EARLY GRADE READING (EGR) PROJECT

EGR COMPLEMENTARY READING MATERIALS

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List of Abbreviations

ANERA   American Near East Refugee Aid

EGR   Early Grade Reading

G   Grade

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

KG   Kindergarten

MOEHE   Ministry of Education and Higher Education

MSA   Modern Standard Arabic

NIET   National Institute of Education and Training

PA   Palestinian Authority

RAMP   Reading and Math Project - Jordan

TWG   Technical Working Group

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

Teaching reading to young children is a complex process. Young children develop reading skills and strategies at different rates and reach benchmarks at different times. For most children, becoming a good reader means having access to good teaching and to materials that will support their educational development. Effective reading programs offer a wide range of activities that support learning, including:

- Reading aloud to help children understand the structure of written language, expand their knowledge of words, and learn new ways of using language

- Individual reading to help them become independent, get more practice, and choose books for themselves

- Instructional reading, which involves a carefully designed program to help readers expand their skills and strategies

Student reading a decodable book (Photo: RTI)

A key factor in reading development is reading books that offer **the right level of support and challenge**. When books are matched to readers, the young readers can continue their successful progress to becoming an accomplished reader.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) Early Grade Reading Project (EGR) cooperated closely with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE) to provide each student in EGR classrooms with age- and grade-level appropriate reading materials. In March 2018 EGR formed the Materials Development Technical Working Group (TWG) comprised of 10 members from four MOEHE General Directorates: General Education – Kindergarten (KG), Supervision and Educational Qualifications; National Institute of Education and Training (NIET); and Information Technology. The TWG methodically progressed through many stages before the complementary reading materials reached the classrooms: developing a book leveling instrument, inventorying the available books in the schools and in the market, leveling the available books, identifying the gaps, and finally developing and/or purchasing needed reading materials. By project end, EGR had developed or procured over 100,000 titles of leveled readers, decodable readers, big books, and read-aloud books to provide the 104 schools that EGR supports with complementary reading materials for KG–Grade 2 classrooms.

Leveled Readers and Readability

Leveled Readers and Readability

EGR, in coordination with a TWG from the MOEHE, developed criteria to determine the grade-level appropriateness of the complementary reading materials. EGR considered two factors in determining a book's appropriateness: level and readability. Both leveling and readability are necessary in determining the texts that students should be reading.

Leveled reading removes the "one size fits all" approach to reading, giving each child the opportunity to develop essential skills at their own pace. Leveled readers are complementary reading materials that are available to children at different stages of reading. Typically, the teacher will assess the reading level of the child, place them with other students of similar level, and match each group or student with books that are sufficiently challenging to make progress but not so difficult as to frustrate and demotivate the child. Leveled readers are categorized into levels of difficulty that facilitate matching the book with the reading level of students. Ideally, at the beginning of the school year, the student sits with the teacher and reads a book that is at that grade level. The teacher asks the student to answer questions about the text or to retell the story. The teacher is looking for a book that a child can read at 90–95% accuracy with about 70% comprehension to find their level.

Without leveled readers, all students must read the same text whether it is above or below their reading level. Since not all children develop at the same rate in terms of reading, teachers must be prepared for having multiple reading levels within the same class.

Leveled readers can be used for partner reading or guided reading in small groups. This type of reading helps the teacher focus and give attention to a child who is having difficulty.

Leveled readers, therefore, have many advantages. By differentiating instruction, teachers can help all learners improve their reading competence at their own rate. Classroom experience, supported by research, shows that children read familiar words more quickly than unfamiliar words. Reading the same book together as a class group can be minimized in favor of students reading books at their own level.

"Readability" to most reading professionals usually means the application of a readability formula to determine the difficulty of text. In classrooms and publishing houses, readability is often thought of as an objective numerical score obtained by quantifying the readability criteria. Traditional readability formulas are based on two measures that have been found to be reliable and valid by many research studies:

1. Syntactic difficulty, which is measured by sentence length
2. Semantic difficulty, which includes word length measured in syllables and letters. Word frequency is also considered.

"Leveling" also yields a score of difficulty, but it is less objective and considers some subjective factors of judgment. Both readability and leveling are necessary in determining the texts that students should be reading.

The "perfect" classroom or school library would have a large set of books organized in levels of difficulty from the easy books that a beginning reader might read to the longer, complex books that advanced readers will select. EGR's goal was to provide sets of leveled readers in the schools in which the project works.

Again, when the proper, leveled books are selected, for readability, students can read with approximately 90% accuracy, so teachers should look for a child reading at 90–95% accuracy with about 70% comprehension. At these percentages, students can enjoy the story without an overwhelming number of "roadblocks" that interfere with comprehension. Students focus on the meaning of the story and application of various reading strategies to problem solve when they do hit a roadblock in their vocabulary or reading ability. Independent reading with comprehension is the goal; guided reading provides the framework to ensure that students can apply strategies to make meaning from print.

