)	967 (F 30%)	53 (F 45%)	1503 (F 34%)	1356 (F 37%)	4,641 (F 31%)
Refresher Training on Academic Supervision (1 day)			1,436 (F 28%)		667 (30%)	2,103 (29%)

The READ team leveraged the GoB's initiative for accessing and effectively using multimedia classrooms and **supported teachers to use ICT-enhanced teaching materials and training**. Outputs included:

- A 3-day training was provided to 2,726 primary school teachers with a focus on the use of ICT for interactive reading instruction, developing and using a range of e-content for beginning readers
- 50 Supplementary Reading Materials were digitized, of which 15 titles were in minority languages.
- 119 digital materials were developed, including teachers' guides, curricular materials, and textbooks.
- Three apps consisting of 99 reading activities, based on grades 1-3 textbooks were developed and made available for free
- Creation of an online Reading Instruction course in collaboration with a2i, which provides online courses for government school teachers. The a2i platform is targeted to reach almost 400,000 teachers across the country. As of September 2018, total 888 teachers have taken the course through a2i's learning management system named 'Muktapaath'.

- Creation of a website where all digital materials are stored; website is accessed by over 2,000 people daily, from within the country and abroad

IR 2: Increased Use of Early Grade Reading Assessment

The success of the READ project in improving children's reading relied on the effective use of early grade **reading assessments to understand better where children get lost in learning to read.** Teachers adopted formative, continuous assessment tools and techniques that enabled them to better understand the reading skills of their students and strategies for addressing specific gaps. The Instructional Adjustment Tools (IAT) was developed for this purpose in close collaboration with DPE, and has been used to assess and track children's reading progress at three points during the school year.

The IAT tool development process included workshops where technical experts from DPE, NCTB and SCI identified specific reading skills that students in grades 1-3 should be assessed on. It was determined that children in Grades 1 and 2 would be assessed on Letter Knowledge and Phonemic Awareness and those in Grade 3 would be assessed on Vocabulary, Fluency and Comprehension.

Following this initial tool development process, six Regional IAT Validation Workshops were held with groups of school teachers to assess the feasibility of the tool and gather feedback. In a final workshop, the tool was revised based on the feedback from the regional validations sessions and a guideline for implementing the IAT was also created.

READ also made progress in tracking different levels of reading progress. Findings from the analysis of the IAT data in different years showed that students in grades 1 and 2 struggled with phonemic awareness, while students in grades 2 and 3 struggled with constructing sentences and summarizing a passage. To address this, READ introduced specific activities for teachers to focus on in the classroom, and made sure that education officials prioritized these areas during training and regular school visits. The graphs on the following page are a reflection of children's competencies on different aspects of reading³ in the last three years of the project.

³ Phonemic Awareness: % of correctly identified similar beginning and ending sound; Letter Knowledge: % of correctly identified letter; Reading Fluency: % of student correctly read five words in 30 second; Vocabulary: % of correctly identified most used word and Comprehension: Percentage of student correctly answered at least 80% of comprehension questions

