

Foreword

Emerging Landscape of Ideas around GRA: Notes on Going Forward

Introduction

This note sets out the emerging landscape of ideas on the Global and Regional Activities (GRA) program led by the Education for All (EFA) Fast Track Initiative's (FTI) Secretariat's Global Good Practice Team (GGP), resulting from the first round of consultations in June of 2011. It summarizes the results of that first round, the state of the discussion, and also provides some background history on the GRA that seems to have been missing from the perceptions of some commentators, and how the activities are integrated with each other and with the other priorities of the FTI Secretariat as endorsed by its Board of Directors.

Background of the GRA

The GRA program was approved by the FTI Board of Directors, as a type of successor to the EPDF. The program will function under the unified Education for All Fund. The GRA program will provide support for initiatives and programs that address thematic areas and demonstrate their ability to enhance the capacity of country and international/regional level institutions/organizations to support EFA FTI country partners to meet their education goals.

Global and regional initiatives are intended to address the following development objectives:

- Strengthen capacity of country and regional level entities to develop, implement, and/or monitor sustainable national education sector programs.
- Enhance understanding of key priorities through research and practice and increase the impact of investments in education, drawing on innovations, evidence, and global good practices in these areas.
- Improve knowledge sharing between and among EFA FTI partners through the systematic provision of services and products that enlighten, engage and energize partners to apply new knowledge and evidence-based good practices to resolve education challenges.
- Improve Partnership accountability by strengthening availability and quality of data.
- Strengthen South-South networks and partnerships.

The three thematic areas for the GRA program cycle 1 (2011-2013) are:

- Learning outcomes
- Out of school children
- Education financing

Eligible activities to be funded by the program are:

- Research and dissemination
- Technical workshops
- Development of innovative partnerships and networks
- Technical assistance
- Study tours
- Interventions to inform scale up

Summary of Thematic Papers and the Role of EFA FTI Partners

Out of School. This paper concerned itself with gaps in Data, Policy, and Management (or Implementation) in terms of identifying and counting children, assessing the reasons for non-enrolment and non-attendance, addressing out of school issues via improved policy-making and sector planning, and, finally, by developing more effective models of implementation to address issues related to getting children into school and keeping them there. The overall aim is to provide improved tools and guidance as well as documented examples of good practices in all these issues.

Quality and Learning Outcomes. This paper noted the need for an entry point into quality, and argued that early literacy (soon followed by mathematics) represents a good entry point for two reasons: a) because it is chronologically and pedagogically fundamental to accessing all other forms of knowledge at later points in the school system, and b) because in improving learning in these areas one can provide entry points or object lessons in how to improve other subjects, later in the system. The paper called for small amounts of knowledge compilation, and larger amounts of knowledge dissemination based on existing knowledge and experimentation.

Finance. This paper called for work in a) improved reporting and monitoring of finance flows, including analysis of efficiency and equity issues, b) tools for assessing fiduciary risk in the sector, particularly in view of sector and general budget support and other modalities deemed to be more effective than projects managed by donors and NGOs, c) experiences with types of financing that can more directly stimulate or support results, d) Development of integrated funding approaches for equity in education, and e) innovative financing sources.

The three thematic papers have been revised through a consultative process with FTI partners, seeking to enrich the understanding of the thematic areas and to determine an agreed way for the GRA program to help move the out-of-school, education financing, and quality agendas forward.

The papers provide a framework for activities to be developed with members of the FTI partnership, and do not attempt to catalogue the out-of-school, education financing, and quality issues. Elements of the discussions may remain unaddressed, since these thematic papers are only meant to create an overall framework for action, but this does not mean that any specialized considerations cannot be integrated in the activity proposals by partners. In fact we hope they will be, as proposals are elaborated in the coming period.

FTI and Implementation

Given the vastness of the issues, and the requirements of specialization, it is clear that the FTI Secretariat cannot “implement” solutions to these issues. There are plenty of partners, including developing country partners, who are already doing a great deal of work in these areas. The FTI Secretariat, through the GRA activities, hopes to create an opportunity for all partners to take systematic re-look at how these issues relate to each other, and expand the dissemination of knowledge and experiences that can further achievement in these areas.

At the same time, whenever, acting in concert with particular partners, the FTI Secretariat itself can give a short-term boost to a particular area that has gone un-attended, we believe someone has to step in and provide that boost. In most cases the FTI Secretariat will stimulate others; in a limited number of cases we will kick-start a relatively specialized or small area, in the hope of turning it over to others as soon as possible.

Thus, most (90% to 95%) of the implementation of this work is expected to take place through transfer agreements from the FTI Secretariat to various Supervising Entities who have the fiduciary controls needed to supervise funding usage. At the same time, actual implementers may be countries, NGOs, the Supervising Entities themselves, etc.

While the FTI Secretariat hopes to stimulate others in certain areas, and also to encourage clear agreements as to what results are expected, similarly FTI does not intend to issue competitive requests for proposals (RFPs), nor does it see itself as a “client” with “suppliers.” If the term “RFP” sent the wrong message, we propose to re-label these as Requests for Results Partnerships (RRPs). Formal relationships with the Supervising Entities will still need to exist, of course.

Select Comments from Stakeholder Consultation 1

During the first phase of the consultation process, two aspects of the whole process have become increasingly clear: a) areas that were missing in the original formulation, which partners have pointed out and b) partners pointing out their history and ongoing willingness to address some of these areas as well as pointing to other experiences. This section summarizes those reactions. Only main lines of discussion, common to several commentators, are summarized here. More specific comments were too numerous to summarize succinctly, but have influenced the overall tenor of the FTI Secretariat response. These have found their way to the concept notes for round 2 of consultations, most often in the language used throughout. We created new activities or sub-activities in cases where there were comments in common to many partners, especially if the comments clearly implied a “proposition” with regard to a concrete activity that could be said to be missing from the GRA.

Missing areas or general comments included the following, in no particular order. Some are oriented at substance, others at process. Some of these areas were indeed noted in the Concept Notes, but perhaps in too muted a fashion, so they are re-stated here as comments.

1. Naïveté with regard to the political economy and institutional aspects of change or lack of change (e.g., in why certain OOS issues are not addressed in countries' plans, why learning outcomes are so hard to improve, etc.). As well as reform implementation. This was mentioned by many partners and in regard to a variety of areas. This was perhaps one of the most remarked-upon issues.
2. Lack of tie-in to curricular definition of early literacy in countries, in a practical manner, and with possible "hooks" to assessment and learning materials, in an integrated fashion, in the quality area.
3. Need to further emphasize and support country-based planning processes, and to work within the context of country plans and policy dialogue as much as possible. In all areas.
4. The need for both systemic frameworks for quality and broader sense of quality. Focus of learning outcomes on early literacy is too tight. Mostly in quality area.
5. In quality, the whole issue of attitudes, value and culture as motivators of behavior and determinants of quality, especially when it comes to teacher motivation.
6. Promotion of single approach as a solution to key problems, particularly in early literacy, is not sufficiently cognizant of others' efforts and the variety of approaches others have tried.
7. More emphasis on the local (school or village), especially on the use of data for localized management and accountability, not just policy-setting. Mentioned mostly in the context of OOS. Could tie into concept of political economy, already noted.
8. With regard to some of the concept notes and reviewers who reviewed only one, some of their concerns are actually noted in other concept notes that they may not have reviewed (e.g., the issue of pro-poor financing as a way to deal with OOS or Learning Outcomes is dealt with in the Finances concept note; it was dealt with already, but it has now been made more explicit).
9. Limited recognition of and/or linkage to on-going efforts and initiatives by partners already addressing the identified gaps. Here it is important to note that the GRA does not intend to duplicate but to support the efforts of members of the FTI partnership, while contributing to linking together various efforts for a more comprehensive global approach. The concept notes generally aim to fill gaps in knowledge and practice, but not to be a catalogue of good practices. That will come later, as part of the work itself. For now, however, if a partner feels a set of available knowledge products or practices are so well-evaluated and definitive that further work is not at all necessary, then this would be an important thing to note.

Partner Interest

Partner interests have been expressed in various aspects of the GRA agenda, based on the various partners' work histories and comparative advantage. These are presented in tabular format. In further rounds of discussion we hope to further refine and, at the same time, make this knowledge more explicit. The table is presented in alphabetical order. Some agency commentators made extremely diverse, in depth, and very engaged comments. However, they did not always express ways in which they themselves could proactively engage in a follow-up. We have read the intensity and engagement of comments as suggesting some institutional interest in follow-up (e.g., in being a Supervising Entity in at least some aspects of their comments) but that is, in some cases, only an assumption on our part. In other cases, partners were quite "propositional" and therefore their interest was more likely to be

digestible and presentable in tabular form. In general, our summaries below are very telegraphic statements of groups’ interests, as we cannot reproduce the richness of everyone’s comments in a table. All comments are posted on the webpage as noted, and, also, each thematic paper now reflects commentators points more completely, particularly when commentators were “propositional.”

