



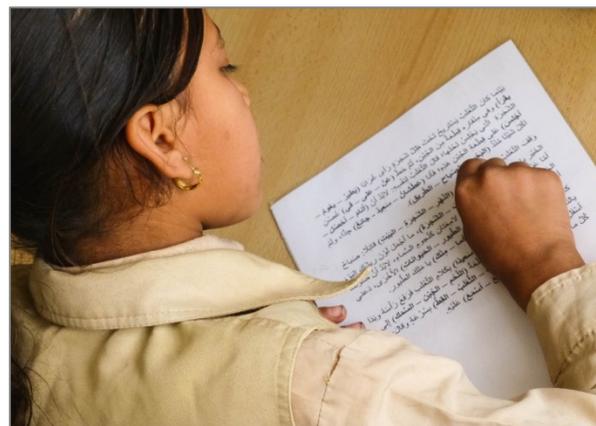
FACT SHEET

Benchmarks for Early Grade Reading Skills in Egypt

BACKGROUND

From 2008, beginning with the Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) project, USAID has supported teacher training and learning resources for improved early grade reading in Egypt. In 2011, the Ministry of Education (MOE) adopted the GILO Early Grade Reading Program as a national project for implementation in Grades 1 and 2 of all 16,000+ MOE primary schools. GILO and USAID have continued support to MOE in training trainers, providing teacher resources for all primary schools, and promoting enhanced supervision of early grade teachers in Arabic reading instruction.

In spring 2013, USAID supported the MOE to conduct the first national baseline assessment of early grade reading skills. Findings of this national Grade 3 EGRA were presented to the MOE in June 2013 in a policy workshop. The workshop initiated USAID support to establish target benchmarks for improved reading skills in Grade 3 of MOE schools.



EGYPT JOINS MEXICO AT THE FOREFRONT OF READING BENCHMARKS

It is nearly a decade since Mexico became the first – to our knowledge – middle-income country to establish specific benchmarks for reading skills in the early grades. Egypt is now the second middle-income state – and the first Arabic-language population – to consider setting benchmarks for reading proficiency in specific grades. Benchmarking early grade reading proficiency is also underway in Uganda and Liberia.

Purposes of the National EGRA Baseline for Egypt Grade 3

- Inform policy decision and planning by the Government of Egypt for improved reading instruction and student learning outcomes,
- Infuse EGRA findings into the development of MOE curricula and teaching resources for enhanced reading instruction in Grade 3,
- Establish a national baseline of Grade 3 reading skills to measure future progress in enhanced reading performance in MOE schools, and
- Strengthen the MOE capacities to implement EGRAs.

THE PROCESS OF SETTING BENCHMARKS

A semi-annual meeting of MOE Early Grade Reading Units from all muderiyas in June 2013 was the opportunity for a policy workshop on reading benchmarks. The 1.5-day workshop immediately preceded the planning meeting for MOE's Early Grade Reading Program and included all meeting participants. The workshop objectives were:

- Present MOE reading program leaders with key findings of the national EGRA 2013 baseline on the current reading proficiency of Grade 3 students, and
- Orient and engage participants in a participatory process of setting Grade 3 reading benchmarks.

Nearly 100 central ministry and muderiya staff and leaders of the Professional Academy of Teachers committed to the MOE Early Grade Reading Program attended the workshop. The workshop agenda comprised:

- A presentation on the results of the national EGRA baseline for Grade 3.
- A morning presentation on benchmarking and key EGRA data and analyses that inform benchmarks for specific reading skills.
- Small group reflection on the EGRA data and group recommendations for select benchmarks.
- The presentation of group recommendations for Grade 3 benchmarks in plenary session and identifying consensus benchmarks across groups.

THE SUBTASKS AND EMPIRICAL DATA FOR EGYPT BENCHMARKS

The policy workshop proposed that the MOE set Grade 3 benchmarks for 4 reading subtasks: letter sound knowledge, nonword reading, oral reading fluency (passage reading), and reading comprehension. Benchmarks include shares of students with zero scores in each subtask. All benchmarks were proposed for achievement within five years, i.e. by 2018.

The findings of three Early Grade Reading Assessments in Egypt chiefly informed these benchmarks:

- The 2009 regional EGRA baseline of Grade 2 reading skills conducted by GILO.
- The 2011 regional EGRA of improved Grade 2 reading outcomes in GILO-supported schools.
- The 2013 national EGRA baseline of Grade 3 reading skills in MOE schools.

Comparative statistics from industrial countries on average reading proficiency for specific reading skills completed the empirical data considered by workshop participants. Participants were also exposed to neuroscience understandings on the importance of reading *speed* for comprehension.

The **table** below presents the specific Egyptian data on reading skills proficiency applied to MOE benchmarking for Grade 3.

NEXT STEPS IN SETTING BENCHMARKS

The consensus benchmarks recommended by workshop participants will be reviewed by reading experts for grade appropriateness. Benchmark recommendations for Grade 3 reading skills will be presented for MOE consideration.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information on the progress of Egypt benchmarks for early grade reading:

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Metric	Letter Sounds	Nonword Reading	Oral Reading Fluency	Reading Comprehension
Grade 3 reading benchmarks proposed by MOE participants in June 2013 policy workshop.	50 clspm	25 cnonwpm	60 cwpm	80% [1]
Average Grade 3 baseline scores (EGRA 2013).	19 clspm	6 cnonwpm	22 cwpm	33% [1]
Share of Grade 3 students reading <u>at or above proposed benchmark level</u> in EGRA 2013 baseline.	5%	1%	0%	9%
Share of <i>Grade 2</i> students reading <u>at or above the proposed Grade 3 benchmark</u> <i>after 6 months</i> of GILO EGRP	19%	12%	13%	NA
Share of Grade 3 students with zero scores in EGRA 2013 baseline.	18%	27%	22%	35%
Share of <i>Grade 2</i> students with zero scores <i>after 6 months</i> of GILO EGRP.	11%	33%	21%	NA

Notes:

[1] Percentage of questions answered correctly.
clspm = correct letter sounds read per minute.

cnonwpm - correct nonwords read per minute.
cwpm = correct words per minute.