Figure 3 : Reading Skills of Grade-1 children Across Years 3-5

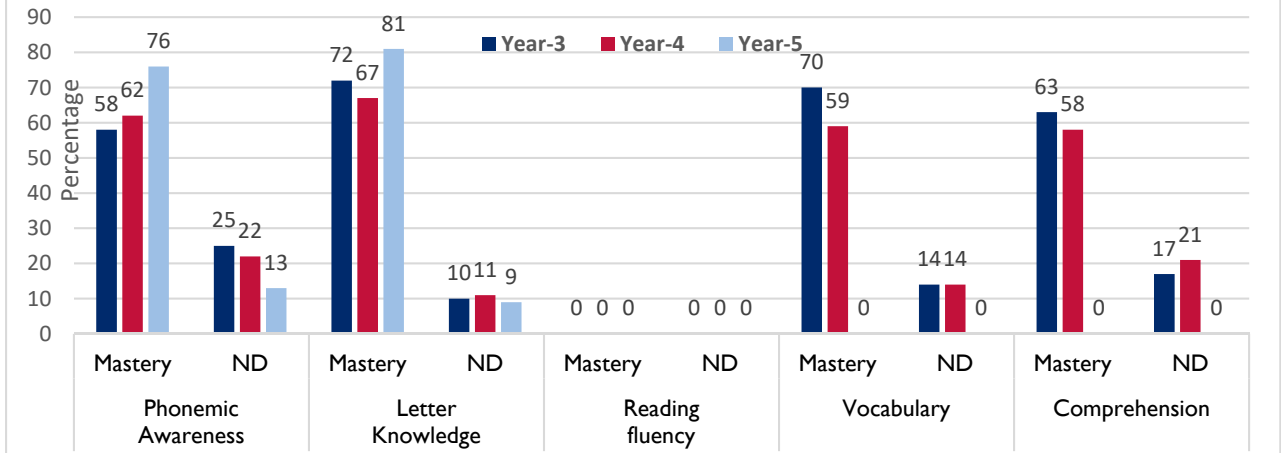


Figure 4: Reading Skills of Grade-2 Children across Years 3-5

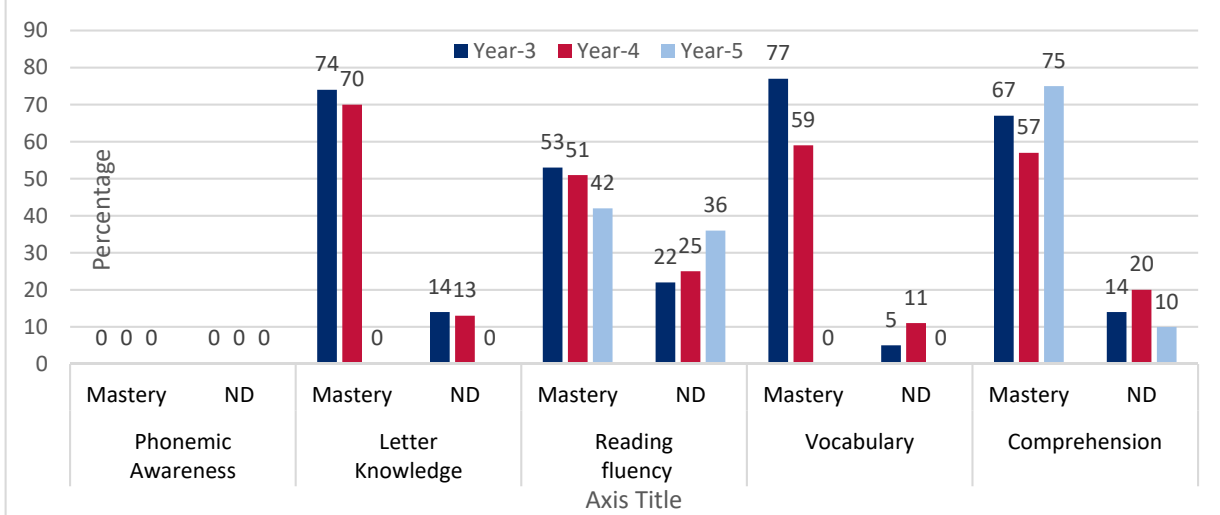
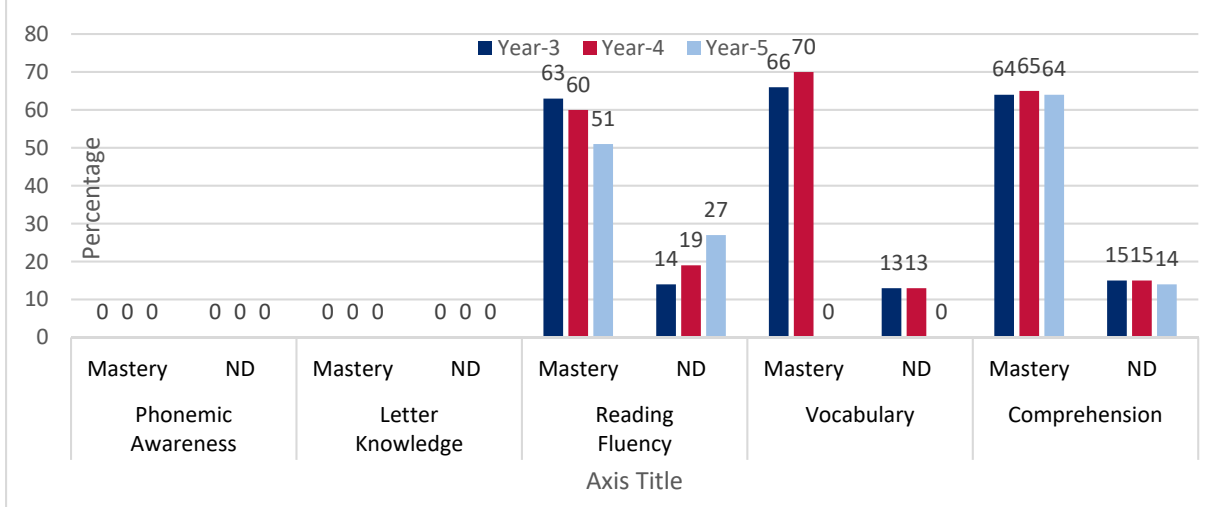


Figure 5: Reading Skills of Grade-3 Children Across Years 3-5



READ introduced Reading Report Cards for each student about his or her reading results. This web-based management information system was used to engage parents, especially mothers, in a dialogue about their child's learning and the importance of reading.