Countries	<p><i>General note: there was not as much commenting from countries as from agencies (at most 5% of comments came from countries). This is something that will hopefully be dealt with in the second round. One understands that countries’ officials are under time pressure with urgent tasks, but an effort will be made to seek further involvement.</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Ghana, the School Performance appraisal Meeting (SPAM) is a multi-stakeholder forum used to promote the use of data for managing enrolment and attendance. Moreover, the Ministry of Education has developed a draft complementary basic education policy (emphasizing State-Civil Society joint implementation) to address OOS children. However, implementation faces budget and cost-efficiency challenges. 2. Honduras will be experimenting with results-based financing as part of its own policies and would welcome support and collaboration with FTI-S. 3. Mozambique suggests the possibility of making better use of both exams and assessment systems and appreciates help in this area. Calls for common benchmarks in public exams. In general the use of public exams for quality assurance, not just filtering, is under-explored. Also express interest in measurement of more basic skills and in mother tongue and in effective remediation approaches (already included in the note on Learning Outcomes) for children falling behind and under difficult conditions.
IBE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest in helping with curricular agenda as it pertains to early literacy, and tie-in between curricular agenda and assessment and learning materials. Can bring in important academic actors.
IIEP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest in finance agenda, capacity-building around finance 2. Also possible role convening work on written assessment in early grades, networking PASEC, SACMEQ, LLECE, other efforts.
ILO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest in helping with linkages between child labor knowledge base and education (OOS) through ILO IPEC program/better connection between analysis of child labor data and education planning.
UIS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing measurement agenda key to all reporting. 2. Work on data issues particularly as they pertain to OOS. Particular attention to issues of absenteeism, in-and-out-of-school phenomena. 3. Work on oral assessment based on existing technical experience. (Convening experts to set standards, compare experiences, etc.).
UNESCO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mutual mandate-setting through common commitment, and agreement generation amongst technical leaders and countries around EFA goal 6, as a starting point. 2. Quality frameworks and agreements to try, use, document. 3. Institutionalizing support to quality enhancement via local knowledge providers (universities and think tanks within countries). 4. UNESCO with UIS expressed its interest to carry out the development of a methodology to improve national reporting systems on financial flows.
UNICEF	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interest in various aspects of data, policy, and management of OOS agenda, including measurement of causes, management of enrollment, experiences and dissemination of practical approaches to OOS. Ongoing history of OOS work with UIS. Experience in household surveys that can

	<p>identify causes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interests and comments expressed in mother tongue, multi-grade teaching, production of texts in mother tongue, PPPs in textbooks, and a great variety of topics that would need to be provided in integral form. This suggests roles in piloting of integrated approaches or very country-based partnerships.
Various bilateral agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interest in FTI Secretariat's technical recommendations on key issues such as norms around learning outcomes (e.g., DfID, USAID). Interested in commenting on and supporting FTI via their own work in countries, convening regional efforts (e.g., AFD around PASEC and learning outcomes, as PASEC one of few experiences in early learning assessment in writing). GIZ has expressed particular interest in collaborating on dissemination and knowledge-sharing of particular products, particularly in quality area. Experience of former InWent is mentioned. GIZ expressed interest in collaboration specifically in mother tongue, ECD, and some other specific areas which would be quite country specific (see UNICEF comments). JICA has worked on learner-centered approaches in Math and Science which could be further supported/networked with others. MOFA in Japan will make available lists of good practices based on recent MDG meeting in Japan. DfID has noted an interest in focused approaches in early learning including assessment of early skills. USAID is already modeling many of the Learning Outcomes approaches noted here, often in rigorously evaluated contexts, and their experiences will inform work going forward. FTI will support these processes particularly if/as USAID links with other donors with a very close interest such as DfID. AFD provided extremely extensive and engaged commentary but it was unclear whether there was a desire to possibly serve as an SE or some sort of coordinating agency except in the area of PASEC which was clear. Their commentaries have otherwise been introduced into the discussion in the concept notes. (As noted above this was also the case with other agencies: extensive and interesting commentary but not clear interest in an SE role.) Further discussions will be warranted as the process unfolds. Similarly AUSAID and CIDA seem to have particular interest in various areas and submitted many comments but it is unclear how they themselves are proceeding in ways that can link with some of these initiatives or possible role as SE partners.
Various civil society organizations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> CGE has signaled willingness to work on political economic and accountability issues with respect to access, learning outcomes, and finance. May need a Supervising Entity. The Brookings Institution has issued a Global Compact on Learning which itself encompasses key FTI partners (DfID, CIDA, USAID, elements of civil society constituencies, for instance), and which addresses itself at the Learning Outcomes / Quality agenda including but not limited to early literacy. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with others, possible work on finance agenda including National Education Accounts. Various NGOs such as Save-the-Children with its Literacy Boost approach, Pratham in India, IEP in Mali (and others), have already been

	demonstrating approaches that tie in to the efforts noted in the Learning Outcomes concept note.
World Bank	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ongoing work on impact evaluation of various kinds of interventions. 2. Ongoing work on quality and benchmarking frameworks (e.g., SABER, work on teachers, assessment, etc.). 3. Work on improved financial analysis and reporting (e.g., ongoing work on Country Status Reports). 4. The role of health factors in both OOS and Learning Outcomes.

Way Forward

In the second consultation, starting mid-July 2011, we propose to further refine interest of groups. It is important to note that the activity descriptions up to now do not attempt to match the richness of the comments received. They simply attempt to create a telegraphic placeholder for the areas commentators said were missing, as a basis for an overall portrait. Details and nuance can be put back in as we progress towards defining these activities more specifically, to generate RRP as the basis for agreements on the results expected.

Instructions for Second GRA Consultation:

1. Review the revised thematic papers according to your expertise.
2. Provide concrete comments/suggestions/edits on the activities, and not on the background/text. We are very interested in concrete aspects of partnership. Because we are not aiming to implement much of this, the key is to assess partner interest in concrete, implementable activities that your organization would like to be involved with. Please let us know if you are interested in implementing some of these activities.

Please send all comments by August 8th.

Once we receive your feedback, we will finalize all papers and post the 3rd drafts on our webpage. Then, we will prepare the Requests for Results Partnerships (RRPs) (note we have changed the language from away from “RFPs”) and send them by mid September to those institutions which expressed their interest. These RRP will be posted on our webpage so that other potential Supervising Entities will be able to make proposals.

We thank you again for your participation and look forward to your inputs to this important program.

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EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program

Thematic Area: Learning Outcomes

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EFA FTI Global and Regional Activities Program Thematic Area: Learning Outcomes

Version 2

July 2011

1. Background

The learning inequality gap between children in the low income countries, and children in the high-income countries, is acknowledged in international forums, but its real depth is often not realized or remembered. If children in low-income countries now have a school life expectancy that is around 60% to 70% of what it is in the high-income countries, their access to knowledge seems to be only about 20% to 25% of what it is in the high income countries. Our best estimates are that the median children in low-income countries are, on average, learning at about the level of children at the 5th percentile of the distribution in the high-income countries. This is a level of learning so low that it does not allow much progression and does not allow for quality solutions, such as self-directed learning, that assumes the basic conditions exist. Yet, actors on the international scene often seem to assume that children in low income countries are just a little behind children in high-income countries, and that relatively marginal actions will help. Many of the quality solutions discussed, such as access to the internet, or the ability of children to learn from their own books, also tend to assume that children already possess even the basic abilities to access those solutions. However, in early literacy oral assessments in grades 2 or 3, something in the range of 25% to 75% of children simply cannot read at all. In countries such as the Gambia or Mali over 90% of the students in Grade 2 could not read a single word. They are not just unable to read with comprehension or to construct meaning; they have not even mastered the most basic mechanical skills, and are thus unable to process printed matter in any way, and are, needless to say, unable to read with comprehension. Thus, they are not able to use text for instruction by the middle of primary school, and continue to be teacher-dependent for instruction—in situations where teaching itself is not very proficient. Yet there is enough experience to show that this need not be the case. In countries such as Cuba, for instance, children are often reading quite well one third of the year into Grade 1, when in other countries they are taking five to ten times as long to get to the same stage. It is true that Cuba has many special characteristics, that the whole population uses Spanish, and that Spanish is an orthographically simple, and other such factors. But there is also evidence that when mother tongue instruction is used well, in areas of the world where there is linguistic complexity, progress can be made. Recent donor experiences and country-initiated experiences also show that progress is possible using systematic approaches. Thus, urgent and specific action on the quality front is both needed and possible.

