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Promising Remedial Learning Models in the MENA Region

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing learning loss is a pressing need. Remedial learning (RL) frameworks play a crucial role in mitigating this learning loss and supporting students in the post-pandemic world. RL involves providing additional, targeted support to students attending formal learning programs who face greater challenges in acquiring knowledge compared to their peers. RL aims to assist learners struggling with one or more subject areas by offering short-term content or skill assistance. It can be implemented in diverse educational environments, with the primary goal of ensuring students receive the necessary support to succeed in formal education.

PURPOSE

TALEEM completed this study to survey promising models in applying and using RL to support improved learning and education program planning in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) region.

METHODOLOGY

TALEEM used a combined approach beginning with a desk review of RL approaches globally and in the MENA region. Using the RL models identified, TALEEM conducted primary research through key informant interviews with model implementers, donors and ministry of education officials to better understand the models.

To access the full report on Remedial Learning, visit: https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA021JRD.pdf

MAIN FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are promising education models using RL in the MENA region?

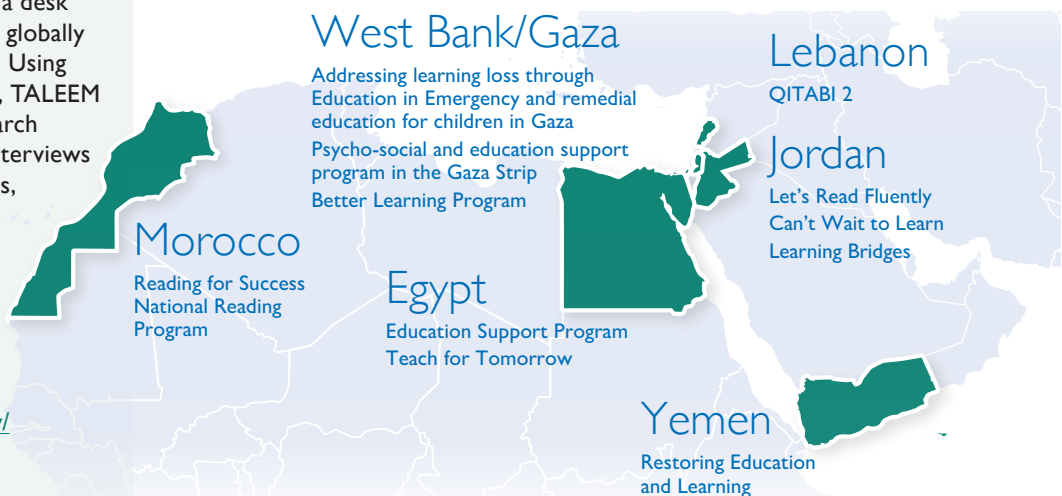
Five of the 11 RL promising models identified through desk research specifically targeted learning gaps caused by COVID-19 school disruptions. Most of them aimed to help students catch up to the standard grade level. These programs varied in focus, addressing foundational skills in reading and math, as well as subjects like Arabic, science, and socio-emotional learning (SEL). Reading was prioritized more than mathematics in most of the models despite a bigger gap in mathematics learning loss.

Most of the identified promising practices used a levelled approach for remediation, meaning that students are provided support according to their performance level rather than their age or grade level. Most programs focused on

primary grade students and were integrated into the formal education system, with some conducted in nonformal settings. Several models catered to marginalized contexts, including children in refugee camps, out-of-school children, adolescents, and those with learning difficulties.

Three promising models warranted further study:

QITABI 2. The QITABI 2 project (2019–2024) in Lebanon, funded by USAID and implemented by World Learning, aims to improve student learning performance in math, SEL, reading in Arabic, French, and English. It targets all public-school students in grades one to six, including Syrian refugees and students from under-resourced schools. The program



involves training teachers, establishing school libraries and resource centers, distributing food packages, and providing learning materials and information and communications technology equipment. The Learning Recovery Program (LRP) within QITABI2 is delivered in person for the first four weeks in the beginning of the year during regular instruction and in six-week summer sessions. The program's mid-term evaluation shows strong linkages with government and education stakeholders and is being integrated into the national education strategy and curriculum. Continuous school-based support is provided to teachers through training and coaching. The program focuses on building foundational skills. Measurement tools are developed for monitoring progress, and regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are conducted to inform project planning.