The IAT Reflection Workshops were organized at the end of every school year to hear from teachers about their experiences in conducting the assessment. As the workshops, the following feedback was noted: i) the assessment identified struggling students with gaps in his/her instruction that requires adjustment. ii) The IAT tool is well-aligned with the quarterly syllabus iii) It brings teachers and students closer together and helps to improve reading instruction skill. iv) Participants suggested simplifying the IAT to facilitate time management and improve the data quality; v) Also suggested to assess only weak students in the following round instead of all students.

IAT results were shared with DPE Officials and other stakeholders. Findings from IAT Sharing Practice were used to sensitize the stakeholders about the potential for positive impact. Around 74% of teachers reported changing instructions in response to assessments. IAT Results were shared in 12 districts in seven regional workshops with UEO AUEO, URC Instructors where the regional results were shared and compared with the national averages. Findings were also found frequently on the agenda of quarterly mothers' gatherings at schools, reflecting their interest in the potential for supervision.

The IAT result sharing enabled DPE officials to view reading results in their region in comparison to the bigger picture and similar regions. This sparked active discussion about why one region is performing better or worse than another. In general, phonemic awareness, vocabulary and comprehension scores were low across regions. Sharing the IAT also allowed READ to hear feedback about how the data could be presented more effectively for informing policy-makers – such as disaggregating NNPS and GPS findings.

IR 3: Expanded Provision and use of Appropriate Supplementary Materials

Increasing opportunities to read and interact with reading materials is key for lifelong and sustained literacy success. While Bangladesh has a rich treasure of children's books, these are not accessed by children in rural, hard to reach communities. Over the last five years READ emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of reading amongst children, teachers, and communities.

- READ organized book leveling workshops to curate a selection of books validated by DPE and NCTB to be used in primary grades classrooms. 5,900 titles were reviewed, resulting in 155 books that were leveled and distributed to READ target schools.
- Teachers were trained on how to incorporate read-alouds in their lessons, and how to lead discussions that foster comprehension.
- Parents and SMC members attended sessions that helped them incorporate reading materials into their homes and support literacy in the home.

Figure 6: Book selection Criteria

- a) Sensitivity (national & social context)
- b) Support curriculum objective & content (G1-3)
- c) Continuum and Joy of reading
- d) Consider Conjunct word
- e) Word / sentence and sentence/page
- f) Support children's reading level

- School administrators committed to using school funds to replenish the book banks from time to time.
- 2,862 schools and 20 libraries set up portable bookstands to make leveled books available for early graders to borrow to take home on a weekly basis. A book captain was selected in each class and given an orientation to manage the bookstand.
- Workshops were held to review and assess children’s books in indigenous languages. Thirty titles were selected and distributed to schools with children who speak these languages. The engagement of Hill Tribe Council, curriculum experts and child literature experts in selecting titles added value in the acceptance profile of READ project.

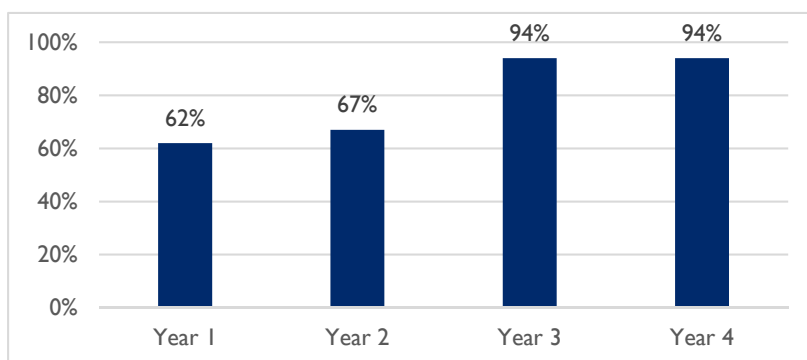


Figure 7. Percentage of schools using Supplementary Reading Materials

READ also **developed and promoted digital format reading materials and apps**. The READ ICT team finalized 69 digital titles of Supplementary Reading Materials, all open source. READ also designed 13 e-materials selected from the Grade 1-3 textbooks. These contents were chosen on the basis of complexity, learning outcomes and the five core components of reading. Finally, four exciting learning apps were developed by the READ team. These include fun exercises and games based on grade 1-3 textbooks. All of these exercises were explicitly focused on five key reading components. All digital materials are free and available on the READ Hub and DPE website.