Readability and Leveling Criteria and Assessment

The TWG, supported by RTI educational specialists, reviewed international and regional book leveling instruments and readability formulas. Relying heavily on the Fountas and Pinnell Text Level Gradient leveling tool,[1] the group selected the indicators to determine the readability and the leveling criteria of each book the project procured or developed.

Readability

Again, the two measures of readability that have been found to be reliable and valid by many research studies:

- Syntactic difficulty, which is measured by sentence length
- Semantic difficulty, which includes word length measured in syllables and letters. Word frequency is also considered.

There is no hierarchy of importance or weighting among these factors. Each poses a challenge to the ease of reading and meaningful communication of what is being read. Skillful authors (and skillful readers) use these features to make the reading experience more effective.

The TWG selected five indicators described in **Table 1** to support readability.

Table 1.   **Readability criteria**

Area	Criteria
Text/print features	Number of words in the passage
	Number of pages
	Number of lines on the page
Word features	Average length of the word (by syllables)
Sentence features	Avg. number of words in a sentence

EGR could not consider a few of the universally recognized indicators, such as use of high-frequency words or complexity of vocabulary, as documentation of these indicators did not exist in the Palestinian system for early grade reading and writing. The MOEHE had not developed word frequency lists or commonly used vocabulary in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) for the early grades.

To determine readability using the selected indicators, the TWG began reviewing books currently used in West Bank classrooms. By entering numerous examples of text from narrative and informational texts from each grade level, the TWG used the computer program *Word Counter* to record word frequency, the average length of words and sentences, number of syllables per word, and sentences per page.

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[1] Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Following the analysis of texts, the TWG developed the descriptors for each indicator. The TWG used Emmett Betts' levels of reading[2] to determine if the text was the appropriate level for the child:

- Easy = 95% of words read correctly or better

- Instructional = 90 to 95% of words read correctly

- Frustrational = less than 90% of words read correctly.

The team acknowledged that Betts' leveling tool was developed for English text. However, the TWG felt it could use Betts' tool as a guide or a starting point for the number of words appropriate for text at each grade level. The TWG agreed on the following descriptors, shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2.   EGR readability indicators

The Readability Indicators	Grade Level	Descriptors
Number of pages	KG	8 to 10 pages
	Grade 1	10 to 16 pages
	Grade 2	16 to 26 pages
Number of words in text	KG 0–50 Words	Beginner: 0–15
		Intermediate: 16–30
		Advanced: 31–50
	Grade 1 30–180 Words	Beginner: 30–70
		Intermediate: 71–120
		Advanced: 121–180
	Grade 2 100–400 words	Beginner: 100–200
		Intermediate: 200–300
		Advanced: 300–400
Average number of words in a sentence	KG	1–3
	Grade 1	3–5
	Grade 2	4–8
Number of lines on the page	KG	0–4 words per page
	Grade 1	1–3 lines per page
	Grade 2	3–7 lines per page
Average length of the word (by syllables)	KG	no more than 3 syllables
	Grade 1	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 4 or 5 syllables
	Grade 2	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 6 syllables, but no more than 6 syllables

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[2] Davidson, M. (2013). Books that children can read: Decodable books and books leveling. Washington, DC: USAID.

Leveling

While assessing the readability of text is objective, leveling a book cannot be done by a computer and is subject to varying degrees of subjectivity. Leveling considers a variety of text features, including the readability factors, to determine the texts that are appropriate for each grade level.

In addition to the linguistic features determined by the Word Count computer program, leveling considers:

- Content: Is it appropriate or familiar to the age group?

- Illustrations: Do the pictures tell the story or explain the vocabulary?

- Curriculum: How are the levels related to teaching methods or the national curriculum?

- Language structure: Does language include repetitious words or phrases? Does the text flow naturally?

- Judgment: Are the readers' backgrounds and experiences sufficient to understand the text?

- Format: How will the type size, spacing, and page layout affect readers' understanding?

Leveling considers matching texts themes to specific grade levels as reflected by the national curriculum. The TWG referred to the KG Guidelines[3] and *Our Beautiful Language*, the Grade 1–2 MSA curriculum, to determine the leveling indicators (**Table 3**). The group decided to use content and design as the two leveling categories.

- Content: To ensure the content was age- and grade-level appropriate, the TWG developed 12 indicators. For example, a story about a teenager, regardless of how interesting, is not appropriate for a first grader. The TWG also did not want the stories to be too immature, that is, stories about cute talking rabbits for second graders. The generally accepted rule is that the main character should be the age of the reader. In addition, the TWG wanted to ensure the content supported the curriculum for each grade.

