SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL
INTERNATIONAL

DJIBOUTI EARLY GRADE READING ACTIVITY

SCHOOL-TO-SCHOOL INTERNATIONAL FINAL REPORT

AUGUST 2022

Contents

BACKGROUND

The MENFOP seeks to improve early grade reading in Djibouti at the school, community, and policy level. The Djibouti Early Grade Reading Activity (the Activity) supports MENFOP to achieve this goal by improving classroom materials and teacher training; building Civil Society Organization (CSO), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), School Management Committee (SMC), and family capacity to support reading; and strengthening the policy environment for reading instruction.

Policy work under the Activity will include supporting MENFOP to monitor and evaluate early grade reading performance, and make data-informed decisions based on information that is valid, reliable, and up-to-date. To achieve this, the Activity will develop and implement large-scale literacy assessments, build MENFOP capacity to carry out these assessments, and support MENFOP to set literacy benchmarks and standards. STS has supported this work through remote support and in-country travel as needed and as defined in our scope of work. This report summarizes the accomplishments of STS's subcontract, the methods used, and the products developed, including a discussion of findings and lessons learned. STS's subcontract was implemented from February 2019 to August 2022 and focused on three main technical activities: EGRA, capacity building of the Service Evaluation, and policy linking.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

EGRA Technical Support

Throughout STS's subcontract, STS led the study design, tool development, enumerator training and data collection oversight, data analysis, and reporting for the Grade 2 and Grade 5 baselines. Key accomplishments included:

Study Design

- STS drafted the EGRA Methodology Planning Document. This included a detailed summary of the plans related to the design and sample of the EGRA study, the instruments, the pilot, the enumerator training, the data collection and analysis.

2019 EGRA Adaptation and Piloting

- STS traveled to Djibouti to facilitate the EGRA adaptation workshop in Arta, Djibouti from October 6-10, 2019.
    - Workshop participants included representatives from Centre de Formation des Enseignants de l'Enseignement Fondamental (CFEEF), Service Evaluation, Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'Education Nationale (CRIPEN), teachers, and other education resource persons. The workshop began

by familiarizing participants with the theoretical background of EGRA and how EGRAs have been used worldwide. Then participants reviewed draft content that had been created by the STS and FHI 360 teams prior to the start of the workshop. Under the guidance of STS workshop facilitators with expertise in EGRA adaptation, the participants revised and finalized the content for all assessment subtasks. The new content was developed to be at the appropriate reading level for students at the end of Grade 2. Similarly, the draft student survey was reviewed and revised to include items that were of interest to the participants and were adapted to the Djiboutian context. During the adaptation workshop, the EGRA and student survey was pre-tested at a nearby primary school. The tools were then reviewed in light of the pre-testing experience and final edits were made to create pilot-ready tools.

- STS led the EGRA pilot enumerator training in Djibouti City from October 14-16, 2019.
  - A small team of Pedagogical Counselors or *Conseillers Pedagogiques* (CPs) was trained on pilot testing procedures from October 14, 2019 to October 16, 2019.
- STS completed data cleaning and analysis of the Grade 2 and Grade 5 pilot EGRAs. STS used the results of the analysis, along with the feedback received from enumerators, to make decisions around how to finalize the baseline tools and also provided recommendations to FHI for developing the internal monitoring EGRA.
  - Pilot data were collected from a total of sixteen schools and 185 students in Grade 3 and 185 students in Grade 6. Following pilot testing, a single passage for listening comprehension and a single passage for oral reading fluency (ORF) were selected for each grade's EGRA, and the tools were finalized. Analyses included reviewing p-values, mean scores, and Cronbach alpha results across the tasks that were tested.
- One Grade 2 and one Grade 5 operational EGRA tools were finalized for use during the project's evaluation.