IR 4: Strengthened Community Support for Early Grade Literacy

In order to sustain and scale many of the efforts READ has made in **creating a culture of reading in the community**, READ worked with key stakeholders including SMCs. Through training, capacity building, and close support, READ has been able to achieve great success in institutionalizing certain of its activities.

- 1,510 GPS SMCs participated in READ’s orientation using the Resource Pack (which was developed in year 1). Newly Nationalized school SMCs were given follow-up support, in order to encourage their continuing involvement in reading; for example, debriefing them on IAT results per school.
- Parent Awareness Sessions have been implemented since Year 1 of the project, where trained facilitators helped parents support children’s literacy in the home. Over the life of the project, 556,325 caregivers attended these sessions.
- READ established 1,500 community reading camps in all divisions in which it worked. The camps, led by trained community literacy volunteers, offered a joyful environment for children to practice literacy skills.
- 659 Reading Festivals were organized at school / catchment areas to create greater public awareness for community support around reading. Activities included alphabet sorting, picture

sequencing, writing words from pictures, re-arranging the letters in words, and guessing the first letter.

- In partnership with Beyond Access Bangladesh, READ worked to revive 20 libraries across the country with trainings for staff and child friendly and age appropriate materials.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Institutional Ownership

READ adopted a strategic partnership which led to ownership of READ interventions and resources by key stakeholders within the GoB, namely the DPE, NCTB, NAPE and PTI. Members from these bodies participated actively in all aspects of READ's programming. Select outcomes of this participation are reflected below:

- Reading instruction guidelines endorsing the READ literacy instruction training were developed by DG-DPE Office and cascaded down to the Upazila level, ensuring schools, teachers and head teachers were informed and on board with the READ approach.
- READ's Reading Instruction and Assessment strategies were incorporated into the in-service teacher training curriculum.
- A majority of READ schools allocated a portion of their school fund to maintain Print-rich Environments in their schools.



Research

READ contributed to a large body of research. This includes large studies evaluating the impact of READ interventions on student learning outcomes, as well as smaller studies looking at more nuanced aspects of the project, including ICT in education, minority language speakers, and impact of community activities. These studies will add to the body of literature in the development field on education in Bangladesh and will be helpful to practitioners and implementers working in Bangladesh. Three studies are showcased below: the GPS endline evaluation, the Naogaon study, and the cost-effectiveness study.

Figure 8.
READ staff shares materials.

Nationwide GPS Endline Evaluation

To assess the impact of the READ project on grade II and grade III children's reading competencies, an evaluation was carried out in 2018. It adopted a repeated cross sectional design, with a control group for comparison. The study was conducted in 6 regions of Bangladesh-Barishal, Cox's Bazar, Dhaka, Jashore, Rangpur and Sylhet-among 765 grade II children and 768 grade III children. Results were compared to a baseline that was conducted in the same schools in June-July 2015. Key findings of the GPS evaluation include:

- Over 90% of students at READ schools have mastered emergent literacy skills, such as, letter knowledge, frequent word recognition, similar beginning words and rhyming words.
- Over 90% grade II and grade III students of READ schools became readers (who could read minimum 5 words in 30 seconds) at the endline. In grade II it increased from 45% to 92% and in grade III it increased from 74% to 99%.
- Students in READ schools were more likely to be fluent readers than students in comparison schools. Students in READ schools had a greater oral reading fluency than students in comparison schools at the endline. Endline scores for grade II were 31 words per minute (WPM) (29 wpm at baseline) for the comparison group and 49 wpm (26 wpm at baseline) for the intervention group. For grade III, scores were 33 wpm (29 wpm at baseline) for the comparison group and 65 wpm (29 wpm at baseline) for the intervention group at the endline.
- Although students' fluency scores have increased significantly, fluency still presents as a challenge to students of both READ schools and comparison schools.
- Significantly, more READ school students could read with comprehension by the endline, compared to comparison group. At the endline, among all second grade students of READ schools, 68% could read with comprehension, compared to 37% students in comparison schools; it was 7% students from both groups in the baseline. For grade III, 75% READ school students could read with comprehension, (6% at baseline), in comparison to 37% of the non-READ school students (5% at baseline).