- Design: The TWG decided upon five indicators to ensure that the illustrations and format were appropriate or familiar to the age group.

Table 3.   EGR leveling criteria

Criteria	Indicator
Content	Subject standards are reflected
	Appropriate to students' age, reading level, and developmental abilities
	Content represents the Palestinian culture
	Content represents other cultures (Arabic-speaking cultures)
	Content represents other cultures (international cultures)
	Books title relates to the content
	Socioeconomic awareness
	inclusiveness addressed positively
	Gender stereotypes avoided; gender equitably represented

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[3] The MOEHE does not have a KG curriculum.

Criteria	Indicator
	Narrative and informational text have a logical sequence (main ideas) and details (informational) or story structure (narrative)
	Content can be understood by the reader
Design	Cover design
	Placement of text and illustrations is appropriate
	Binding
	Content of illustrations reflects the content of the text; age and grade appropriate in terms of a child's perceptual abilities
	Font size

Each of the leveling indicators is supported by descriptors for each grade level (**Table 4**).

Table 4.   **EGR leveling descriptors**

Content	Grade	
Subject standards are reflected	KG	Very important to reflect subject standards in KG and first grade when vocabulary is developing
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	Important in second grade when vocabulary is emerging
Content vocabulary is appropriate to students' age, reading level, and developmental abilities	KG	Content should be for pre-school children. Many pictures; simple characters. Action takes place at one time, not over a period of time. Includes good social habits.
	Grade 1	Important in first grade when vocabulary is emerging. Vocabulary that is commonly used (past, present, and future), includes good social habits.
	Grade 2	Vocabulary that is commonly used; addresses new vocabulary; includes good social habits
Content accurately represents the culture depicted in the book.	KG	Palestinian or international cultures depicted positively. Does the content cultivate values and morals of the Palestinian culture? Important to develop sensitivity to understand differences in people, age, gender, religion (windows into different identities and cultures through stories).
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Books title relates to the content	KG	In the early grades, titles must be literal.
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Socioeconomic awareness	KG	Solutions to problems are assessable to all/any socioeconomic levels
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Inclusiveness addressed positively	KG	Depictions of characters with physical, mental, or emotional challenges presented as part of society
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Gender stereotypes avoided; gender equitably represented	KG	The roles of boys and girls are varied, with careful attention not to present stereotypical or traditional gender roles.
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	

Content	Grade	
Narrative and informational text have a logical sequence (main ideas) and details (informational) or story structure (narrative).	KG	Very important to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. All action taking place at one time.
	Grade 1	Very important in first grade to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. No flashbacks or stories told out of sequence. Beginning first grade readers have all action take place at once, gradually building to multiple episodes across time by the end of the year.
	Grade 2	Important at the beginning of second grade to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. Later in the year, texts can have numerous episodes and time passing. The plots become more complex.
Content is familiar and can be understood by the reader.	KG	Texts should have many familiar words that students need to read quickly. Some compounds words, some irregular past-tense verbs.
	Grade 1	Texts should have no more than 3 unfamiliar words on each page. Simple factual text; reader is beginning to learn the relationship between sounds and letters; repetitive patterns in texts; simple dialogue; sequential order.
	Grade 2	Texts should have no more than 3 unfamiliar words on each page. Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known; some texts with plots, settings, and situations outside the typical experience; texts with multiple points of view can be introduced; text lends itself to inferential thinking and questioning.

Format		
Cover design	KG	Reflects the content, appealing and age appropriate, colorful; makes the child want to open it
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Placement of text and illustrations is appropriate	KG	Simple layout; illustrations support or complement the text, contain big, large, simple pictures free from distractions
	Grade 1	Simple layout; illustrations follow a regular pattern; more text appears than in KG
	Grade 2	More difficult layout of informational text, and some fiction with denser format
Binding	KG	Securely binds the pages well so book does not come apart
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	
Content of illustrations reflect the content of the text and reader's age	KG	Illustrations lead reader to understand the meaning of text without any societal stereotype
	Grade 1	
	Grade 2	Fewer illustrations are present.
Font size Large: big book=72; regular=+24 Medium: 24–16 Small: 14–12	KG	Large font; diacritics are optional
	Grade 1	Large, medium font with diacritics
	Grade 2	Medium font with diacritics

Piloting the Leveling Criteria

Once the TWG had drafted the readability and leveling criteria, the team had to pilot the criteria among students to ensure the tool's validity. The first version of the readability indicators had been built based on international and regional studies and linguistic features for available stories in schools.

The piloting activity took the following steps:

Step 1: The piloting activity took place on April 15 and 18, 2018, in four schools located in the three West Bank regions. Seventy-one students (36 girls, 35 boys) participated in the piloting. The sample size included 6 students per grade level: 24 students from Grade 2, 23 students from Grade 1, and 24 students from KG.

