



# National Arabic Literacy Strategy 2023-2028



**USAID**  
من الشعب الأمريكي







*In this modern, high-tech age, education cannot be limited to reading and writing; it goes way beyond that to encompass mastering computer and Internet literacy, major international languages, communication skills, professional work ethics, critical thinking and analytical skills. Once they gain these abilities, students will be able to produce knowledge and contribute to progress, heeding the teachings of the Holy Quran: “O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge.”*

*We have been blessed with a rich language, deep-rooted heritage and noble values. For our students to fully appreciate and experience that heritage, mastering Arabic is a must. It is the language of the Holy Quran and the Ummah’s unifying tongue. It shapes their culture and defines their episteme.*



**King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein the Second**  
**The Seventh Discussion Paper**



## Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
EGMA	Early grade mathematics assessment
EGRA	Early grade reading assessment
ESP	Education strategic plan
FCDO UK	Foreign, commonwealth and development office
GDP	Gross domestic product
G1	Grade 1
G2	Grade 2
G3	Grade 3
G4	Grade 4
G6	Grade 6
G12	Grade 12
K2	Kindergarten 2
KG	Kindergarten
MD	Managing directorate
MoE	Ministry of education
MSA	Modern standard arabic
NCCD	National center for curriculum development
NCHRD	National center for human resources development
NLS	National literacy strategy
OECD	Organization for economic co-operation and development
PISA	Program for international student assessment
PRESTIJ	Pre-service teacher education in jordan
PTC	Parent–teacher council
QRF	Queen rania foundation for education and development
SG	Secretary general
TLM	Teaching and learning material
TIMSS	Trends in international mathematics and science study
TOR	Terms of reference
RAMP	Early grade reading and mathematics initiative
USAID	United states agency for international development
UNESCO	United nations educational, scientific and cultural organization



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## I. Preamble

The individual right to education is long recognized in international agreements<sup>1</sup>. Education provides a foundation for human development leading to economic opportunities, autonomous exploration, and social mobility. As the basics of education rely on the ability to receive and express ideas through the written word, literacy itself has been identified as another essential right<sup>2</sup>. The definition given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) captures its complexity: “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts<sup>3</sup>.”

Moreover, literacy is a gateway to learning in other academic topics. In fact, the low performance on international mathematics tests, such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), demonstrated by students in Arab countries is partly attributed to issues with literacy. A high percentage of students cannot easily understand mathematics problems<sup>4 5</sup>. The ability to read and write in Arabic also affects students’ ability to learn a second language such as English—an essential skill in an interconnected global economy. In addition, literacy is linked to knowledge economy skills such as the ability to present a persuasive argument.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly. (1948). Universal declaration of human rights. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.  
United Nations General Assembly. (1989). Convention on the rights of the child. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

<sup>2</sup> Moretti, G. A. S., & Frandell, T. (2013). Literacy from a right to education perspective. Report of the Director General of UNESCO to the United Nations General Assembly 68th Session. [https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO\\_Literacy\\_from\\_a\\_right\\_to\\_education\\_perspective\\_2013\\_En.pdf](https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO_Literacy_from_a_right_to_education_perspective_2013_En.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Montoya, S. (2018, October 17–18). Defining literacy. GAML Fifth Meeting, Hamburg, Germany. [https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/4.6.I\\_07\\_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf](https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/4.6.I_07_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Montoya, S. (2018, October 17–18). Defining literacy. GAML Fifth Meeting, Hamburg, Germany. [https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/4.6.I\\_07\\_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf](https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/4.6.I_07_4.6-defining-literacy.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Abadzi, Helen, and Marialuisa Martelli, 2014. Efficient Reading for Arab Students: Implications from Neurocognitive research.”