Naogaon Endline Evaluation

The evaluation study adopted a quasi-experimental longitudinal design, with a comparison group. Using this baseline data as a starting point, the endline was conducted by Innovative Research and Consultancy Ltd (IRC) in May 2018 among the same students who were now in Grade II and III. In total 1,883 students were tracked and interviewed for the endline; around 15% attrition was found for both treatment and comparison groups. Key findings of the Naogaon evaluation include:

- Overall performance of the READ school students was significantly ($p < 0.001$) better than the comparison school students in both emerging and higher order literacy skill tasks across all grades at the endline.
- The number of self-reliant readers increased more than 6 times among Grade II and almost doubled among Grade III students of READ schools by the endline.
- Although second graders of READ schools could read 27 more words and third graders could read 34 more words in a minute than baseline, fluency was still a challenge for most students at all schools. Nonetheless, the treatment group had higher fluency scores than the comparison group at the endline.
- Students of READ schools scored significantly better (Grade II- 87%, Grade III- 92%) in frequently used word task than students of comparison schools (Grade II- 69%, Grade III- 77%) at the endline.
- Over 85% of students at READ schools have mastered emergent literacy skills, such as, letter knowledge, frequent word recognition, identification of words with similar beginning sounds and rhyming sounds.
- Students at READ schools reported studying longer than students in comparison schools. At the endline, students of all grades reported studying for longer than 2 hours per day with Grade II students in READ schools studying for almost 3 hours per day (176 minutes).

Cost Effectiveness Analysis Study

To conduct a cost effectiveness analysis of improving student reading outcomes, the results from the GPS Endline and the impact evaluation of the Community Reading Camps (CORE/CORE PLUS impact evaluation) were paired with their implementation costs. Utilizing the ingredients method, a rigorous approach to conducting cost-effectiveness analysis, READ's costs were calculated from a social perspective. This means that all costs regardless of who pays for them, or if resources were donated or volunteered, are included. The report presented the total costs for GPS Endline and CORE/CORE PLUS schools; the cost per CORE and CORE PLUS student; and the cost per one-unit increase in reading comprehension, fluency, and self-reliant readers, as compared to students who did not receive the READ intervention. Key findings include:

- For CORE students in the GPS Endline, the analysis found that for each student a one percentage point increase in proportion of reading comprehension questions answered correctly costs approximately BDT 447 (USD 5.34). A one-word increase in a student's oral reading fluency costs approximately BDT 491 (USD 5.86). These results are applicable to all of the CORE students in the GPS Endline and is not restricted to students defined as "readers."
- It costs approximately BDT 448 (USD 5.35) for each percentage point gain in the proportion of students classified as "readers." This means that each additional reader costs approximately BDT 44,850 (USD 536).
- Because the impact analysis for CORE/CORE PLUS Community Reading Camp intervention yielded negative statistically insignificant findings, the cost effectiveness findings are not interpretable.

Adapting and Learning

Adapting and Learning are key components of USAID's approach to development activities. They have also been fundamental to achieving READs results and activities. Three specific cases of adapting and learning are highlighted below:

From Training to Mentoring

The project initially implemented a dynamic approach to teacher training. The trainings were engaging and had the potential to provide results by providing participants with opportunities to develop teaching-learning skills. However, the project realized that training alone could not provide teachers the support they needed to increase literacy skills of their students. To address concerns raised by teachers and administrator, the project shifted their approach to building teacher capacity by implementing in depth mentoring and coaching. This allowed teachers to pursue their professional development in their schools, practice and demonstrate new techniques, and receive critical feedback from experts for improvement. They were able to do this in the real life setting of their classrooms, with their students.

Reading Camps and Struggling Learners

Reading camps were designed in partnership with communities, and intended to reinforce the development of fundamental reading skills outside of the traditional school classroom setting. A Randomized Control Trial in 2017 showed that community reading camps were not contributing significantly to support the struggling learners. Considering the findings, the READ team decided to

conduct a diagnostic assessment to identify non-reader students, and to customize reading camp session to ensure support for the non-readers. READ conducted diagnostic assessments of students and identified 53,110 non-reader students in grade II and III at the beginning of the 2018 school year. After 2.5 months of a customized reading camp, 35,579 (67%) non-reader students became readers. Parents, teachers and other community stakeholders were very impressed to see the results.

Journey with the Government

The reading camps demonstrated the honest, open and collaborative approach employed by the READ project with the government. It is important to recall that initially there was not a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government. This made start up and the first phase of the project difficult especially when shoring up government uptake and ownership. But, through ongoing communication and consultation with the government at all levels, READ built a positive relationship with key stakeholders.