Step 2: The TWG members identified beginner, intermediate, and advanced books that they had determined reflected the leveling criteria they had developed to use for the piloting.

Step 3: On the day of the piloting activity, teachers selected six students based on their reading performance, two advanced readers, two intermediate readers, and two beginner readers, to read a set of books individually to a member of the TWG team who conducted the field test.

Second grade student reading a 400-word book (Photo: RTI)

Step 4: The tester (TWG member) asked the student to read a book, starting with the books with the highest number of words. If the story was too difficult, i.e., the student missed more than 10% of the words they read, the tester went to the intermediate category at the same grade level. If the student again missed 10% of the words, the tester went to book with the fewest number of words for the grade level.

Piloting Results

KG results: The advanced books (31–50 words) were considered instructional (90–95% of words read correctly) for 8% of the sample. In other words, only 8% of the students read the books by decoding the words, which meant that they were frustrating for 92% of the students. Intermediate books (16–30 words) were considered instructional for 4.16% of the sample, and beginner books (0–15 words) were considered instructional for 50%, noting that students only understood the plot in wordless books; 37.5% of the sample students could not read the picture books (**Table 5**).

Table 5.   **Results of KG piloting**

Summary Table / KG			
Category: Students Who Passed	**Boys**	**Girls**	**TOTAL**
Number of students who passed **advanced** level	1	1	**2**
Number of students who passed **intermediate** level	0	1	**1**
Number of students who passed **beginner** level	6	6	**12**
Category: Students Who Did Not Pass	**Boys**	**Girls**	**TOTAL**
Number of students who did not pass	4	5	**9**

Summary Table / KG			
Category: Students Who Passed	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
TOTAL			24
Percentage of students passed **advanced** level	50%	50%	8%
Percentage of students passed **intermediate** level	0%	100%	4.16%
Percentage of students passed **beginner** level	50%	50%	50.00%
Percentage of students who didn't pass	44%	56%	37.50%
TOTAL			100%

First grade results: The advanced books (121–180 words) were considered instructional (90–95% of words read correctly) for 26% of the sample, meaning that they were able to read the books easily, indicating that these books were frustrating for 74% of the students. Intermediate books (71–120 words) were considered instructional for 0.0% of the sample, and beginner books (30–0 words) were considered instructional for 21% of the sample; 37.5% of the sample students could not read the books from their grade level (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Grade 1 piloting results

Summary Table / Grade 1			
Category	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
Number of students who passed **advanced** level	3	3	6
Number of students who passed **intermediate** level	0	0	0
Number of students who passed **beginner** level	2	3	5
Number of students who did not pass	6	6	12
TOTAL			23
Percentage of students passed **advanced** level	50%	50%	26%
Percentage of students passed **intermediate** level	0%	0%	0.00%
Percentage of students passed **beginner** level	40%	60%	21.70%
Percentage of students who did not pass	50%	50%	52.17%
TOTAL			100%

Second grade results: The advanced books (300–400 words) were considered instructional (90–95% of words read correctly) for 42% of the sample, indicating that these books were frustrating for 58% of students. Intermediate books (200–300 words) were considered instructional for 8.3% of the sample, and beginner books (100–200 words) were considered instructional for 12% of the sample; 37.5% of the sample students could not read the grade-level books. Some of the students could not read books from the first grade advanced or intermediate level (**Table 7**).

Table 7. Grade 2 piloting results

Summary Table / Grade 2			
Category	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
Number of students passed advanced level	6	4	10
Number of students passed intermediate level	0	2	2
Number of students passed beginner level	1	2	3

Summary Table / Grade 2			
Category	Boys	Girls	TOTAL
Number of students who didn't pass	6	3	**9**
TOTAL			**24**
Percentage of students passed advanced level	60%	40%	**42%**
Percentage of students passed intermediate level		100%	**8.30%**
Percentage of students passed beginner level	35%	65%	**12.50%**
Percentage of students who did not pass	66%	33%	**37.50%**
TOTAL			**100%**

Conclusion from Piloting Activity

The results indicated that there were no students at the intermediate level in the three grades targeted by the project. Most Grade 1 students could not read texts with 30 words. In KG, 87.5% of the students could not read at all. The MOEHE practice of delaying reading until the last five lessons of Grade 1 could contribute to the low reading results. Throughout KG and Grade 1, the teacher read aloud to the students with little or no student interaction with the text.