November 2020 Data Collection – Grade 2 Baseline[1]

- STS facilitated a remote Training of Trainers (ToT) from November 10-12, 2020 for ten *conseillers pédagogiques* (CPs) and members of the S*ervice Evaluation* who had participated in the pilot study in October 2019. They were selected as trainers because of their familiarity with EGRA content and their ability to lead training sessions.
  - The ToT focused on the enumerator training content and preparation for the CPs to serve as trainers. Prior to the ToT, STS prepared a suite of training materials for use during both the ToT and the full enumerator training. The materials included a detailed trainers' guide for the ToT, a detailed facilitator's guide for the enumerator training, pre-recorded training videos for each EGRA subtask and other key topics, PowerPoint presentations, and handouts. During the ToT, CPs reviewed all training materials and practiced facilitating sessions. STS

---

[1] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, travel to Djibouti was not possible at the time of the planned baseline in April-May 2020. The baseline was thus postponed until November 2020.

facilitated sessions remotely during the morning, and the FHI 360 field team facilitated sessions in the afternoon. Mornings were devoted to practice presentations where STS provided feedback to trainers on their use of training materials and facilitator's guides. STS also facilitated sessions on how to conduct Assessor Accuracy Measures (AAM), how to share AAM results, roles and responsibilities during data collection, and organizing enumerator practice. Each afternoon, the trainers worked in small groups to review the content of the facilitator's guide and to practice using the tablets.

- STS facilitated remote daily debriefs with the trainers throughout the enumerator training of 57 CPs which took place between November 16-19, 2020.
    - During these debriefings, the trainers communicated questions asked during the day by enumerators about EGRA rules, sampling, and subtask instructions and challenges were discussed. The daily debriefs enabled STS to provide advice and support to the trainers throughout enumerator training.
- STS remotely monitored data collection which took place between November 23-29, 2020.
    - Data were collected by teams of two CPs each from the circonscription being visited, and the FHI 360 team oversaw the work of the CPs in the field with STS conducting remote quality assurance checks daily and communicating with the FHI 360 field team. Each team visited one or two schools per day depending on the time taken at each school and the distance between schools. At each school, enumerators aimed to administer the EGRA and survey to a random sample of eight Grade 2 and eight Grade 3 students. In total, data were collected from 83 schools.
- STS cleaned all data and applied disposition codes in preparation for analysis.
    - Disposition codes were applied to the dataset to categorize the various issues or problems that emerged during the data collection process. These codes were used in determining cleaning rules that were incorporated into the database using syntax to clean the data accordingly. These coding and flagging procedures helped to ensure the various and nuanced contexts of data collection at the school level were sufficiently cataloged and considered during the data cleaning, analysis, and reporting process.
- STS analyzed all Grade 2 and Grade 3 data.
    - STS applied weighting functions, and generated mean score, zero score, and statistics on students who scored at or above the mean for data for each of the disaggregated groups of interest. Differences between categories were analyzed using t-statistics. STS also explored whether contextual factors serve as predictors of student reading performance as measured by letter sound identification, ORF, and reading comprehension.
- STS facilitated a remote results presentation for key MENFOP stakeholders in March 2021.
- STS drafted the November 2020 baseline technical report in collaboration with FHI 360. The report was submitted to USAID in June 2021 and summarized the processes of tool

development, enumerator training, data collection, as well as the results of all analyses and key findings.

April 2021 Data Collection – Internal Grade 2 EGRA[2]

- STS revised the Grade 2 EGRA based on feedback from MENFOP, including drafting revised instructions for some subtasks; running item-level analysis, reordering, and rerandomizing grid-based items; and editing response options.
- STS created a Training of Trainers agenda and all relevant training materials, including PPTs, videos, and handouts.
- STS co-facilitated part of the Training of Trainers (TOT) remotely the evening of April 18, 2021.
- STS revised all Grade 2 enumerator training materials for use during the April 2021 enumerator training and shared with trainers. STS also provided guidance as needed to the trainers throughout the enumerator training April 20-22, 2021.
- STS conducted scoring and analysis of Assessor Accuracy Measures during both the TOT and enumerator trainings.
- STS conducted remote data quality assurance monitoring throughout the Grade 2 data collection (originally scheduled for April 25-27, 2021 but included some late data collected through May 2).
- STS finalized data quality assurance monitoring and disposition codes for the April Grade 2 EGRA data collection.
- STS cleaned the data sets and applied all disposition codes. STS submitted the cleaned datasets to FHI 360 to conduct the analysis.
- STS led the writing of the April 2021 EGRA results report, in close collaboration with FHI 360 who provided the data analysis findings.