In many countries the basic structure of system functioning has improved remarkably when it comes to improving access: school construction and teacher training systems are increasingly able to generate the needed numbers. Problems remain with the more deeply poor and with special populations. But the

quality assurance systems are shaky if not broken or barely existent. UNESCO and the World Bank, for instance, recognize this and are trying to provide assistance with remedies that address systemic assurance and system benchmarking for quality. The basic quality assurance chain, or the logic chain linking enrollment to outcomes, is broken in many places. Instructional time is insufficient, and what exists is used poorly; textbooks are chronically scarce, too expensive, or may not present the necessary content. Poorly paid teachers are supposedly supervised by inspectors who do not show up and managed by principals who assume no instructional responsibilities. In these information-deprived circumstances, teachers may interact only with the few students who keep up. Thus, only the smartest or those with parental help may benefit from schooling. The rest may drop out or even graduate illiterate.

Education *for* “all” implies that regular schools should teach basic skills not only to those who are better off, but to practically everyone, except perhaps special education cases which require special handling. To achieve this, the chosen methods must be effective not just with the average or better students but with the weakest as well. Textbooks, teaching methods, teacher training must work to ensure learning for the weaker rather than for just the average or better students. To justify continued financing by donors, relatively quick and tangible results must be obtained from educational investments.

When the FTI partnership was set up in 2002-03, the four gaps seen as needed to fill for success: data, policy, capacity, and financing. With time it was found that donors and governments had overestimated the competencies of poor students. The information needed to help them benefit from school was the most important gap of all. To get results in terms of student learning outcomes the FTI partnership must close the knowledge gap and offer knowledge applicable to daily practice in schools.

It is proposed that as a case in point the FTI process works with selected countries to rapidly boost learning outcomes using initial literacy as a case in point. There are several reasons for using reading in the early grades as a case in point in improving learning outcomes: a) reading is fundamental to all other skills and there is evidence that it is much more cost-effective to use early reading as a leverage point that can improve other skills later; b) in this particular area there are enough pilot and even scaled-up experiences available, by now, that one can generalize from—thus there is no need to wait (at the same time, there is no need to promote one single approach—experimentation should be encouraged as long as it is well-evaluated); c) key donors and countries are keen to work in this area, and a few already have large and rigorously evaluated activities already starting up, where the FTI Secretariat and the partnership more generally can act as brokers of information and can help generalize experiences, and can provide support with specialized technical assistance where needed; d) the international community seems to increasingly demand a results-based focus in education that can produce a sense of measurable progress in education similar to what can be done in the health sector (see, for instance, the Brookings Institution’s efforts on a Global Compact on Learning, calling for specific learning outcomes to become central as MDG or EFA goals). The FTI Secretariat would propose to quickly add early grade mathematics to the work. EFA goal 6 also refers to life skills. At the same time, as an entity trying to produce results in short order, there is a need to focus, and to tackle various subject areas in sequence. Thus far, EFA goal 6 has been under-explored; our view is that exploring it, and beginning to deliver on

it, requires a sequential focus that can start with reading, proceed quickly to mathematics, and then to life skills.

Also, it should be noted that while many knowledge-generating and -packaging actions are proposed here, there is enough of an empirical basis on how to get going with improved learning outcomes to allow the FTI partnership to start to develop national-scale efforts. Thus, the model envisioned here is of rapid start-up of actions which can lead to national-level improvements in learning outcomes, while at the same time pipe-lining new knowledge and new experiences into such improvement processes. This does not imply that FTI would propose any single approach. Many experiences should be encouraged, as long as they are well-evaluated. Furthermore, no approach is without flaws, and no approach should simply be replicated uncritically across countries. However, for countries wishing to move quickly, there is enough existing knowledge to conform suggestive, adaptable approaches that can produce and demonstrate fast gains, if truly adapted and demand-led. GRA would of course also encourage other countries and/or donor partners wishing to develop something more completely from scratch, or simply as an alternative. Thus, there are options for relatively quick start-ups and also for more experimental start-ups that may be more fine-tuned to country needs (but slower).

The aim of activities in this area should be to support with knowledge (sections 2 and 3 below), and then demonstrate (in actual experiences: section 4 below) that marked improvements (from 100% to 500%, or 0.5 to 1 standard deviations) are possible in the space of one to five years, first in replicable experimentations, and then in scale up. Some countries have started down this path. Naturally not all countries who might want to aggressively move forward in this area will be at the same starting place, nor will all start at the same time, and many will choose particular approaches that might turn out not to work as well. However, the general ambition is to at least double or triple, within a few years, how well children are reading and then performing in mathematics in the first few grades.

2. Proposed Activities

The Global and Regional Activities (GRA) fund is to finance activities to fill these important gaps in order to improve the learning outcomes.

In order to provide a clear picture of the set of activities, ancillary activities that may be financed by other trust funds, but which are key to the achievements envisioned in the GRA, will sometimes be described.

In terms of the GRA classifications, the following activities are envisioned:

1. Research, reviews of the literature, and knowledge packaging (including data collection and repository, development of presentational materials summarizing evidence, etc.),
2. Technical workshops, peer learning events, and conferences, and
3. Scalable experiences to address specific issues, technical assistance around Education Sector Plans (ESPs).

Some explanation of how all this fits together may be useful. We believe that the matters to be addressed on learning outcomes are sufficiently urgent and that enough knowledge exists, that it is possible to start with Activity 2, namely specific experiences in countries that can be taken to scale quickly. Indeed, such experiences are already taking place, under countries' own initiatives and with either country-based, or multilateral and bilateral donor funding. However, while this work continues, it is also necessary to improve the knowledge base used to support these efforts, and to provide technical assistance, in some cases, to sharpen them. At the same time, as already noted, there is the option to try other approaches that may need to be designed from scratch. Thus, FTI-S may direct certain specific lines of analysis, using consultants (including consultants with experience in their own countries to the extent possible) and using other trust funds, to generate knowledge products that countries can use in their experiences. In addition, as countries gain experience, holding workshops and other events where new evidence is brought to bear, and where countries can share their experiences, will be helpful. These events can also be used to allow new countries interested in these activities to see what other countries are doing.

The rest of the paper takes on the needed work sequentially: research and knowledge generation and packaging, stimulating start-up of quality efforts, and promoting the exchange of lessons.

Research and Knowledge

Three specific lines of work are envisioned here: refinement of indicators, literature reviews and packaging of knowledge, and repository of data on indicators. Some of the work will be carried out with trust funds other than the Education for All Fund of which GRA is part. They are described here for the sake of completeness.

2.1. Further work on refinement of indicators

In early 2011 a panel of experts, convened by the FTI-S and the World Bank, met to discuss and recommend improvements to the existing FTI-S indicators, namely:

- Proportion of students who, after two years of schooling, demonstrate sufficient reading fluency and comprehension to “read to learn.”
- Proportion of students who are able to read with comprehension, according to their countries' curricular goals, by the end of primary school.

In addition, the panel was asked to comment on the convenience of some sort of universal fluency standards (as a way to anchor the fluency idea in the first indicators), an idea which had been floated after the development of the indicators just mentioned. The panel recommended (focusing for now only on the highest-order recommendations) drawing attention away from fluency as a goal, using written rather than oral assessment for accurate reporting of goals, and not making inter-country comparisons based on fluency and especially not on fluency alone. In response, the FTI-S proposes to use the following indicators:

- Proportion of students who read with sufficient understanding, by the end of the first two grades of primary schooling, to use their own reading as a means of instruction in subsequent grades, as appropriate to that grade.
- Proportion of students who, by the end of the primary cycle, are able to read according to the expectations in the national (or sub-national in countries where curriculum is decentralized) curriculum.

The FTI Secretariat will proceed, with urgency (in fact, preliminary conversations have started with PASEC, SACMEQ, UIS, and will continue with others), to network with assessment organizations and educational development organizations to propose concrete ways in which these indicators can be measured. This will be addressed in section 2.3.9.

To properly measure these indicators, in a manner that is consistent with international reporting on progress on these indicators, will require some form of group written assessment aimed at comprehension. At the same time, certain practical exigencies require that oral assessment of individual students be used in certain circumstances, as long as they include comprehension components and as long as fluency is not reported by itself or privileged as a measure; that is, as long as comprehension is recognized as the aim, and is reported. Those circumstances include: 1) In the medium term, it has to be recognized that well-researched experiences in written, group assessments of early reading in lower income countries have not gained much currency yet, and thus that, for the time being, reporting in early grades based on any form of assessment, including oral assessment, be acceptable. 2) In the foreseeable future, group written assessments that focus on comprehension, in the early grades, will produce results that are uninformative, as too many students will be below any reasonable threshold. In addition, practical experience shows that in conditions of poor achievement, oral assessments can be good motivators for improvement efforts. Thus, oral assessments *of different forms* should be used to motivate, fine-tune, and track efforts aimed at improving the performance of the most disadvantaged, as long as they meet certain requirements.