Based on the observation of one of the TWG members during his participation in EGR's Time on Task study and the project baseline assessment, students in first and second grades who read with ease had difficulties comprehending what they have read. During the school visits, the TWG members confirmed that the time allocated for reading activities was less than 60 minutes a day, as indicated in the Time on Task study. This lack of instructional time could influence the students' ability to read lengthy text. The students' reading abilities could also be affected by the lack of complementary reading materials; Grade 1–2 students had access to the textbook only.

Modification to Leveling

Based on the piloting results and previous EGR studies, the TWG revised the readability criteria. The group reduced "number of words in the text" and "number of pages." For first and second grades, they revised the descriptors based on the average number of words in each lesson in the *Our Beautiful Language* curriculum. For KG, the TWG relied on EGR education experts to advise since the MOEHE did not have KG students' textbooks.

First grade texts had an average of 34 words in the reading selections that were introduced in the last five units of the year. The second-grade textbook introduced reading passages starting from the first lesson with 70 words on average for each lesson. Considering the results of the piloting and the Grade 1–2 curriculum, the TWG revised the readability descriptors (**Table 8**).

Table 8.   Revised readability descriptors

The Readability Indicators	Grade Level	Descriptors
Number of pages	KG	8–10 pages
	Grade 1	10–16 pages
	Grade 2	16–26 pages
Number of words in text	KG	0–30
	Grade 1	20–60
	Grade 2	40–100
Average number of words in a sentence	KG	1–3
	Grade 1	3–5
	Grade 2	4–8
Number of lines in the page	KG	0–4 words per page
	Grade 1	1–3 lines per page
	Grade 2	3–7 lines per page
Average length of the word (by syllables)	KG	no more than 3 syllables
	Grade 1	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 4 or 5 syllables.
	Grade 2	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 6 syllables, but no more than 6 syllables.

After revising the readability criteria, the TWG reviewed the leveling criteria. One modification resulted: the description of font size was articulated by specific and larger font sizes.

While this instrument was used during EGR's project life, EGR encouraged the MOEHE to revise and modify the instrument as needed and then release it as a national book leveling instrument for kindergarten, first, and second grades. The book leveling instrument is in **Annex A**.

Inventory of Available Reading Materials

After developing the leveling criteria, EGR began to determine the availability of complementary reading materials by identifying the available materials in West Bank primary classrooms and the local market. EGR conducted a market survey to determine the availability of decodable readers, big books, leveled books, and read-aloud stories for KG through Grade 2 based on EGR's leveling tool. The staff found no MSA decodables, big books, and wordless picture books, but the team did discover leveled books for KG–Grade 1 published by Asala in Lebanon but available locally in Dar Al Shorouk bookstore. EGR also explored the possibility of using the read-aloud books used by the USAID Reading and Mathematics Project (RAMP) in Jordan, implemented by RTI.

In January 2018, EGR requested the inventory of the reading materials, maintained by ICT, currently in use in the public schools. Several MOEHE departments supplied lists of the books in schools as well as a set of the donor-provided Scholastic library. EGR reviewed the MOEHE-supplied list as well as the set of books to determine any gaps which the project could fill, though they could not be verified against the MOEHE official book inventory.

Upon reviewing the list, EGR determined that the MOEHE had no clear process for categorizing books; books had been categorized by individual teachers based on their background knowledge and experience without reference to any national, regional, or international standards. Although this categorization process was not approved by the MOEHE, the Ministry did not reject it.

Between 2004–2007, the *Hayya Niqra* (Let's Read) program, implemented by American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) in a partnership with MOEHE, provided schools with Scholastic's "My Arabic Library" for Grades 1 and 2. All books had been translated from other languages to Arabic, which affected the quality and accuracy of the language and the cultural sensitivity. The books also did not have a progressive development of reading skills. A review of all available books, including the Scholastic books, revealed the need to develop leveled readers and other reading materials specifically created to enhance reading and writing instruction.

Identified Gaps

The specific gaps, categorized by book type, are detailed below.

Alphabet Recognition Books

There were no alphabet recognition books in targeted classrooms. The reading and writing instruction policy adopted by MOEHE in teaching literacy was based on the following:

- KG: There was no curriculum for this grade, only a teacher's guide. However, alphabet recognition was not included in the guidelines for KG instruction.

- Grade 1: The text book addressed and emphasized learning the 28 letters of the alphabet during the academic year as the major purpose for the textbook.

- Grade 2: Teachers assumed all students learned the alphabet in Grade 1, so they did not cover it again.

Decodable Readers

There were no decodable readers books in schools or on the market. Based on EGR's discussions with the Ministry, it seems that they were not aware of the concept and the purpose of decodables as well as leveled readers.

Big Books

In 2007, Pen-media and Sesame Workshop, in partnership with the MOEHE, implemented the Sesame Street Project funded by USAID WBG. Each of the 100 targeted schools in the project was provided the Sesame Street Big Books. There were also big books in the local market published by regional publishers, but they were too expensive for schools to buy.

