ANNUAL REPORT FROM
SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL

RESEARCH • PRACTICE • PARTNERSHIP

2019
School-to-School International (STS) is committed to improving the lives and learning of girls and boys worldwide through thoughtful research, practice, and partnership.
Dear STS Supporters,

STS’s mission statement promises that our work is grounded in three thoughtful areas—research, practice, and partnership. In 2019, we continued that commitment while leading numerous assessments and expanding the types of services we provide. Here are a few highlights of what the past year brought for our team.

Mixed-methods research: To help our partners go beyond questions of what children are learning to understand why some children are learning more than others, we introduced a mixed-methods approach to research projects in Mali, Sierra Leone, and the Philippines. Combining quantitative data with qualitative data, we provided numeric results alongside contextual information that may explain improved outcomes.

Performance evaluations: In addition to assessing student learning, we evaluated the performance of educational programs in Morocco, Mali, and Niger. These helped partners develop theories of change to test their assumptions about project design—and it helped funders determine if program objectives had been met.

Benchmarking: In 2019, we worked with our partners to solve one of the problems of decontextualized assessment results. With our help in establishing benchmarks and intermediate targets, partners and governments in Djibouti and Malawi can better gauge student performance.

Collaborative support to schools: Building on lessons learned from 15 years in Guinea, we met with teachers, principals, parents, and officials in Tanzania, asking them to identify strengths and challenges in Arusha’s education systems. Together the group brainstormed locally sustainable strategies for improving education, health, and engagement (the Whole Child Model). As a result of these conversations, STS worked with local partners to train teachers on effective methods for teaching reading and mathematics in the early grades.

In all these efforts, STS continues to learn how to help children succeed in school. Our partners tell us they are now more able to understand assessment results, make informed decisions, and teach in better ways. We hope that as a result of these efforts, more children will succeed in school and build a better world for themselves and their communities.

All our best,
Mark Lynd
President & Co-founder

Candace Debnam
Executive Director

Our Guiding Trio
Research, Practice, Partnership

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STS Annual Report 2019

Mixed-Methods Research & Evaluations

STS remains one of USAID’s largest providers of EGRAs and EGMA. At the same time, our work in 2019 allowed us to couple our student assessments with qualitative research services to understand the “whys” and “hows” of trends in education.

Qualitative Research, Inclusive Evaluations, and Alternative Measures

In 2019, STS conducted mixed-methods evaluations and learning assessments across sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

In Mali and Niger, we conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions as part of a midterm review of the NORAD-funded SEAQE Sahel program. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, we partnered with Catholic Relief Services and the United States Department of Agriculture on a mixed-methods evaluation that included literacy assessments, school and classroom observations, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Continuing our partnership with EdIntersect and Winrock in Mali, STS used a variety of information to understand communities’ knowledge, attitudes, and practice regarding girls’ schooling.

In the Philippines, STS leads the design, administration, and analysis of reading assessments— including an Early Grade Reading and Sign Language Assessment—for children who are deaf or hearing impaired. Working with the International Baccalaureate Organization, we launched a multi-county, fully digital study of students’ global mindedness.

Assessing USAID/Morocco’s Reading for Success

In 2019, STS managed the external evaluation for USAID’s Reading for Success project.

By combining a desk review with findings from school visits and five newly developed qualitative instruments, we constructed a study design that ensured evaluators and stakeholders had a shared understanding of the evaluation’s purpose, methods, and analysis.

STS validated results through both an in-person workshop in Morocco and a remote meeting with USAID and Ministry of Education stakeholders prior to leading broader dissemination in a remote webinar. The evaluation results assessed the extent to which project activities contribute to USAID’s Education Development Objective for Morocco. They advised the mission’s implementation of ongoing and upcoming activities—including Reading for Success— and informed the design of USAID/Morocco’s new Country Development Cooperation Strategy.

The project marks a growing number of external performance evaluations STS has conducted.

Spotlight on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

STS led the development of diagnostic and assessment tools for ACCELERE!, a five-year project that aims to improve educational outcomes for girls and boys in the DRC.

This work included the conceptualizing learning assessment tools; developing guides for the tools; training staff and data collectors accordingly; overseeing the assessments’ implementation; and leading data analysis. STS also coordinated the project’s operations research agenda.