BLP. The Better Learning Project (BLP) in Palestine, implemented by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), focuses on improving education and psycho-educational well-being for children and youth. The project consists of three program interventions: general psychosocial support (PSS) in classrooms, small group interventions for academic under-achievers, and specialized PSS for nightmares associated with traumatic stress. The BLP uses psycho-educational well-being to address the learning gaps caused by crises and disrupted education. It involves teachers and counselors providing small group interventions and psychosocial assistance to help students catch up academically. The project emphasizes SEL to foster resilience, teaching students skills to navigate

emotions, build relationships, and cope with stress. BLP is adaptable to different educational contexts, allowing for integration into school curricula or informal settings. Furthermore, it leverages technology, such as a mobile app for self-directed learning, to support students and their families during disruptions. Evaluations show that the program has been successful in improving students' socio-emotional skills and their academic performance. The BLP showcases promising practices for education in conflict-affected areas. BLP's strong coordination within the MoE has resulted in full integration into the existing educational structures.

RAMP. The Early Grade Reading and Math Project (RAMP) in Jordan, funded by USAID and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, aims to improve reading and math outcomes in public schools grades K2-G3. RAMP focuses on enhancing curriculum coherence, teacher professional development, parental involvement, and evaluation systems. The project has short-, medium-, and long-term levels or phases to sustain its intervention, including a targeted remediation approach implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. RAMP's best practices include government and community partnerships, teacher capacity building and support, a focus on foundational skills, resilience in adapting to challenges, and targeting a wide range of students, including Syrian refugees. The program utilizes measurement tools like diagnostic assessments to monitor progress and tailor remedial support to individual student needs.

Research Question 2: What is the evidence base to support these models? What are the conditions for implementation?

The promising models used the following evidence base:

Monitoring tool such as classroom-based assessments, standardized tests, and surveys

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)/Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA)

Conditions for implementation

Government Buy-in, Ownership, and Collaboration with Stakeholders

Strong Professional Development Support for Teachers

Adaptability Based on Evidence and Data

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RL PROGRAMMING IN THE MENA REGION

Research Question 3: What are the recommendations for RL programming in the Middle East?



Establish Strong Partnerships: Collaborate closely with government education authorities, relevant stakeholders including school directors, supervisors, teachers and parents, as well as community members to ensure alignment with national education strategies, curricula, and policies. Engage in continuous communication and collaboration to foster a sense of ownership and promote program sustainability.



Prioritize Teacher Capacity Building: Invest in comprehensive and ongoing training programs for teachers, providing them with the necessary skills and resources to deliver effective remedial instruction. Offer on-going coaching and support to enhance teaching practices and ensure quality implementation of RL interventions.



Focus on Foundational Skills: Design interventions that prioritize the development of foundational skills such as literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional competencies. Address learning gaps early on by providing targeted support to build a strong foundation for students' academic success.



Build Adaptability and Resilience: Incorporate flexibility into program design to enable adaptation and continuity during crises or challenging circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or in conflict-affected areas. Develop strategies for distance learning and alternative instructional methods to ensure continuous support to students.



Promote Inclusivity and Equity: Target a diverse range of students, including vulnerable and marginalized populations, to address educational inequities and provide equal opportunities for all learners. Tailor interventions to meet the specific needs of different student groups and ensure access to remedial learning programs for all.



Implement Effective Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: Develop robust M&E frameworks that utilize evidence-based assessments and regular data collection. Use this data to track progress, identify students' specific needs, and inform program planning and adaptation. Continuously monitor program effectiveness and make data-driven decisions.



Foster Knowledge Exchange and Learning: Promote communities of practice and platforms for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and successful strategies among education program implementers. Encourage collaboration, learning, and innovation through networks, conferences, and professional development opportunities.



Conduct Rigorous Research and Evaluation: Invest in rigorous research and evaluation studies to generate robust evidence on the impact and effectiveness of remedial learning interventions. Share research findings and disseminate knowledge to inform policy and practice at the national and international levels.



Continuously Improve and Refine Programs: Embrace a culture of continuous improvement by using feedback, monitoring data, and research findings to refine program design and implementation strategies. Regularly assess and adapt interventions to meet evolving student needs and contextual factors.