Leveled Readers

As emphasized previously, no leveled books were available for any of the targeted grades. No inventory existed which could tell a teacher if a book should be used as a read-aloud, shared reading, or independent reading activity, although many of the books available in the classroom would have been ideal for these activities.

The TWG focused on identifying or developing books and materials that met the leveling criteria to fill the gaps. EGR also recommended that the MOEHE develop an online annotated inventory of all early grade reading materials for national coaches and teachers to know the resources available for them to use and how to use them in their teaching. Had EGR been able to continue, the project would have assisted the MOEHE to develop the complete inventory.

Development and Procurement of Reading Materials

Following the inventorying of available books, EGR identified complementary reading materials to purchase or develop. The goal of the project was to create a print-rich environment in each KG through Grade 2 classroom in EGR-supported schools. Each classroom was provided multiple copies of each title to enable teachers to group students with similar reading levels.

Purchased Materials

Big books: EGR procured one set of "My Family and I" big books, published by Dar Al Rabie in Dubai /United Arab Emirates, for KG classrooms. The set included seven titles aligned with Unit 1 "Everything Surrounding Me" in the KG teacher guidelines. Also, EGR provided Grade 1 classrooms

Set of KG Big Books – My Family and I

with two titles: *Faris Is a Big Child* and *On My Grandpa's Farm*, which were aligned with the Grade 1 curriculum. Although big books are usually reserved for KG classrooms, EGR provided these to Grade 1 because many Palestinian children do not attend kindergarten.

Set of 30 leveled readers procured from Asala

Leveled readers: EGR provided KG and Grade 1 with a set of 30 leveled readers, published by Asala in Beirut, Lebanon.

Read-aloud books: EGR provided Grade 2 with 10 titles developed by the Tamar Institute in Ramallah and published by local publishers and 5 titles developed and published by RAMP in Jordan.

Since the local market did not have the required quantities of books, EGR purchased the big books and leveled readers though Palestinian vendors who brought the books in from abroad. The proc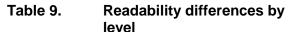urement process took approximately 90 days to deliver. The RAMP titles were printed locally under the Creative Commons agreement. Production required 45 days.

Developed Materials

Decodable Readers

EGR developed and provided two sets of 56 titles of decodable readers; each set included 28 titles. The decodable readers were for use in KG–Grade 1 classrooms. The short readers covered all the letters in the Arabic alphabet as introduced in the text book *Our Beautiful Language*. The complete list of decodable readers is in **Annex B**.

Table 9 illustrates the readability differences between level one and level two.

The set of 28 decodable readers, Level 2

Table 9.   Readability differences by level

The Linguistic Feature	Level 1	Level 2
Number of pages	8	8
Number of words in text	No more than 14	No more than 20
Number of words in a sentence	1–3	1–4
Number of lines in the page	1	1
Average length of the word (by syllables)	1–3	1–4

Leveled Readers

Since there were no leveled readers for second grade, EGR developed a set of six books that included a story's basic elements such as characters, time, place, events, plot and resolution. The set was divided into three stages with two books in each stage: Bud (Beginner); Flower (Intermediate); and Fruit (Advanced). The stages became progressively more difficult in content and vocabulary. The series had two main seven-year-old characters *Fatoosh* (girl) and *Farfoosh* (boy).

The characters from the Grade 2 leveled readers: Farfoosh and Fatoosh

Wordless Books

Wordless book that teaches students not to litter

Sharing wordless books builds important literacy skills, including listening skills, vocabulary, comprehension, and story structure. Since EGR schools had no wordless books, EGR developed and published one wordless book. The theme was littering, which EGR felt was appropriate for KG–Grade 1. Teachers can use the book for students to make predictions, solve problems, and develop vocabulary terms. This book was distributed to KG and first grade classrooms in the EGR-supported schools.

Posters

EGR developed four interactive posters to use in the EGR classrooms. From explaining difficult processes to visual brainstorming, interactive posters are a good way to consolidate student learning and promote their comprehension. Each poster was heavily laminated to enable teachers to use it repeatedly. EGR provided the appropriate markers for teachers to use when writing on the posters.

Story Map: This poster is a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of story as well as other subject matter. Just as a regular map can help us 'see' the roads, lakes, and mountains around us, a story map can help us 'see' the various aspects of a story.

Story Map poster in Arabic

Word Map: A word map is a visual organizer that promotes vocabulary development. Using a graphic organizer, students think about terms or concepts in several ways. Most word map organizers engage students in developing a definition, synonyms, antonyms, and a picture for a given vocabulary word or concept. Enhancing students' vocabulary is important to developing their reading comprehension.