Beneficiaries

Over the life of the project, READ met all of its targets. In addition to supporting over 1.3 million children, READ increased the capacity of targeted schools, teachers, administrators, communities and volunteers to operationalize effective strategies and boost functional resources. As a result of READ:

- Language teachers are now fully trained in reading instruction assessment, instructional adjustment tools, use of SRM and ICT in Education.
- Administrators' capacity for supporting reading has been strengthened, with a focus on the chain of academic supervision with coaching.
- Quality resources were developed and are accessible to teachers and students through digital pathways.
- SMC and community engagement was established for out of school Community Reading Camps and use of school fund to support this activity after the project ended

Figure 9. OVERVIEW OF BENEFICIARIES

Focus of the Year : Collaboration with GoB (DPE, NCTB, NAPE), Reading Instruction & Assessment (RIA), Leveling Supplementary Reading Materials, Develop Instructional Adjustment Tool (IAT),		
Year - I	<i>Number of Primary School received READ support: 660</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Number of total Children received support from READ intervention: 86,792</i> - <i>Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received support on READ Activities: 762</i> - <i>Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 1,312</i> - <i>Number of teaching and learning materials distributed: 0</i>

Focus of the Year : Strengthen Reading Instruction & Assessment, Effective use of Instructional Adjustment Tool, Academic Supervision, ICT in Education, Digital SRM

Year - 2	Number of Primary Schools received READ support: $(660+850+450) = 1960$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Children received support from READ intervention: 295,159 - Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received support on READ Activities: 967 - Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 2,037 - Number of teaching and learning materials distributed :137,566

Focus of the Year : Reading Instruction & Assessment, Coaching + Academic Supervision, Effective use of Instructional Adjustment Tool, Digital SRM, Print rich-material

Year - 3	Number of Primary School received READ support: $(660+850+743) = 2,253$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Children received support from READ intervention: 214,873 - Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received Training on READ Activities: 53 - Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 957 - Number of teaching and learning materials distributed: 20,717

Focus of the Year - Community Reading Camp, Effective use of Instructional Adjustment Tool, SMC and Parents engagement, Sustainability, Reading Instruction & Assessment integration into DPE's sub-cluster training

Year - 4	Number of Primary School received READ support: $(1,352+850+1,057) = 3,259$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Children received support from READ intervention: 367,445 - Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received support on READ Activities: 1,503 - Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 3,848 - Number of teaching and learning materials distributed: 886,156

Focus of the Year – Instructional Adjustment Tool, SMC, Parents & Community engagement, Sustainability,

Year - 5	Number of Primary School received READ support: $(1,352+850+471) = 2,673$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Children received support from READ intervention: 159,826 - Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received support on READ activities: 1,356 - Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 2,800 - Number of teaching and learning materials distributed: 117,600

READ Focused on Reading Instruction & Assessment, Print Rich Materials, Instructional Adjustment Tool, Supplementary Reading Materials, Community Reading Camps, ICT in Ed.

Project Lifetime	Number of Primary School received READ support: 5,583	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of total Children received support from READ intervention: 1,124,095 - Administrator (Head Teacher and GoB Officials) received training on READ Activities: 4,641 - Number of Asst. Teacher trained / received support on READ Activities: 10,954 - Number of teaching and learning materials distributed: 1,162,039

TOTAL REACH	
Number of Primary Schools that received READ Inputs and are providing better reading enhancement support to the early graders.	5,583
Number of Primary Schools that developed the capacity to offer learner appropriate digital material under ICT in Education	2,721
Number of Early Grade students supported by Reading Enhancement Interventions	1,124,095
Number of Teachers trained	10,954
Number of Administrators who developed capacity for better academic supervision & coaching	4,641
Number of Story Books and teaching learning materials (TLM) distributed	1,162,039
Number of Community Reading Camps established	1,500
Number of Children participating in Community Reading Camps	218,770

DIVISIONS	DISTRICTS	UPAZILAS	UNIONS	SCHOOLS
7	19	51	407	5,112

Table 4. READ Achievement vs. Target against Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Base line	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year-5		Cumulative Achievement
		Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement	Annual Target	Achievement	
<i>PROJECT OBJECTIVE: IMPROVED READING COMPETENCE AMONG EARLY GRADE STUDENTS IN READ SUPPORTED SCHOOLS IN THE SELECTED DISTRICTS</i>												
Proportion of students who, by end of grades 1-3 of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of Bangla grade level text (comprehension)	24%	40%	NA	45%	NA	45%	36% (G-II)	60%	69%	60%	69%	115%
Average number of Words read Per Minutes Correctly (WPMC) in a narrative passage (oral reading fluency) by the grade 1-3 children	22	35	NA	40	NA	40	38 (G-III)	50	61	50	49	98%
Percent of grade-3 children scoring 60% and above in Bangla in final exam	25%	35%	NA	40%	NA	40%	14.8	55%	50.40%	55%	49%	89%
<i>INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1: IMPROVED PROVISION OF EVIDENCE-BASED, INTERACTIVE EARLY GRADES READING INSTRUCTION</i>												
Percent of school using strategies to foster comprehension in the grade 1-3 classroom	0	70%	0%	75%	72%	75%	72%	80%	86%	80%	95%	105%
Number of learners enrolled in primary schools and /or equivalent non-school based settings with USG support	-	85,140	86,792	259,006	295,159		214,873	471,615	367,445	193,810	159,826	1,124,095
# of learners enrolled in primary schools and or/ equivalent non-school based settings with USG support (total number of pupils, new entrants plus existing students)			86,792	315,765	347,664		340,125	521,715	440,754	419,610	328,279	1,543,614
Number of school administrators successfully trained with USG support	-	954	817	933	967	176	53	1,541	1,503	1,351	1,356	4,696

