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Government of Nepal
Ministry of Education

FACT SHEET

Health and Education Office

USAID'S EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM (EGRP) IN NEPAL

BACKGROUND

Nepal has made remarkable progress in the education sector and expanded learning opportunities for children and adults since 1990. Net primary enrollment rates have increased from 64 to nearly 95 percent, with similar enrollment rates for girls and boys. These improvements have put Nepal on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal 2: Universal Primary Education. Despite this progress, there are concerns about the quality of education and low school completion rates. Nepal's linguistic, geographical, and socio-economic diversity also affect schools' ability to provide quality education services for all students.

An Early Grade Reading Assessment was conducted in March 2014, with USAID funding, to provide baseline data on the foundational reading skills of Nepali children. The assessment found that 34 percent of second graders and 19 percent of third graders could not read a single word of Nepali. Nepali students only display emergent reading skills by grade three, which would be expected by the end of grade one or beginning of grade two. Students in the Terai had both the lowest mean score and the highest zero scores compared to other regions of Nepal and were, on average, reading 12 correct words per minute fewer than students in the Kathmandu Valley. Moreover, students who reported speaking Nepali at home performed better than students speaking another first language.

This assessment demonstrated the need for a nationwide Early Grade Reading Program to improve the reading skills of Nepali students.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) is a five-year, \$53.8 million project to support the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve the foundational reading skills of Nepali primary school students in grades one through three. EGRP will directly support the National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) 2014-2019, which aims for children to read with fluency and comprehension by grade three. NEGRP is led by the Ministry of Education (MOE) with support from USAID and other donors under the MOE's School Sector Reform Plan.



EGRP will improve the foundational reading skills of one million Nepali primary school students in grades 1-3.

SNAPSHOT

Life of Project: 2015-2020

Goal: Improve the foundational reading skills of one million Nepali primary school students in grades 1-3

Implementing Partners: RTI International (prime contractor) & the Government of Nepal's (GON's) Ministry of Education

Geographic Focus: 16 target districts (Banke, Bardiya, Bhaktapur, Dang, Dadeldhura, Dhankuta, Dolpa, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Kaski, Manang, Mustang, Parsa, Rupandehi, Saptari, Surkhet)

Total Project Amount: \$53.8 million

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

1: Improved Early Grade Reading (EGR) Instruction

- Design, produce, and distribute evidence-based EGR instructional materials used by teachers.
- Train in-service public school teachers on the use of the provided materials.
- Provide monitoring and coaching in EGR for teachers in target districts.
- Improve classroom-based and district-based EGR assessment processes in target districts.

2: Improved National and District EGR Service Delivery

- Improve MOE's capacity for EGR data collection and analytical systems (for the NEGRP).
- Institutionalize policies, standards, and benchmarks that support improved EGR instruction (for the NEGRP)
- Improve the planning and management of financial, material, and human resources devoted to EGR.
- Adopt national standards for early grade reading improvement and expand those standards geographically.



EGRP will design, produce, and distribute instructional materials used by teachers to help improve reading skills in grades 1-3.

3: Increased Family and Community Support for EGR

- In target districts, raise community awareness of the importance of teaching children to read in a language they speak fluently.¹
- Engage parents and families to support reading in target districts.
- Strengthen capability of PTAs and school management committees to contribute to quality of reading instruction in target districts.
- Strengthen capacity of parents and communities to monitor reading progress in target districts.

PLANNED RESULTS

The Early Grade Reading Program aims to:

- Improve early grade reading skills of students: increase the proportion of grade 1–3 public primary students who can read and understand grade-level text.
- Improve national and district early grade service delivery by supporting Phase I of the NEGRP and complete the design and demonstration of a successful national model that standardizes EGR delivery, which the MOE can feasibly replicate and scale to national implementation.
- Increase family and community support for early grade reading.
- Distribute emergency teaching and learning materials to 14 earthquake-affected districts.

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¹ Research overwhelmingly shows that children who learn to read in a language they speak well develop stronger reading skills - in both that language and in additional languages - than children who learn to read in a language they do not speak well (http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacq946.pdf).