October 2021 Data Collection – Grade 5 Final Pilot[3]

- STS drafted an enumerator training agenda for the Grade 5 EGRA pilot enumerator training and updated all Grade 5 EGRA training materials to reflect the content of the new test and shared with FHI, including facilitator's guides, handouts, and PowerPoints.
- STS remotely monitored the Grade 5 pilot data collection from October 10-12, 2021, including daily quality assurance checks, liaising with the field, and finalizing disposition codes.

---

[2] Following baseline data collection in November 2020, the EGRA tool was reviewed again by MENFOP leadership, and revisions were made to the tool for April 2021 to improve the appropriateness of the assessment for students in Djibouti. Modifications were made to the administration protocols, and minor adjustments were also made to the content of the tool.

[3] Following the publication of new minimum proficiency standards in 2021, the DEGRA team decided to revise the Grade 5 EGRA to match the comprehension standards for the grade level more closely. As such, a second Grade 5 pilot was conducted in October 2021 with 284 students.

- STS completed data analysis, including all data cleaning, of the Grade 5 pilot data and drafted a memo summarizing results and recommendations.

April 2022 Data Collection – Grade 5 Baseline

- STS prepared a training agenda and collaborated with the Service Evaluation and FHI 360 to finalize enumerator training materials.
- STS conducted data monitoring in collaboration with the Service Evaluation for the Grade 2 and Grade 5 data collection between April 24 to 27, 2022.
- STS completed data cleaning of the Grade 2 and Grade 5 EGRA datasets from the April 2022 data collection. STS submitted the cleaned datasets to FHI 360 to conduct the analysis.
- STS drafted the April 2022 EGRA results report including front matter, methodology, and findings for Grade 2 and Grade 5, and summary conclusions, as well as formatted applicable report annexes.

Capacity Strengthening

Throughout STS's subcontract, STS led a series of capacity strengthening activities for the Service Evaluation of MENFOP. STS conducted several participatory webinars with the Service Evaluation around how to implement large-scale literacy assessments and how to analyze and report on EGRA data. A detailed summary of all capacity strengthening webinars was submitted to FHI 360 on July 20, 2022, and all relevant webinar materials, including recordings, were saved to this google drive folder. Key accomplishments included:

- In January 2020, STS prepared for and conducted a capacity building webinar with the MENFOP service evaluation on pilot data analysis.
- In June 2020, STS facilitated a series of five capacity building webinars with the Service Evaluation that focused on how to conduct analysis of data using SPSS software.
    - This included preparing PowerPoint slides and interactive activities for each webinar, reviewing the Service Evaluation's homework assignments each week, and continually adjusting plans for what content to include and how to execute the webinars after debriefing on each week's session.
- In September 2020, STS facilitated five two-hour webinars with the service evaluation on conducting analysis and reporting using SPSS, including both OTI and EGRA assessments.
- STS collaborated with the Service Evaluation to lead them through cleaning and analysis of the Grade 3 EGRA baseline dataset. This included preparing data files, syntax, instructions, facilitating one webinar on January 20, 2021 and reviewing the Service Evaluation's work.

- STS continued the guided practice webinar series with the Service Evaluation team on the analysis of the Grade 3 EGRA baseline dataset. Three webinars were conducted on February 2, February 11, and February 18, 2021.
- STS facilitated three webinars on October 13, 20, and 27, 2021 with the Service Evaluation on how to program EGRAs in Tangerine.
- STS prepared for and facilitated a capacity strengthening webinar with the Service Evaluation on Assessor Accuracy Measures on April 12, 2022.
- STS prepared for and facilitated three capacity strengthening webinars with the Service Evaluation: March 15 & 22, 2022 on pilot analysis and March 29, 2022 on data monitoring.
- STS prepared for and facilitated two capacity strengthening refresher webinars with the Service Evaluation on Tangerine programing and preparing for the Grade 5 baseline on March 30 and April 5, 2022.
- STS prepared for and facilitated a webinar on June 29, 2022 on the analysis plan and data analysis syntax of the Grade 2 and Grade 5 EGRA analysis.