Percent of trained administrators participating early grade reading supervision	0	80%	0%	85%	72%	85%	74%	90%	94%	90%	99%	97%
Number of teachers/ educators who successfully completed in-service training with USG support	-	1,320	1,312	1,745	2,037	685	957	3,912	3,848	2,702	2,800	10,954
# of module for reading instruction incorporating formative assessment, applicable for pre-service and in-service teachers training	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	-	-	-
<i>INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2: INCREASED USE OF EARLY GRADE READING ASSESSMENT</i>												
Percent of targeted schools using Instructional Adjustment Tools for classroom reading assessment	0	70%	0%	80%	100%	80%	100%	85%	99%	85%	100%	121%
Percent of targeted teacher changing instruction in the class room based on Instructional Adjustment Assessment result	0	70%	0%	75%	89%	75%	77%	80%	97%	80%	100%	117%
# of fluency benchmarks developed for early primary grades 1-3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	-	-	1	-	2
<i>INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3: EXPANDED PROVISION AND USE OF RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE SUPPLEMENTARY READING MATERIALS</i>												
Number teaching and learning materials (TLM) provided to target school and com. with USG assistance	-	58,080	-	144,080	137,566	14,408	20,717	859,700	886,156	50,127	117,600	1,162,039
Number of materials classified according to stages of reading competence	0	150	0	70	70	0	0	-	-	-	-	290

Percent targeted schools using supplementary early-grade reading materials	0	0%	0%	80%	66%	85%	68%	90%	94%	90%	95%	94%
Number of teachers received training on use of ICT in classroom	-	-	-	450	447	450	731	1,057	1,057	450	491	2,235
Number of supplementary early grade print materials transformed into digital formats for multimedia projection or web usage	-	2	-	70	69	50	50	50	119	-		238
<i>INTERMEDIATE RESULT 4: STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR EARLY GRADE LITERACY</i>												
Number of School Management Committee (SMC) supported by READ	-	660	-	850	1,510	1,510	1,510	2,190	2,133	1,351	1,406	5,153
Percent of Upazilas holding Reading festival	0	80%	0%	85%	63%	90%	99%	95%	100%	-		97%
Number of children having access to reading opportunities through community reading camps	-	-	-	28,800	6,558	9,600	7,847	101,400	105,740	101,400	98,625	218,770
Number of early grade parents attending in parenting meeting (mothers gathering) in the school	-	85,140	-	259,005	96,591	79,575	70,016	650,767	556,325	169,215	398,975	1,121,907

BEST PRACTICES, LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the key accomplishments, a series of best practices as well as lessons learned emerged; these double as actionable recommendations for future programming in the context of Bangladesh, the region, and perhaps beyond.

1. **Be flexible and willing to adapt.** The agreement allowed SCI and READ to implement changes in the activities which ultimately lead to more effective implementation and successful results.
2. **Continuously monitor for program improvement.** Monitoring is an integral part of implementation and linked to the intermediate results. While impact evaluations are helpful to understand program success, steady project monitoring is also essential for learning and course correction.
3. **Be honest and open with findings within your project and with others (IPs, donor, government) when things are not working.** This was seen with the teachers' training and the reading camps examples.
4. **Use research, and tailor approaches based on research to those who need it most.** In the case of the reading camps, the impact evaluation showed there was no effect on performance, therefore the camps' approach was modified and tailored to those who need it.
5. **Share findings with the government and other stakeholders in a way that is easily digestible.** The READ project presented research findings to the government and other stakeholders. Results presented in a user friendly way allowed them to be interpreted and understood for use. Presentation and communications matter.
6. **Work with the government requires continuous communication.** Initially it was difficult for READ, especially without an MoU, but overtime the team was able to build trust and ownership of the process and of tools and materials.
7. **Bring the government to schools and the field so they can see first-hand impact.** Hearing and seeing the voices of beneficiaries has a powerful impact on all, including government officials.