Literacy also contributes to achieving economic prosperity and sustainable development. Improving knowledge outputs, such as literacy, brings many benefits to long-term economic growth. For example, an improvement in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries' average score on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) which assesses what students know and can do at the age of 15 years in reading, mathematics, and science by 25 points would over 20 years, add approximately US\$115 trillion in lifetime gross domestic product (GDP) for a generation born in 2010<sup>6</sup>. In contrast, the lack of literacy skills has serious social and economic repercussions for countries, such as low mental and physical health, poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality.

In the educational system, teaching literacy skills effectively provides the basis for addressing the most complex educational challenges. A country's ability to build a strong foundation for basic literacy skills is related to donors' confidence and willingness to invest in more development projects. In addition, lessons learned from national and international literacy programs can be applied to improve service delivery by future educational reforms.

<sup>6</sup> OECD. (2010). The high cost of low educational performance: The long-run economic impact of improving PISA outcomes. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/44417824.pdf>.

## 2. Introduction

The Jordanian Ministry of Education (MoE) has made significant progress in developing a reading framework for the early grades—kindergarten 2 (K2) to grade 3 (G3)—and improving early grades students’ basic reading skills. In 2015, the MoE launched the Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative (RAMP), co-funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), with the aim of working on national reforms to improve students’ reading and mathematics skills. The initiative, led by the MoE, succeeded in reaching all students of all nationalities in Jordan, including those with disabilities and in refugee camps. In addition, it was able to bridge the gender literacy gap in the early grades. Bi-annual national Early Grades Reading Assessments (EGRA) have shown a worrying number of students that have not shown any improvement. A report issued by USAID describes Jordan’s progress in reading in the early grades as “slow but steady” and notes that reading comprehension levels remain “very low.” Furthermore, a large number of students still score zero in the early grade reading assessment (EGRA). In 2018, 18% of students in G2 and G3 received a score of zero in reading and comprehension, while 16.6% received a score of zero in oral reading fluency.

Based on the early grades reforms accomplished so far, Jordan is in a strong position to expand and develop a comprehensive national program to improve literacy skills. A National Literacy Strategy will contribute to meeting the objectives of the National Strategy for Human Resource Development 2016-2025 and the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2018-2025 that consider the education sector as an engine of economic growth. Additionally, improving the quality of education is one of the Government of Jordan’s priorities.



*Achieving success and prosperity in countries that lack natural resources, such as Jordan, depends entirely on human capabilities and their competitiveness, which could only be achieved by providing distinguished education with qualitative outcomes for its recipients. From this point of view, Jordan has placed investment in education at the top of its national priorities, and this was reflected on the achievements of the educational system in Jordan, which for many years outperformed the countries of the region in terms of quantity and quality.*

National Strategy for Human Resources Development (NSHRD), 2015



The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) aims to build on what has been achieved through the frameworks of the aforementioned strategies and plans, to improve focus, and to complete the set goals. It seeks to mobilize resources and efforts to lay strong foundations aimed at empowering students with literacy skills at an early age. Such foundations will help them grow, increase their knowledge and culture, enlighten their minds, raise their awareness, and expand their perceptions to achieve their full potential and thus contribute innovative and creative ideas as well as academic achievements to their community and their country. The NLS mobilizes not only the education system but also Jordanian society as a whole. It will ensure that children's acquisition of literacy skills is deepened, that a love of reading is incorporated in all basic stages of learning, and that strong literacy skills support students' academic performance in other subjects, helping them to continue their learning and succeed in school and life.

Core to the government's ambition to advance students' performance in literacy is system-level reform. To achieve this, the MoE adopted a new approach to change by committing to developing a comprehensive vision for advancing students' performance in literacy skills in early learning stages (K2–grade 6 [G6]) through the 5-year NLS. The strategy development team adopted the following principles to ensure that the NLS is both national in scope and based on evidence:

- **Inclusiveness**, so that the NLS is perceived as everybody's business where everyone can play an important role in helping children and young people develop their literacy skills, and it can mobilize all stakeholders during the implementation period.
- **Openness**, so that the need for change and the vision we seek to achieve are shared frequently and positively.
- **Evidence-based**, so that the decision-making process is, at all levels, based on evidence related to literacy in the Arabic language.
- **Appropriateness to context**, so that it is a plan from Jordan and for Jordan.
- **Results-focused**, so that the NLS provides a clear theory of change that links activities and learning outcomes and allows monitoring of progress and course adjustment, as necessary.
- **Capacity building focus**, so that implementation can begin early, with greater understanding of the vision that will achieve the desired impact.