The FTI Secretariat's immediate efforts will concentrate on stimulating: a) the distilling lessons learned, and improving upon, written early grade reading assessments, and inducing collaboration between agencies, to further this aspect, b) inducing some regularization and experimentation with end-of-cycle assessments, in collaboration between countries and regional/international assessments, and c) calling for development of standards and suggestions around oral assessments for the purposes noted above. In the medium term, the Secretariat will support development of written group assessments of early literacy. See section 2.3.9 for a fuller specification of this idea.

In addition, this work will feed the development of the Results Framework for the FTI.

2.2. Indicators repository

FTI-S would propose working with a partner Supervise Entity (SE) to create a repository of all the key indicators specifically relevant to early reading, and early mathematics. Important as this may be, it

should be noted this global-level work should not replace the actual utilization of assessments to improve teaching, within countries themselves. This topic is discussed below.

This agency would be a body with experience and interest in creating repositories of such data. As per now UIS is identified as a possible SE. Care is to be taken not to duplicate work other agencies are doing. The objective would be to provide easy access to countries, donor agency staff, researchers, and others, on the basic indicators that pertain to learning outcomes particularly in this context.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure knowledge sharing on all outcomes data related to early learning outcomes (perhaps as subset of all learning outcomes)
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of data base not only on the value of key indicators but processes and uses of learning outcome indicators and other rich information that characterizes the outcomes in a systematic way, and dissemination mechanism via web site.
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile results and also data on methods and usage from all countries participating in early learning assessments • Pilot visits to countries to populate database
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database for public use operational
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database operational by late 2012. (Comments appreciated on a reasonable deadline.)

2.3. Literature reviews, knowledge generation, and knowledge packaging

The identified knowledge gaps and proposed specific activities largely correspond to the Quality Strategy for FTI, already sent to the EFA FTI Board. The amount of existing information for the various activities varies. For some, only literature reviews would be necessary, while for others actual research would be needed. However, research would be done only for the purposes of clear implementation and usage.

In what follows, some activities could be considered to be relatively “light” and could be carried out via consultants and without an institutional partnership. This is typically denoted by the absence of a tabular presentation of the activity. For other cases (e.g., section 2.3.1) during the consultation process various partners expressed an interest in activities that are considerably more involved. In those cases, the activity is presented in tabular form. The current plan is to commission literature reviews and state-of-the-art knowledge packaging, in some of the “lighter” areas via a USAID trust fund, rather than the GRA, and to use the GRA for areas of analysis that are more involved. However, this plan could change. Since the “lighter” activities are not planned to be implemented under the GRA, they are not tabulated as is the case in the activities that are to be GRA-funded. However, note that piloting and field based research on these subjects is expected to be included in country-based activities. For that reason, we list their technical contents in detail here.

While the themes below are described in detail here, for the sake of economy, note that all of them need to be included in the workshops (see section 3) and in country experiences for scale-up (see section 4).

2.3.1. Curricular issues and curricular supports in assessment and learning materials

During discussions regarding the GRA, at least one key partner noted their interest and willingness to carry out background analysis on the way in which a sample of countries approaches the issue of reading in the early grades in their national curricula, and also link this to both a) assessment tools available to the countries to know whether these curricular objectives are being met, and b) availability of learner support materials (in particular textbooks, and in particular textbooks to foster reading and mathematics in the early grades). It could be that, should a partner ultimately be interested in this agenda as a somewhat coherent whole, it would obviate the need for some of the shorter, individual studies noted in sections 2.3.8). The prospective activities that would emerge are obviously richer than what can be summarized in a table, but for the sake of completeness and yet trying to be succinct, the following tabular presentation of activity that links curriculum to assessment to learning materials can be proposed.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess curricular content and mapping of curricular content to language (specifically reading [and math?]) books and other learning materials, and disseminate knowledge.
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desk-based assessment and research. Field-based case studies, if appropriate (particularly in the case of books, perhaps also needed to assess linkage of curricular expectations to available assessment methods). Dissemination at workshops.
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes.
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assess curricular content with regard to reading and early math instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Focus on degree to which curricular content in language covers issues of fluency and comprehension, and their interaction, in a sample of key countries. Focus on both national language and mother tongue. ○ Assess degree to which there is assessment guidance to teachers, and/or in the systemic assessment approaches (sample-based quality and learning outcomes assessment), to accurately gauge the above-mentioned skills, particularly in the early grades. Compare existing assessment guidance for assessing reading (and math? And writing?) in the countries to emerging international trends and literature on early grade assessment, and lessons learned from efforts such as ASER, Uwezo, EGRA, LAMP (while noting that the latter focuses on adults, and while noting that these efforts may have other purposes such as broad awareness rather than classroom practice). ✓ Assess whether books (and other learning materials) reflect the curricular guidelines well. Also, assess books in light of research literature on pedagogical effectiveness and economic cost-effectiveness. (See list of possible research questions in Section 2.3.8.).

	✓ Disseminate knowledge produced at appropriate venues and workshops.
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two international workshops • Four regional workshops • E-learning modules and materials • (Further comment invited.)
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All events completed by XX. (Further comment invited.) • All e-learning and other forms of distance education available by XX. (Further comment invited.)

2.3.2. Research-based instruction in early grades

Much research suggests that gradually presented phonics, phonological awareness, systematic feedback to all students, use of instructional time for practice, writing, use of scripted lessons, defined modules of specific duration, availability of textbooks built on the same principle would make all students literate, particularly if delivered in local languages that are consistently spelled. (Most of them were written down in recent centuries, in contrast to the spelling of European languages and especially English, which reflect older pronunciations.) However, as noted, FTI-S would not promote a single approach; the idea would be to encourage other approaches while at the same time having at least one option that in our view, and based on the best evidence we have, can produce results. While much is known, there are further areas worthy of investigation.

These knowledge issues to be addressed include:

- At the most general level, how to produce masses of textbooks and general reading books that are cost effective and pedagogically effective?
- Is daily brief feedback for every student (by a teacher and better students) a realistic and sustainable procedure during initial reading instruction? How are teachers of limited education likely to learn and apply this procedure given limited supervision? How can the better students be used to help classmates in systematized but feasible procedures?
- What should be the optimal duration of initial reading modules so as to teach all letters and essential diphthongs while keeping teachers focused on proximal goals?
- Are there significant efficiencies in instructional time or learning outcomes if letters are presented through a “linguistic” approach, or do commonsense orderings of letters bring about the same outcomes?
- Can the scripting of lessons for beginning reading be systematized so that new countries and languages could follow standardized procedures and save time? A process would be useful.
- Can the writing of textbooks be systematized, as for example, in a software program (BLT used by the Summer Institute of Linguistics or SynPhony by the Canada Institute of Linguistics)? Would such software be practically usable?

- What instructional and grouping methods can realistically be implemented in large classes (60-120 students) by teachers of limited education? (if any). Examples would be J groups and modifications.

2.3.3. Use of local languages in the instruction of basic skills

Linked mainly to literacy (but also to numeracy) is language of instruction. Students come to school with vocabulary and syntactical understanding of their mother tongue, and they may have sufficient command of languages spoken by neighbors and relatives to understand the simple concepts used in basic skills. However, the large numbers of languages in many countries create logistical problems in children's literacy. Textbooks and teachers must be dedicated to these efforts. These are some of the reasons why research is needed to enhance the utility of local languages under various circumstances.

The knowledge issues to be addressed include:

- Link to production of reading materials in mother tongue, both for direct instruction but also for pleasurable reading, and to capture local stories. Possible use of PPPs and partnerships with NGOs in this area. Various NGOs have experience in this area and have discovered inexpensive ways to do this.
- How many local languages do the residents of a country really speak and to what degrees of fluency?
- How many days, weeks of school interaction do children speaking one local language require in order to acquire sufficient knowledge of another local language and receive instruction in it?
- How many days, weeks of interaction do children need to become habituated to differences of dialects or similar languages and understand teachers or respond to questions?
- Logistical issues involved in multiple-home-language situations, but tempered against research on precisely how common this (unknown) and whether in fact when this is common, whether there is a sufficiently dominant root stock language that can be used to teach the most initial decoding skills without too much problem. This is a vastly under-researched area.
- How much preparation or study do teachers speaking one local language require in order to teach primary school in another local language? Which combinations in specific countries may be more feasible?
- Can children speaking one language be effectively made literate in a neighboring language, assuming no political problems? The hypothesis must be tested.