Through our work with ACCELERE! in the DRC, we have contributed data and analytic thought leadership to seven initiatives:

1. Operations Research, including a teacher motivation and incentives study and a community-education finance study
2. Early Grade Reading Assessments
3. Quarterly Assessments
4. Rapid Needs Assessments
5. Reading Benchmarking and Target Setting
6. Theory of Change and Fidelity of Implementation Monitoring
7. Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Activities

Improving reading, equity, and access in the DRC through cohesive research and analysis
For 16 years, STS has been developing the Whole Child Model, a holistic approach to education based on the understanding that for students to thrive, their basic needs must be fulfilled.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE WHOLE CHILD MODEL

Over the summer, STS’s president & co-founder Mark Lynd traveled to Tanzania to explore first-hand how the Whole Child Model would work in Arusha. Working with local partners, he visited schools, observed classrooms, spoke with teachers, and interviewed principals, PTA chairs, and local officials.

In contrast to a “direct service” implementation model used in Guinea for 15 years, STS has embraced a collaborative approach in Tanzania. Local actors were asked to identify strengths and challenges in schools and the education system and then to propose strategies for improving education, health, and engagement. Following these consultations, STS worked with a local foundation to provide training to teachers in the use of effective methods for teaching reading and mathematics in the early grades.

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NEW PARTNERSHIPS IN 2019

School-to-School International is pleased to have partnered with the following organizations for the first time in 2019.

- ADRA Norway
- Catholic Relief Services
- Florida State University
- International Baccalaureate Organization
- Joshua Foundation
- Nascent Solutions
- Oikos East Africa
- Plan International - United Kingdom
- Select Research
- World Learning

EMPOWERING PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships with government agencies, industry peers, and local education authorities allow STS to create lasting change for students, teachers, and their communities.

In 2019, we continued our partnerships with the Education Development Center and Mali’s Ministry of Education to train regional and district level officials in implementing EGRAs for management and decision-making purposes.

We expanded our work through DFID’s Girls’ Education Challenge—now supporting projects in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe—to help families, communities, schools, and local governments understand current attitudes surrounding girls’ education as well as their impact on learning outcomes.

Additionally, we leveraged our multi-year engagement with Chemonics and USAID to develop a theory of change for the ACCELERE! project at large and facilitate a collaboration, learning, and adaptation (CLA) approach to results sharing in the DRC.

SPOTLIGHT ON SIERRA LEONE

Working with Catholic Relief Services, STS led the baseline evaluation of the USDA’s McGovern-Dole Food for Education program.

STS’s work included leading the technical design and implementation of the mixed-method evaluation. Baseline data were collected at 70 schools in 15 chiefdoms using a reading assessment tool modified by STS. In addition, 12 focus group discussions collected the critical perspectives of community members, leaders, and parents. STS used findings within the multiple intervention streams of the project—including improving pupils’ literacy levels and health and dietary practices—to make clear recommendations to give the project the best chance at success from its outset.

SPOTLIGHT ON MALAWI

STS is the external evaluator for DFID’s project for the Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalized Girls.

STS is conducting a mixed-method, gender-sensitive, and inclusive evaluation of the TEAM Girl Malawi project over the project’s five-year duration, from baseline to endline. As part of this work, STS was contracted to finalize the monitoring, evaluation, and learning design for the Girls’ Education Challenge-Leave No Girl Behind project. In this role, STS collaborated with partners to complete the project’s log frame, conduct a gender and social inclusion analysis, and develop a measurement, evaluation, and learning framework.
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Senior Director of Literacy and Learning

Hetal Thukral
Senior Director of Evaluation and Research

Beth Odenwald
Director of Programs

In 2019, STS experts published and presented on a range of topics within our industry, including:

• Assessing Mathematics Proficiency of Multilingual Students: The Case for Translanguaging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
• Public Witness Hearing on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
• The Role of Gender in Math Acquisition
• Effective Interventions for Children with Disabilities
• The Importance of Sampling Weights and Practical Considerations for Research
• Addressing Marginalization in Ethiopian Education
• Scaling EdTech for Literacy: Perspectives from Researchers, Funders, and Implementers
• Data Use for Improved Programming and Sustainability: Case Studies in Applying CLA Approach
• Adapting Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to Include Sign Language
• Using Actionable Data to Strengthen Inclusive Education Programming

In all our efforts, we continue to learn from our colleagues as much as we give—and we believe our work together will help us all find new and better ways.

- Mark Lynd
DEDICATED TO FISCAL INTEGRITY

We are grateful to all of our partners—both public and private—including individual supporters. Your generosity facilitates our work so that, together, we can transform lives.

Individual Donors

Barbara A. Fincham
Candace Debnam
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Thomas Bell
and the Shawn Mindus and Alice Engelmore Charitable Foundation

STS is a non-profit 501(c)3) organization that values accountability and financial transparency.
For more information on our finances, please review the available 990 forms on the “About STS” page of our website, STS-International.org.

Statement of Activities

Support & Revenue

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Expenses

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Net Assets

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<td>December 2019</td>
<td>$326,185</td>
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