ANNEX: SELECT SUCCESS STORIES

STORY I

July 30, 2018

SIDDIKUR RAHAMAN, UPAZILA OFFICER: PROMOTING A CULTURE OF READING TODAY AND INTO THE FUTURE

One upazila officer joined READ to strengthen the culture of reading. The Government of Bangladesh makes every effort to provide all primary schools with supplementary reading materials, like storybooks, in order to support students' reading practices and abilities. However, in many schools, students do not have access to these materials. In many schools, books have been found untouched, long after delivery. Sometimes, students are not allowed to take the books to their homes.

Raninagar upazila education officer (Acting) Siddikur Rahaman decided to support a system to change this. In December 2016, USAID's READ Activity started operating in 662 schools in six upazilas of Naogaon district. READ provided supplementary reading materials like storybooks, at varying reading levels, from simple to complex. Mr. Rahaman and READ not only delivered the books, but also developed a book borrowing system in government primary schools. Now, 100% of children have access to reading materials. Book borrowing systems are fully functional. Teachers follow a regular distribution of book lending where students can borrow and read books at home. During the school day, a classroom assistant, hired by the READ Project helps teachers and students with reading stories in the classroom. A Book Captain is also selected among the students. He or she plays the role of distributing and collecting storybooks along with maintaining a book register, which keeps tracking the book distribution.

Mr. Rahaman explained that with READ, *“the books are helping students to grow their reading interest and play a vital role to create good reading habits and improved skills. The more they read, the more their school performance will be good.”* He also added, *“the storybook distribution practice READ started also encouraged us to make government's system functional. All the schools in our district got a momentum of distributing storybooks among the students.”*

A head teacher at Mokhorpur Government Primary School of Naogaon Sadar supported by sharing, *“The systematic way of supplying supplementary reading materials inspired us to distribute government provided storybooks effectively. We are now making the best use of the supplementary materials. Students' interest in reading is growing.”* As a result, the project has observed a significant improvement in teachers' distribution and use of the government-provided books, thanks to READ's systems and teacher and student enthusiasm. This book borrowing system is an important step in creating a culture of reading at school, in communities and at home.

STORY 2

February 6, 2018

LOCAL COMMUNITY READING CAMPS

In 2015, READ first introduced Community Reading Camps, which provided unique community-based learning environments for students in grades 1-3 to do fun activities to improve their Bangla reading skills. There are now 1,362 Community Reading Camps, including the Durgapur Reading Camp in Kaliganj Upazila, Jhenaidah District.

Ms. Parvin, Head Teacher of Durgapur Government Primary School, learned about the reading camp through the School Management Committee (SMC) and parent awareness sessions. She was amazed at how effective the camp was in helping children learn letters, words, sentences, and conjunct letters. Community Literacy Volunteers read stories to students from the camp's storybook collection. Students can borrow books, draw pictures, play with alphabet cards, and color in the camp.

Durgapur teachers recognized the camp's role in improving student literacy, attendance, and enthusiasm to learn. "The camp is a place where children's creativity is nurtured. In rural areas, like ours, we have limited out-of-school learning opportunities."

Parents saw the camp's value, too. "If you see the colorful posters, festoons, print-rich materials, and other reading materials around the camp, you will think that a festival is going on here. My daughter tells me many stories she heard from Community Literacy Volunteers."

Since READ interventions ended in late 2016, the Durgapur community has continued financially supporting the reading camp.

There are now 77 other community-led reading camps that support Community Literacy Volunteers honoraria, learning materials, and regular monitoring.

STORY 3

April 23, 2017

COMMUNITY ADOPTION OF READ'S COMMUNITY READING CAMP

One day, while having a meeting with School Management Committee (SMC), Ms. Parvin Sultana, Head Teacher of Durgapur Government Primary School, in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenaidah district, came to know about Community Reading Camps (CRC). She was amazed to hear how early grade students' reading skills were improving through this intervention.

Now Ms. Sultana has a CRC in her school, which proved to be a playful learning space.



Photo: Durgapur CRC students enjoying their learning

Realizing the benefits of CRC, the community of Durgapur area has decided to run the CRC on their own, instead of relying on the local NGO. “We formed 5-member committee that consists of teachers and parents. We are collecting a little amount from the community to support the Community Literacy Volunteers who are teaching our children with dedication” a teacher named Nahid Sultana said. Like Durgapur CRC, 77 CRCs across the country have already been adopted by their respective communities.