Policy Linking

Throughout STS's subcontract, STS provided technical assistance to the FHI 360 team for setting Grade 2 reading benchmarks following the policy linking approach, including preparing for and co-facilitating the January 2021 policy linking workshop. Key accomplishments included:

- STS collaborated with FHI 360 to plan, prepare for, and execute the remote benchmarking workshop in Djibouti from January 24-29, 2021.
    - o This included creating handouts and ratings sheets in English and French, reviewing and providing feedback on PowerPoint slides, preparing EGRA orientation and training materials for teachers, and analyzing EGRA data against preliminary benchmarks.
    - o STS conducted analysis of the second-round ratings from the benchmarking workshop in late January and shared with FHI.
- STS collaborated with FHI 360 to debrief on the January 2021 policy linking workshop and to provide recommendations and lessons learned to USAID.
    - o STS contributed to filling in the debrief worksheet provided by USAID.
    - o STS participated in debrief meetings with USAID/Washington and USAID/Djibouti.

METHODS

STS's period of performance was greatly impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic which began affecting project activities in March 2020. Originally, STS planned to travel to Djibouti to oversee the baseline data collection in the spring of 2020 and also to facilitate capacity strengthening workshops starting in the summer of 2020. Due to travel restrictions imposed by

the COVID-19 pandemic, STS was unable to travel to Djibouti and therefore had to shift to a remote approach.

For the EGRA activities, STS conducted remote Trainings of Trainers (ToTs) with a smaller group of participants who then led in-person enumerator trainings. The trainers were chosen from among MENFOP staff who had participated in prior EGRA activities to ensure they had the background, skills, and knowledge to lead the enumerator training. To facilitate the ToTs, STS utilized video conferencing platforms and included opportunities for the trainers to practice facilitation.

For the capacity strengthening activities, STS led a series of remote webinars with the Service Evaluation in place of the in-person workshops originally envisioned. The webinars were organized around key topics of interest shared by the Service Evaluation. The video conferencing platform Microsoft Teams was used, and both STS and participants took turns screen sharing to demonstrate and practice exercises live. STS's approach to the remote webinars was participatory and included follow up homework for the Service Evaluation team to practice what they had learned.

PRODUCTS DEVELOPED

Throughout the course of STS's period of performance, several products were developed to complete the activities required per our scope of work. A summary list of key technical products created is included below:

EGRA

- EGRA methodology planning document
- Grade 2 EGRA tool
- Grade 5 EGRA tool
- Student survey tool
- Grade 2 enumerator training materials
- Grade 5 enumerator training materials
- EGRA results reports for Grade 2 baseline, midline, and Grade 5 baseline

Capacity Strengthening

- Webinar materials, including PPTs and exercises, for the following webinars:
    - January 2020
    - June 2020
    - September 2020
    - February 2021
    - June 2021
    - October 2021
    - March 2022

          o   April 2022
          o   June 2022
- Summary report of all webinars
- STATA guide (to be submitted August 2022)

Policy Linking

- Teacher EGRA orientation materials
- Workshop handouts and ratings sheets

SUCCESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Lots of changes outside of the DEGRA project's control occurred throughout STS's period of performance requiring flexibility and adaptability, in addition to strong communication and collaboration with FHI 360. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic led to constant changes to activity timelines and required shifting from an in-person training approach to a remote training cascade model. Additionally, USAID issued new guidance for setting benchmarks in 2020 which required redesigning the technical approach to benchmarking. Furthermore, due to travel restrictions, STS was unable to lead in-person capacity strengthening workshops and instead designed a series of ongoing remote webinars. STS's ability to pivot as needed based on shifting contextual factors was a true success of this project.

Another key success was the close collaboration fostered by STS with the MENFOP's Service Evaluation. Although STS was not able to work with the Service Evaluation in person, the ongoing webinars actually allowed for more frequent trainings to take place than would have been the case if we were limited to in-person workshops. The Service Evaluation expressed great satisfaction with STS's training approach, and we were able to tailor the webinars based on their needs and interests.

In addition to these key successes of STS's subcontract under DEGRA, lessons were also learned throughout STS's period of performance which have been shared with FHI 360 via emails, phone calls, and quarterly reports. We have summarized some of the most pertinent lessons learned below.

- The Service Evaluation is eager to continue learning about data analysis and in particular the use of STATA. This could be an area that FHI 360 may be able to provide additional capacity strengthening support.
- At times, the Service Evaluation team was busy with several concurrent activities—for DEGRA, the World Bank, and MENFOP—which limited their time and ability to engage in and practice the activities as STS originally planned. Finding a way to coordinate the SE team's schedule across stakeholders could help ensure the SE has the bandwidth to engage in each activity to their fullest extent.