Word Map poster in Arabic

Character Map: A character map helps students progress from impressions or reactions about a character to a deeper understanding of the character's attributes. The poster features the two seven-year-old characters *Fatoosh* (girl) and *Farfoosh* (boy).

Reading Comprehension Map featuring Fatoosh

Reading Comprehension Map: A comprehension map is a visual organizer that enhances and develops questioning and thinking skills based on the instructional strategy introduced in EGR training sessions: the Before – During – After strategy. It is used to assess students' comprehension of any reading text. **Table 10** shows the complementary materials that EGR provided to EGR classrooms.

Character Map poster with Farfoosh and Fatoosh

Table 10. Materials provided by EGR

Unit	Book's Title	Total Number of Books	Targeted Grades
Book	Decodable reader Level 1	35,336	KG – G1
Book	Decodable reader Level 2	35,336	KG – G1
Books	Leveled readers (30 books in each set)	6,750	KG – G1
Book	Big books: set of seven books *My Family and I*	350	KG
Book	Big book: *Faris Is a Big Boy*	195	G1
Book	Big book: *On My Grandpa's Farm*	195	G1
Book	Wordless book	225	KG – G1
Book	Leveled reader: Fatoosh and Farfoosh (6 books)	6,300	G2
Book	RAMP – 5 read-aloud books	5,250	G2
Book	10 read-aloud books	10,500	G2
TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS		**100,437**	
Poster	Interactive story map	400	KG – G2
Poster	Interactive word map	400	KG – G2
Poster	Interactive character map	400	KG – G2
Poster	Interactive reading comprehension questions	400	KG – G2
TOTAL NUMBER OF POSTERS		**1,600**	

Complementary Reading Materials Guide

EGR, in coordination with the TWG, prepared a guide for using the complementary reading materials to ensure their alignment with the KG–Grade 2 curriculum. The guide included specific activities and instructions for using the materials to facilitate teachers' use of the materials and support students by providing them with level-appropriate reading activities. Each EGR-supported classroom received a copy of the materials guide.

Cover of Complementary Reading Materials Guide

Videos

Although not classified as books, videos of EGR's activities using the complementary reading materials contribute to their sustainability. Since video has become an important part of teacher education, EGR created three instructional educational videos for teachers to use to improve their classroom practices in reading instruction.

Strategies for Reading Comprehension helps teachers understand some of the strategies for teaching reading comprehension. It helps them figure out which reading skills and strategies can be taught explicitly while students are learning subject-specific content through authentic reading tasks. Through this video, teachers will understand that effective readers use strategies to understand what they read before, during, and after reading.

Stages of Reading Video explains how students' progress as readers. It is based on the students' experiences and not on their age or grade level. The stages of reading are:

- **Modelled reading**: an expert reader models a love and passion for words, stories, and ideas

- **Shared reading**: the teacher and students work together in reading text to gain meaning from text and to examine the reading

- **Guided reading**: the teacher encourages students to talk, read, and think their way through a text while assisting them to develop appropriate reading strategies

- **Independent reading**: students independently apply previously learned reading strategies to a self-selected text.

Scene from the Stages of Reading video (Photo: RTI)

Letter Sounds and Letter Names stresses the importance of learning letter names and letter sounds and how that knowledge contributes to word recognition and to literacy development. From the classroom observation that EGR implemented and from the feedback provided from supervisors, some teachers have difficulty teaching letter sounds, and teachers confuse letter names with letter sounds. EGR created a video that includes letter names and letter sounds to be a guide for teachers.

Handover to the MOEHE

On January 16, 2019, EGR hosted the project's final recognition ceremony for the MOEHE personnel who had participated as coaches, TWG members, and advisors to project activities. All the materials produced by the project were on display for the Ministry participants to see everything that was going into schools. MOEHE Minister Dr. Sabri Saidam thanked EGR for its contributions and pledged to open a special EGR unit within the Ministry, under the auspices of General Education – KG, to house the items developed. EGR provided hard and soft (electronic) copies of all materials to the Ministry.

All EGR-supplied materials on display (Photo: RTI)

Annex A: EGR Leveling Instrument

Criteria	Indicator	Grade Level	Description
Linguistic features "Readability"	Number of pages	KG	8–10 pages
		Grade 1	10–16 pages
		Grade 2	16–26 pages
	Number of words in text	KG	0–30
		Grade 1	20–60
		Grade 2	40–100
	Average number of words in a sentence	KG	1–3
		Grade 1	3–5
		Grade 2	4–8
	Number of lines in the page	KG	0–4 words per page
		Grade 1	1–3 lines per page
		Grade 2	3–7 lines per page
	Average length of the word (by syllables)	KG	no more than 3 syllables
		Grade 1	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 4 or 5 syllables.
		Grade 2	The text must contain at least one or two words consisting of 6 syllables, but no more than 6 syllables.
Content	Subject standards are reflected	KG	Very important to reflect subject standards in KG and first grade when vocabulary is developing
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	Important in second grade when vocabulary is emerging
	Content vocabulary is appropriate to students' age, reading level, and developmental abilities	KG	Content should be for pre-school children. Many pictures; simple characters. Action takes place at one time, not over a period of time; includes good social habits.
		Grade 1	Important in first grade when vocabulary is emerging. Vocabulary that is commonly used and sight words (past, present, and future); includes good social habits.