2.3.4. Effective early-childhood education methodology

Despite much conceptual emphasis on early childhood education, outcomes have been limited to specific rather high-cost experiences, and project designs have not worked well for low-income areas. Mainly middle-class people send their children to pre-school, and the relative advantage they obtain

increases the ‘Matthew effect.’ (The tendency of the already-advantaged to gain further advantage, while those without advantage fall further and further behind, leading to less income equality, later in life, as would be possible with more pedagogically-inclusive approaches.) The GRA would finance reviews and pilots to determine how best to deliver preschool education to low-income populations that support learning readiness and school readiness. Examples would be:

- Development of procedures for preschool educators to follow for sustainable interactive means of language development.
- Review on impact of health indicators on child development; school readiness in general (nutrition, for instance)
- Studies on instructional time and materials that would significantly improve performance scores among low-income children.
- Establishing the benefit amounts and areas that may be obtained from realistically implementable ECD programs.
- Review Early school years low cost assessments
- ECD programs that specifically foster literacy preparedness
- Experimentations on low cost, locally developed pedagogic materials supporting child development (cognitive, linguistic, physical and socio-emotional)
- Review of various preschool services promoting school readiness for disadvantaged children and in FTI countries.
- Workshops and/or flagship report work on ECD.

Were one SE to be interested in ECD as a whole, it would be possible to “package” the above list of issues, or most of them, into a single activity. It may be most convenient to package these into knowledge-sharing rather than researcher- or consultant-based knowledge production and knowledge packaging. For instance, a Community of Practice on Monitoring ECE Quality made up of a small group of strategically chosen countries (perhaps starting with one specific region) - those who are interested in and well-positioned to move forward with knowledge-sharing and piloting quality monitoring in their countries. Such a Community of Practice could act as an informal forum for discussing, validating and disseminating ECE quality frameworks.

It is important to note that FTI does not have a particular strategic mandate to work on ECD issues. However, FTI does have a mandate to work on all EFA Goals, and it is clear, furthermore, that quality and learning outcomes, which are particular strategic foci for FTI, are strongly affected by children’s ECD experience. Institutionally, though, it may be necessary for an ECD focus in GRA to be seen to lead to the strategic results that FTI is being judged by, in terms of FTI’s emerging results framework.

2.3.5. Effective and efficient math instruction

Math outcomes are poor at the early level, and teachers sometimes perform less well than students (as measured in SACMEQ). A broad range of critical variables has been mentioned in research and measurement, and variable philosophies are promoted. There is a need for targeted studies in determining the variables that do matter in low-income environments, and in remedying them effectively. A similar need exists for the remediation of teachers with limited ability to carry out elementary calculations fast and to explain concepts correctly to students. The work on early mathematics is admittedly at an earlier stage than the work on literacy (and life skills even earlier, but one needs to prioritize), so more preliminary work will still need to be done on mathematics, including assessment techniques that have meaning at the local level but can also be generalized.

Identified issues are:

- Studying the relationships and causality patterns between prominent math-related variables (eg. magnitude processing, prediction accuracy) and actual student achievement
- Determination of feasible instructional activities and amounts of practice in K-3 (or higher) that would significantly improve the performance of curricular math objectives for poorer students
- Math textbooks that effectively and most economically teach the required concepts
- Means to improve teachers' math knowledge and automaticity of calculations
- Role of local counting systems and cultural issues (e.g., but one example only, the fact that English and French do not follow as simple a generative rule as Spanish and then, certainly, some Asian languages—where French, for instance, calls 85 four-twenties and five, as opposed to 8-tens and 5; or most Western languages do not call 20 2-tens but have a special name, starting a simple generative rule typically only with the 100s) and greater sensitivity to how instruction needs to adapt (and another reason to be careful with international benchmarking). Cultural and linguistic issues matter in mathematics education, particularly in early mathematics education, and these interact with home-language issues. Little of this has received the serious research it merits.

2.3.6. Teacher training and supervision

The investments in teacher training have shown limited connection to results, because in the past much teacher training appears rather theoretical, there is limited classroom practice using techniques that are quickly-rewarding to the teachers and the children (in that teachers can see unmistakable progress in the children), there is insufficient modeling of behaviors and classroom feedback, and many other issues. Teachers may attend and even pass tests of pre-service and in-service training, but their “kinetic” (actual physical presence and movement, and what has been called “being with-it”) classroom behaviors seem uninfluenced by the training content. Thus, several studies have shown limited or no effects of teacher training, *as often practiced*, on student achievement. But there are alternatives. Teacher training at least partly through observational learning, particularly for critical lower-grade behaviors, but

this effect must be streamlined and demonstrated. The role of direct and frequent support and monitoring and supervision is often recognized verbally but not practiced (often for lack of budget allocation to transport and under-training of the teacher mentors themselves), though studies show their value. Also, teachers with limited formal education must learn more of the content necessary to teach students in areas such as basic math. Furthermore, in many cases teachers are trained without involving principals, and without involving district officers and supervisors so that they can create both accountability *and* a supportive environment in which the training can take hold. As noted, a great deal of experience shows the importance of fairly intensive in situ follow-up. However, this is expensive. As a result, cascade methods are often tried, but without strong results based on measured evidence in children's learning outcomes. In this section, and elsewhere in this note, we make a call for experimentation with the use of technology, such as video clips, that can be used to demonstrate effective use of instructional techniques in the classroom, and thus allow for some measure of cascading but with much higher fidelity than has been done in the past.

Issues would include:

- How can observational learning methods be institutionalized for helping teachers manage classroom-relevant, practical techniques that provide quick feedback by showing results at child level? Which procedures are feasible and what are the effects of these methods? What role can technology (e.g., videos) play (as they are increasingly feasible even in the poorest countries)? These can be used to provide mass-scale training of teachers that nonetheless does not lose fidelity, as is often the case with mass-scale training. How can video be combined with supportive supervisory visits and mentoring?
- Aside from feed-forward modeling, what is the contribution of detailed planning and visualization processes to these methods? Experiments would be needed, and toolkits would be written.
- Piloting lesson scripting in various circumstances, developing an audiovisual "toolkit" for this work. (Activity repeats from reading and may be appropriate for both groups).
- Proposing and piloting technologies and usage procedures likely to facilitate essential supervision from a distance. How sustainable would the likely procedures be? A literature review of likely technology would be useful.
- Testing sustainable cash on delivery procedures, documenting results of various cash on delivery pilots.
- The relationship between pre-service and in-service or CPD of teachers will need to be explored. In many countries the replacement rate of teachers is low and thus in-service and CPD are a good way to have quick impact. Nonetheless, looking at how pre-service training incorporates research-based reading methods will be a good idea.

2.3.7. Remediation strategies for students falling behind

Low-income countries are faced with large numbers of students who fail to learn the very basic skills that subsequently become prerequisites for more advanced skills. Remediation is needed before students are promoted, but it has received little attention, except in the form of private tutoring. There is a need to develop methods and strategies for efficient remediation and to encourage countries to adopt remediation policies.

Specific further issues will become more detailed after a literature review presents the outstanding issues and potential choices at the early-grade level, at the least. Potential activities would be:

- Literature reviews of remediation methods in specific countries, including detailed descriptions of the methods used as well as evidence regarding effectiveness;
- Designs of effective remediation programs, materials development, logistics, timeframe.
- Pilots of remediation courses likely to be effective with various populations. A research basis would have to be shown (partly derived from the literature review that will be carried out).
- Development of country-level remediation strategies (to take higher-grade skills and private tuition into account) and seek to maximize the proportion of students mastering basic skills.

2.3.8. Textbook production, financing and distribution, and use

Textbook issues are lengthy and difficult. The provision in the lower-income countries often fails due to expense, delays, and corruption. Even when textbooks are available, their quantity and quality may be suboptimal. The content may be limited, the reading methods may be inefficient, the math presentations may confuse beginning readers. Textbook illustrations could be too confusing for students with limited exposure. The research base for producing them may be nonexistent. Finally there are findings related to size and spacing or letter complexity that are unknown and therefore not used. Thus, the textbooks may not be cost-effective because of their high cost: what can be done to lower their cost? An informal consultation at the World Bank (April 24-29, 2011) brought out problems and solutions that will be studied, and the relevant questions will be modified. At this time, a partial list of the issues is below.

- What are the most important factors that influence textbook pricing the most? Which of these could be realistically controlled, and by how much could textbook prices be lowered if controlled? (Including color use, formatting, paper tariffs, rent-seeking, collusion, etc)? Which of these factors related to economics and markets (monopolization, small print runs, collusion, corruption)?
- How many actual words (not just new vocabulary) should grade 1 textbooks have, given the likely existence of a single book available for poor students (if available at all). What are the optimal presentations of letters, diphthongs, syllabic letters etc. in various languages and scripts so as to speed up automaticity? What is the contribution of illustrations in convincing children

to pursue further reading at various levels of proficiency? The perceptual and emotional aspects of illustration must become better understood and documented.

- For the textbooks of the lower grades (1-3) layout may optimize costs? What is the most economical configuration given picture size and frequency, colors, fonts, white space? How repetitive and predictable should be the placement of text and graphics? How much use of white space that has high paper costs? How much use of complex typographical conventions and multiplicity of exercises per page, which appear to generate interest but may simply generate confusion? Observational and computer-led studies (e.g. using ‘eyelink’’) could be conducted.
- Similarly, what issues should inform the design, number of pages, contents, presentation of textbooks for the higher grades of primary schools as well as lower-secondary schools?
- How does relative complexity in textbooks affect the probability that students will work with the content? According to some research, modest challenge may contribute to greater learning outcomes.
- What issues specifically impact the development, printing, distribution of textbooks in local languages? Studies, pilots, development in specific countries and language configurations would be financed.
- There should be development and testing of glossaries and dictionaries in local languages to contain the vocabulary taught in schools of interested FTI Partner countries. The GRA activities could finance their development in specific countries and also evaluate their usage if feasible.
- How feasible is the use of e-readers in upper primary grades? Some experiments might be financed.
- Issues of workbooks and other learning materials, not just textbooks, will need to be considered.
- Link to production of reading materials in mother tongue, both for direct instruction but also for pleasurable reading, and to capture local stories. Possible use of PPPs and partnerships with NGOs in this area. Various NGOs have experience in this area and have discovered inexpensive ways to do this.
- What can be done not just with textbooks but also with worksheets and other forms of learning materials that require distribution and budget? Means to lower their cost and/or improve their distribution?

2.3.9. Learner and system assessment

Given the indicators FTI-S plans to recommend in response to the expert panel noted in section 2.1, and in collaboration with other institutions, it seems necessary to improve learner assessment in three areas: end-of-cycle written assessment, early written assessment, and oral assessment.

To monitor performance changes and evaluate the outcomes of various experiences, a regular program for measuring reading and math achievement can then be recommended to Partner countries and donor agencies. Achievement tests are needed that are valid and reliable for the lower grades. They should show progress through at least the primary and the lower secondary grades in important subjects. Their scores should be intuitively comprehensible if possible. Also they should be quick and inexpensive to set up and to score every 2-3 years, and they should not overly tax the limited psychometric capabilities of low-income countries. If possible, they ought to provide some means of comparison with other countries, though this feature is not indispensable.

Furthermore, it is important to note that there is no implication here that assessment will somehow automatically improve instruction. Much of the rest of this note focuses on ways in which instruction can be improved (e.g., use of mother tongue, improved use of textbooks, practical classroom skills for teachers. But assessment (appropriate assessment) is part of the set of areas in which improvement is needed.

Furthermore, other aspects of performance assessment, particularly emphasizing the school level rather than the system level, are needed. These aspects pertain to issues such as time on task, effectiveness of school management and finances, etc. Various partners have already started work on this. Furthermore, the upcoming FTI results framework will likely propose indicators that can be used in this benchmarking.

The following activity description suggests a possible approach. The activity description could be, and most likely would have to be, disaggregated for each type of assessment.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage emergence of standards and good practices in end-of-cycle assessment, early written assessment of literacy and mathematics, and oral assessment. Including downstream use of public examinations. (With caution.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Country specific activities related to development of scalable experiences ✓ E-learning or other forms of distance training. ✓ Technical guidelines and reviews published. • Encourage and pilot system experience with critical service-delivery indicators, especially as they pertain and link to the FTI M&E framework (under development).
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical workshops and knowledge dissemination • Technical assistance • Field trials of service delivery indicators, further trialing of international and regional assessments
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Encourage experiences with end-of-cycle written assessment, applied at the appropriate grade, possibly using the pre-PIRLS framework, in a given set of initial countries (and without necessarily using a fixed grade), financed by GRA. Use the experiences to further inform other countries. Pre-PIRLS technical assistance and learning could be encouraged to provide specialized services to FTI by taking a packaged approach to a given set of FTI countries. A possible SE could be the World Bank or IIEP,

	<p>with IEA technical assistance, and full country collaboration, subject to further discussion. To be further discussed is the link with later-grade assessments now done by PASEC, SACMEQ, and LLECE, which could be said to be end-of-cycle equivalent, or close to it; as well, include sample-based assessments already practiced in a few countries at or near the end of cycle. Sharing of experiences across these actors, and with the countries themselves, would be needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bring together experiences of the few regional organizations (PASEC, LLECE) and countries which do provide written early literacy or mathematics assessments with other regional organizations which do not (e.g., SACMEQ), and may continue not to because it is not in their mandate, but which could nonetheless provide linkages to countries that are interested in early literacy assessment. ✓ Use a consultative process led by an official institution with experience in oral assessment, such as UIS, and with the participation of countries, NGOs, and scholars, to combine learning from its and others' experiences, and produce some standards whereby oral assessments can be used for appropriate uses (see elsewhere in this note for what such appropriate uses might be). ✓ Given the similar nature of all these, given the need to continue to work on a set of mutually-agreeable indicators (something akin to what is described in section 2.1), and given the link between this activity and the need to collect data on how these indicators are proceeding (section 2.2). • Assessment of existing experiences with school-level service delivery indicators focusing on crucial inputs and processes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ School environment, teacher competence, financing, student learning and pedagogical management could be areas covered. ✓ Experiments would develop information on optimal sample size needed to obtain relatively fast snapshot of system functioning as viewed from school level. ✓ Analysis of optimality of depth versus speed and focus. ✓ Field trials in sufficient number of FTI countries to provide evidence and lessons for further spread. ✓ Ensure collaboration and lessons learned from various efforts in this area, and linkage to system-level benchmarking (see section 2.3.10). ✓ Link to FTI M&E framework.
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices shared and documented in three assessment areas, types, or levels (oral early, written early, written end-of-cycle). Standards of usage, examples of best practices, created or referenced, simplified, disseminated. • Country experiences with end-of-cycle written assessments such as pre-PIRLS fostered. • Field trials, and lessons on with service delivery index produced and shared.
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All workshop events and agreements completed by XX. (Further comment as to timeline possibilities welcome.) • All e-learning and other forms of distance education available by XX. (Further comment as to timeline possibilities welcome.)

A plethora of international comparison assessments at the primary school level, but most fail to fulfill the above requirements. For the upper primary grades, there are international comparison tests in French, English, and Spanish (PASEC, SACMEQ, LLECE), as well as in the languages of countries participating in TIMSS and PIRLS. There are also country-level achievement tests and public examinations.

- Monitoring efforts aside, few countries have made changes on the basis of the standardized tests. Efforts should be made to interpret this phenomenon and find solutions. A statement of best practices is needed, to drive presentations and technical assistance may help governments identify realistically actionable issues given the results of oral and written reading assessments.
- Instruction can become more effective only if instructional time is measured and improved. Considerable research has already been carried out in the measurement of time loss at various levels. Surveys have been used for school-level time losses and teacher absenteeism, and observation instruments have been used for time use at the classroom level. A package tool containing selected surveys and snapshots similarly quantified and of low inference will be prepared in order to be implemented in selected countries.
- Designing a 3 Rs “PISA” or All-Grade-Reading Fluency test. It could consist of letters, words per minute, and “shallow” comprehension questions. Administration could also include a math test, such as a two minute magnitude processing test under experimental development and a time writing test. Assistance from an official convening agency with experience in oral assessment, which could distil and somewhat codify best practices from the experiences of countries, NGOs, and academics, would be helpful.
- The early-grade set of tests ought to be institutionalized outside the FTI Secretariat, possibly to an organization handling interactions between PASEC, SACMEQ, or LLECE. Reading math, and writing fluency would be administered along with international comparison tests (PASEC, SACMEQ, LLECE); interested organizations would receive financing for doing so.
- Studies of substituting a 3-minute group test (wordchains) for the more intensive individual reading tests. An organization administering reading tests would also administer this instrument and compare outcomes.
- More can be done to make systematic comparisons of early literacy oral assessments and provide a good standard. This would include the issue of whether prosody or timing are good (equivalent, at least for practical purposes, or timing is really that important?) ways to look at fluency.
- Improving the Stallings Classroom snapshot and instructional time use surveys to produce an integrated package with associated software and audiovisual administration procedures.
- Assessing the effect of various treatments on girls performance that Partner countries may be administering (such as scholarships, nutritional interventions)

- Some countries use public examinations effectively for improving instruction (e.g., Kenya). While this may lead to “exam-driven” systems the fact remains that some of these countries do have higher cognitive achievement, even in non-routine tasks, and that these exams are the only form of real accountability the system faces. How much can be done to harness the power of these examinations to improve performance, while at the same time avoiding the obvious dangers, is a greatly under-explored and too-readily-dismissed area.