Criteria	Indicator	Grade Level	Description
		Grade 2	Vocabulary that is commonly used and sight words, addressed new vocabulary. The main characters should be the age of the reader. Includes good social habits.
	Content accurately represents the culture depicted in the book	**KG**	Is the culture depicted in the book well presented? Important to develop sensitivity to understand differences in people, age, gender, religion (windows into different identities and cultures through stories). +1 if Palestinian: Is the Palestinian culture accurately presented? Does the content cultivate values and morals of the Palestinian culture?
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Book title relates to the content	**KG**	Title is a literal description of the content
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Socioeconomic awareness	**KG**	Solutions to problems are assessable to all/any socioeconomic levels
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Inclusiveness addressed positively	**KG**	Depictions of characters with physical, mental, or emotional challenges presented as part of society
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Gender stereotypes avoided; gender equitably represented	**KG**	The roles of boys and girls are varied, with careful attention to not presenting stereotypical or traditional gender roles.
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Narrative and informational text have a logical sequence (main ideas) and details (informational) or story structure (narrative)	**KG**	Very important to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. All action taking place at one time.
		Grade 1	Very important in first grade to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. No flashbacks or stories told out of sequence. Beginning first grade readers have all action taking place at one time, gradually building to multiple episodes taking place across time by the end of the year.

Criteria	Indicator	Grade Level	Description
		Grade 2	Important at the beginning of second grade to have a sequential or chronological sequence of events in a story. Later in the year, texts can have numerous episodes and time passing. The plots become more complex.
	Content is familiar and can be understood by the reader	KG	Texts should have many familiar words that students need to read quickly. Some compounds words, some irregular past-tense verbs.
		Grade 1	Texts should have no more than 3 unfamiliar words on each page. Simple factual text; reader is beginning to learn the relationship between sounds and letters; repetitive patterns in texts; simple dialogue; sequential order.
		Grade 2	Texts should have no more than 3 unfamiliar words on each page. Some technical content that is challenging and not typically known; some texts with plots, settings, and situations outside the typical experience; texts with multiple points of view can be introduced; text lends itself to inferential thinking and questioning.
Design	Cover design	KG	Reflects the content, appealing and age appropriate, colorful, and makes the child want to open it
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	
	Placement of text and illustrations is appropriate	KG	Simple layout; illustrations support or complement the text, contain big, large, simple pictures free from distractions
		Grade 1	Simple layout; illustrations follow a regular pattern; more text appears than in Grade 1
		Grade 2	More difficult layout of informational text, and some fiction with denser format
	Binding	KG	Securely binds the pages well so book does not come apart
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	

Criteria	Indicator	Grade Level	Description
	Content of illustrations reflects the content of the text and is appropriate in terms of a child's perceptual abilities	KG	Illustrations lead reader to understand the meaning of text without any societal stereotype
		Grade 1	
		Grade 2	Fewer illustrations
	Font size Large: big book= 72; regular= +24 Medium: 24–16 Small: 14–12	KG	Large font
		Grade 1	Large, medium font with diacritics
		Grade 2	Medium font with diacritics

Annex B: Decodable Readers

Level 1 Decodable Reader	Level 2 Decodable Reader
رنا في روضة	رامي وريما
دب يأكل	دلو دانة
بطة	بابا في بستان
ماما وماعز	مريم وسمسم
نحلة ونملة	نادر في نابلس
سلة سمر	سامح وسالي
زيت وزعتر	زينة
حلا	حامد في حيفا
لولو	ليلى مع لولو
تالا	تالا
في جيب جميل	جمال في نابلس
فادي وفارس	فارس
علبة عارف	عماد في عنبتا
شادن وشادي	شبل
صوص	صوص
قرد يقفز	قيس معه صندوق
ثلج وثعلب	ثوب ثريا
خالد وخولة	خيمة
ذبابة	ذيل ذئب
غسيل غيث	غادة في غزة
طبل طارق	طارق في طبريا
كرم وكوكي	كريم في عكا
ضحى وضب	ضب وضبع
هنا وهاني	هدى
وداد ووديع	وردة وديع
ألوان	أحمد وإسراء
ظبي	ظل من؟
يد يد	ياسر يلعب