2.3.10. Systemic improvements and QA frameworks

Some partners remarked that the initial focus of the proposed work was too oriented at the ultimate delivery point, namely the classroom, and the teacher-learner interaction. Some noted that one element missed due to this “excessive” (our emphasis) classroom or pedagogic orientation was the political-economic and institutional development issues needed to generate sustainability and support to an approach; as well as elements of institutional change management. Those issues were noted by FTI-S, and an activity is proposed to deal with that. Others noted that another element missed due to this excessive pedagogical focus was the need to make sure that overall quality-assurance and quality-delivery systems are as good as they ought to be, and are aligned with the more classroom-oriented results initially in the concept note. At the same time, issues of motivation and incentives are missing.

We agree and have proposed activities (immediately below and in an activity description pertaining to political economy and institutions) that various partners could engage in and that the GRA should be willing to support. However, we would also like to dialogue a couple of points, at the risk of being repetitive with the foregoing. While systems and political-economic/institutional approaches are needed to ensure sustainability and scale-up, in our view there is a relative dearth of effective, sharp, results-oriented experiences with boosting quality in the classroom in the developing world, that demonstrate large-sized impacts, and via a focus on the learning-teaching process. There is, increasingly, work on assessment, but relatively little work on how to feed that work into teaching (with a few exceptions), in a direct and helpful way that teachers can effectively use. Similarly, there has been work on quality assurance systems issues such as district management, accountability methods, and innovations such as report cards, often in the context of school autonomy and site-based management, but they are often insufficiently grounded in what needs to happen in the classroom, partly because there are not enough experiences of classroom (and teacher support and supervision) practices that are indeed demonstrably capable of boosting learning. Furthermore, their “effect sizes” are sometimes (maybe most of the time) disappointingly small (partly because they are predicated on manipulating one single aspect of school management, and often a relatively secondary aspect)—only around 0.2 or thereabouts. But the developing world needs effect sizes more in the range of 1. And there are, again, quite a few innovations in the political economy and sustainability of reform, often involving civil society, the private sector, teacher unions, etc., but, again, they are often focused on access equality, out-of-school issues, on efficiency of input usage (hence experiments with decentralization and formula funding, for instance) and also on funding equity and social justice, and not so often on actual learning results (which are the key to equity, in the end). Thus, both partner countries and partner agencies have lacked a link between these sorts of efforts and whatever happens in the classroom that can actually boost learning in a sharp and noticeable way, and that can provide a tangible sense of progress and

satisfaction for teachers, communities, and Ministries; and that can also lead to a gradual build-up of lessons learned about how to boost learning.

So, while we agree with the need to carry out work on these more systemic issues, we believe that a great deal of focus needs to rest on the classroom aspects; it is what all the systems are for, in the end. We hope partners agree that an approach that puts a lot of emphasis on the teacher, the classroom, and the school is needed and refreshing, and that this continues to be a distinct feature of efforts going forward. That said, though, we agree that more work on the systemic aspects is needed. With that in view, we present a possible activity in tabular form. Again, this presentation cannot do justice to the richness of what partners might intend. It just forms a placeholder against an eventually richer description to be discussed with particular partners.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop quality assurance frameworks or benchmark systems, and agreements amongst countries to step up their own use of quality assurance frameworks. • Specific areas of interest, given their importance, would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher management and policy systems and benchmarks ○ Assessment system benchmarking (note link to reading assessment—while noting that the aspects of assessment noted here are the general issues referring to assessment systems, not the specific ones referring to reading) • Development of quantitative service-delivery indexes or benchmarks based on <i>school</i>-level indicators of time on task, teacher effectiveness, finance, etc.
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-based analysis and development • Workshops to propose and delineate field trials and country involvement/adoption¹ • Meeting(s) to coordinate emergence of such framework when proposed by more than one partner²

¹ In our view it is important to note that most countries of course already have elements of quality assurance frameworks or benchmark systems. Thus, it is important not to base program assumptions on the notion of countries trialing whole new systems (unless they specifically desire to do so). However, not all aspects of such systems, as they currently exist in countries, work equally well, and sometimes they have not been recently thought-through or widely dialogued, within the countries themselves, as *integrated systems* (so they may be a bit stale and so no one looks or critiques their functioning as systems). Furthermore, in some countries these systems may actually work reasonably well, in the sense of systems-engineering (e.g., assessment and exams data are linked to teacher supervision and support, and both are in turn linked to teacher professional development, sometimes even with specific referral systems) but the pedagogical content is sometimes vague or not of proven effectiveness, so the systems do not result in actual improvement in learning outcomes. Thus, what is most often needed may be: a) a shoring up of aspects of the systems that may be weak but not wholesale adoption of an entire approach, b) refreshing the conceptualization of the system as a true system, and c) retooling the pedagogical or “technical” content of the systems so as to actually boost learning outcomes (or indeed other tangible expressions of school quality).

² Some partners have different elements and/or varying approaches on this. It is important to unify forces and chart clear ways forward.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field tests and trials of frameworks (or aspects of frameworks) or indices • Production of manuals, descriptions, hosting of web-based sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Web-sites with comparative information on how countries' policies and practices compare to benchmarks. • Dissemination at workshops
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes and other measures of quality
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Convene consultative forums with both technical experts and other partners. ✓ Simultaneously convene consultative forums with partner countries to ensure demand-led approach and ensure a balance of country interests.³ ✓ Pilot framework or aspects of framework (see footnote referenced above) or field-based service delivery indexes. ✓ Disseminate framework ideas even prior to trial, since trials may or may not be complete trials, and countries may desire to experiment with certain aspects relatively on their own. ✓ Dissemination of results of piloting, as a matter of process and mutual learning regarding implementation. ✓ Documentation. ✓ Ensuring sustainability via strengthening of academic institutions within countries, and as institutions. Document cases of good practices that already exist in countries where the academy is responsive, in an institutional way, to applied research and technical assistance needs (e.g., MISR at Makerere University, faculty of education at Kenyatta University in Kenya).
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed consultations with experts, partner agencies, and countries • Field tests with lessons learned produced, including field application of benchmarking frameworks and assessment of local institutionalization of ability to support educational improvement (e.g., in-country universities, think-tanks, and CSOs) • Live dissemination of lessons learned • Documentary dissemination and repository of lessons learned. • Panel or workshop on best practices for institutional involvement of academic institutions in ongoing school and system quality monitoring and methodological development
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All events completed by XX. (Further comment on reasonable expectations

³ FTI-S has a mandate to work with low-income countries. Other partners' agendas include middle-income or even high-income countries. How this focus issue gets worked out in practice requires more work. As a matter of practical reality it seems more likely that international agencies could have more impact on low and middle income countries, and that improvement in high-income countries is more a matter for those countries' collaborative processes via their own Ministries of Education or OECD rather than UN-family international agencies or international NGOs.

	<p>welcomed.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All e-learning and other forms of distance education available by XX. (Further comment on reasonable expectations welcomed.)
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2.3.11. Political economy, accountability, and sustainability, including local level

As noted above, some partners have suggested that the approaches discussed in the original concept note were perhaps “naïve” from a political-economic and institutional point of view, since the constraint to improved teaching and learning is not always a “technical” one, having to do with either the teaching-learning processes, improved inputs, or even with systemic approaches to quality control. Instead, issues of accountability, both at the local level and also accountability pressure on the state to deliver at the macro level, were also noted as important by a few partners. In fact, FTI has already had some experience with supporting the involvement of civil society and other actors in political-economic dialogue and support to sector planning, namely the CSEF grant which was enabled under the EPDF. Given various partners’ comments, it seems worthwhile to at least consider continuing some activity similar to this one. With that in mind, and again cautioning that these tabular presentations cannot honor the richness of the discussion and must be seen only as a telegraphic placeholder for now, the following activity description can be sketched. It also has to be noted that some of the ideas pertaining to accountability and political economy are particularly cross-cutting, so it is difficult to separate them according to the GRA thematic areas of Out of School Children, Quality/Learning Outcomes, and Finance. In fact, accountability is, in a sense, the intersection point of all these. For the sake of convenience, we list the key activities here, and, in a departure from some of the other tables presenting potential activities, we flag the activities that link across to the other two thematic areas of the GRA. One last point to make is that the sectoral goals of most civil society coalitions in most of the countries in FTI are fully compatible with FTI goals, so in the table below we take it for granted that the ultimate goals (e.g., what the advocacy is *for*) are compatible and focus on the activities.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity-building to improve role of civil society organizations in improving education planning and policy-setting, creating social accountability over plan execution and implementation, and advocating for innovations that increase accountability for both access (Out of School agenda), learning (Quality/Learning Outcomes agenda), and fiscal efficiency and equity (Finance agenda). Assessment of reform implementation processes via on-the-ground research of political economy and institutional change, and sharing with others.
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct training of national coalitions Workshops and peer-to-peer learning and exchange events Action research and learning-by doing Publications and dissemination
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes and other measures of quality Outputs

Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity development in management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmarking staff and technical needs of international CSO coalitions to supervise regional and local ones, using Foundations and other similar organizations to benchmark ○ Assessment of staff and technical levels and staffing ○ Develop more systematic ways to assess and advise NECs on capacity needed, and assess ○ Develop streamlined response to actually improve capacity via direct training and peer-based learning, and use of policy and procedures manuals ○ Develop more transparent and rigorous ways to fund NECs, develop better balance between formula based and more negotiation-intensive proposal-and-budget based allocations ○ Distinctions between implementation NGO and advocacy/policy NGO work and strategic planning and training in the latter • Specific areas of technical advocacy capacity development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Girls’ education ○ Learning outcomes ○ Education in post - conflict and emergency situations ○ Access to school for specialized populations (disability, those with greatest disadvantages such as the intersection of the deeply poor, rural, female, and minority) ○ Budget tracking and budget execution; accountability for fiscal transparency and efficient spending; analysis of efficiency and corruption, including expenditure tracking ○ Policy and legal review of policies and regulations, evaluation techniques • Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Techniques for improving Legislative and Parliamentary work ○ Maintaining stock of position notes and databases to be able to make quick analyses and pronouncements on breaking policy issues ○ Appropriate targeting of advocacy efforts ○ How to evaluate effectiveness of advocacy ○ Feeding technical positions to political campaigns, encourage candidate dialogue on education issues
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All events completed by XX. • All e-learning and other forms of distance education available by XX.

3. Technical workshops, peer learning events, and conferences

Existing knowledge and further knowledge as it develops, on every one of the technical issues listed above, need to be disseminated in appropriate venues. However, a larger need exists for training various stakeholders on knowledge that is not included above. A large unmet need exists for technical information, and there is no clear institutional base for delivering it. Universities, consultant companies, and NGOs have followed philosophies, whose research base is sometimes uncertain. Perhaps for these reasons, international organizations have had little or no capacity on instructional issues. The GRA would finance the FTI Secretariat and training organizations for the provision of targeted and modules aimed at filling these gaps. (Examples would be the World Bank’s WBI, the UNESCO IIEP, etc). Audio-visually

developed configurations of knowledge modules would be assembled to meet the needs of various stakeholders as needed, either by distance, residential workshops, in-country workshops.

Those applying for financing under this category would present detailed research-based material for consideration to the FTI Secretariat. The providers would ensure follow-up that would result in long-term retention and use of the knowledge rather than a one-time brief exposure.

Note that the technical content of all the training and workshops would be around the key 8 topics identified above.

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure knowledge sharing on all of the topics that pertain to improved reading and mathematics in the early grades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ International higher-level workshops to generate motivation and exchange both technical and implementation information with leadership of ministries, donor agencies, and NGOs. ✓ Regional events with similar focus. ✓ Country specific activities related to development of scalable experiences ✓ E-learning or other forms of distance training. ✓ Technical guidelines and reviews published.
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical workshops and knowledge dissemination • Technical assistance • Intervention to inform scale up
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge-sharing would be led by a SE that is expert at training and capacity building. This would apply in particular to larger events and on-line or other forms of distance capacity building. • Smaller country-based events, tied to country-based implementation, would be coordinated in a different manner. • A form of certification could be sought and offered. It should have as much labor market value as possible. • Initial workshops would be based on existing knowledge. As knowledge is refined or new information comes about, the new knowledge would be introduced into workshops and seminars. • In areas where knowledge does not exist yet or does not exist in a sufficiently “packaged” form FTI-S could commission the needed knowledge production and would closely supervise the preparation of training modules along with an SE that is expert in knowledge-sharing management, such as the management of online modules and learning. • In other areas, knowledge may already be ready and packaged and there may be a need only for dissemination. Various partners may already have such knowledge, based for example on Impact Evaluations that have already been carried out, and may even have well-developed workshop agendas with a useful mix of components. • Combinations of the two (new knowledge, existing and already-packaged

	<p>knowledge) are also possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some partners may be content-neutral experts in capacity-building, but with considerable expertise in knowledge management and event-management. Their input and participation may be of importance and ideas are welcome.
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two international workshops • Four regional workshops • E-learning modules and materials on all eight topics
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All events completed by XX. • All e-learning and other forms of distance education available by XX.

4. Scalable experiences, TA around Education Sector Plans (ESPs)

In addition to knowledge-generation and packaging, along with knowledge dissemination, GRA will work with country-based SEs and LEGs who would like to develop experiences that will produce sharp improvements in learning outcomes in early grade reading and mathematics. The purpose of these experiences is thus to create serious forward movement on learning outcomes at a national level, something which has thus far escaped all EFA and FTI efforts.

In this area, we envision working with a variety of SEs, one for each of various countries. However, the typical set of actions implemented by an SE would be as in the table below. Not all actions will need to be done in all countries. This will depend on the country's interests, and what actions have already been performed. However, the table presents a typical profile.

Note that the technical content of all the training and workshops would be around the key 8 topics identified above. In particular, country experiences can be used to test certain ideas and produce knowledge that can then be used regionally and globally to improve learning outcomes, and can be transferred to other country settings.

4.1. Summary of envisioned activities

Proposed activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country-level experiences in national scale-up of sharp improvements in learning outcomes
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local knowledge sharing • Intervention to inform scale up
Link with Results framework indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Improved learning outcomes
Proposed approach:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTI-S in collaboration with partners would develop a list of interested countries and interested SEs • In countries with existing efforts, FTI-S would formalize relationship with relevant SE or other implementing agency, and provide support and technical assistance as needed, in the specific areas noted below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ In some cases the SE will be well-supported already. In that case FTI-S would only seek to help the FTI partnership understand the lessons learned emanating from that experience. • In countries with new efforts, FTI-S would work with the CA, or an SE wishing

	<p>to take the lead, the LEG, and in particular the Ministry, to define an activity and choose an SE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work could lead off with a workshop to explain the basic idea, what can be achieved, and what it would take • Eventually FTI-S would facilitate TA and networking to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Apply assessments that are suitable to developing a baseline and/or motivating change ✓ Identify scale-up path ✓ Target geographical areas of work if country desires ✓ Develop lesson plans and methods ✓ Improve reading materials and develop method for distributing ✓ Develop and implement methods for coaching teachers ✓ Apply any of the innovations listed as appropriate to further knowledge for other countries (as well as the country in question) ✓ Develop an impact assessment or evaluation approach, and apply it ✓ Package lessons learned for regional and global sharing. These will include: a) knowledge of what can be achieved, b) further specific technical knowledge based on impact evaluation, and c) logistical and managerial knowledge of how to scale up ✓ Over time ensure that the lessons learned find their way as quickly as possible into ESPs to ensure scale-up (it could be at the outset if there is an ESP process starting up)
Expected Deliverables:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-up and ongoing experiences in X countries.
Timeframe:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences started up by XX.

5. Summary

To help Partner countries deliver quality education to their poorer constituents, important knowledge needs to be obtained and applied. GRA financing would make it possible to produce it, synthesize it, and disseminate it in appropriate and comprehensible forms. For some topics, mere literature reviews would be necessary, and for some others, field experimentation would first be necessary; no country should simply adopt a methodology or approach with at the very least customizing it; in some cases starting with a completely novel approach. Under all circumstances, the goal would be to lead into full-scale implementation and institutionalization in the countries which have asked for assistance. And the assistance would in most cases be implemented through various partners.

Priorities were presented on the topics of reading fluency, instruction in local languages, early childhood education, math instruction, teacher training, remediation strategies for students falling behind, textbook availability for students, performance measurement and evaluation, and knowledge communication to various stakeholders of important technical information that already exists. Also the interactions in some of the questions would be studied, as appropriate.

In many respects the possibility of the GRA funding presents a unique opportunity to resolve issues that have long-remained unanswered due to a lack of specific knowledge or interest by researchers who carry out work for their own purposes. This evidence-based customization for lower-income countries, on a demand-led basis, but with specific documentation of results, could have a sizeable impact in the improvement of learning outcomes in Partner countries and can result in lessons-shared across countries.