### 3. The Rational

Continuous investment in improving the quality of curricula, textbooks, and learning resources in primary schools has been a hallmark of the MoE's efforts over the past several years. This commitment was maintained while facing the challenge of absorbing a large influx of Syrian refugee children and educating them in Jordan's schools. In addition, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic forced schools to close for unexpectedly long periods, creating challenging obstacles for teachers and families trying to support their children's learning.

#### 3.1. Preschool learning

The foundation for success in education is laid in the early years of a child's development. No foundation is more important than learning to use spoken and written Arabic to express and share ideas and to access diverse sources of knowledge and understanding. Children who acquire strong literacy skills in their early years are not only positioned to successfully further their education but also to become active, engaged, and productive citizens.

The quality of preschool learning remains a concern in Jordan, with 30% of students enrolled in grade I (GI) evaluated as being unready to learn<sup>13</sup>, and only 38% of 3–5-year-old students evaluated as being developmentally on track in literacy and numeracy.<sup>14</sup> Home learning environments that are not supportive of emergent literacy skills compound shortcomings in the quality of preschool instruction. (Jordan Population and Family Health Survey, 2018) For example, only 16% of children under age 5 have at least three children's books in their home. Half of mothers fully or partially agreed that they believe that the home environment has a limited impact on the outcomes of their children's education. Additionally, only four in 10 mothers reported that either they or a family member has read to their child, and only 7% of mothers reported having ever attended a parent involvement program.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of MoE (i.e., governmental) kindergartens (KGs) is a problem for many low-income families that cannot afford private KGs, leading to inequity among children. Evidence shows that students who attend KG arrive at school better prepared for formal learning and achieve higher grades in school than their peers who did not attend KG.<sup>16</sup>

These data indicate that the current system is insufficient regarding its ability to provide children with strong foundational literacy skills in the early years of their development and education. As a result, the development of literacy skills does not start early enough in Jordan. Enrollment in nurseries and KGs is optional and therefore remains low, especially for nurseries. This is because the private sector is the only provider of enrollment in nurseries and the first level of KG. Accordingly, only 1% of children between the ages of 2 and 4 years are enrolled in nurseries, and just 6% of children aged 4 years are enrolled in the first level of KG, primarily in private sector or community institutions. (JPFHS, 2018) However, the situation for 5-year-old children in K2 is better. In fact, the percentage of 5-year-old children enrolled in K2 reached 64% for the 2020–2021 school year. It should be noted that the MoE is aware of the shortage of public KGs and is striving to increase their availability. Although the government stated that it intended to make K2 compulsory in the 2020–2021 school year, this has been postponed because of COVID-19. The MoE has since shifted its focus away from making K2 compulsory and toward ensuring that the largest possible number of children enroll in K2 by building partnerships with private and civil sector entities and reviewing the legislation governing KGs.

<sup>13</sup> NCHRD Early Development Instrument (EDI) from 2017/18

<sup>14</sup> Jordan Population and Family Health Survey published in 2018 and cited in a QRF document.

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.qrf.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/ecd\\_study\\_methodology\\_en.pdf](https://www.qrf.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/ecd_study_methodology_en.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/reports/a-world-ready-to-learn-2019>

## 3.2 The state of literacy among students in the basic education stage

### 3.2.2 The state of literacy among students in the early grades (1-3)

Jordan has made “steady, albeit slow” progress in improving reading skills in G1 to G3, but students’ level of understanding and comprehension is still “very low.”

Between 2014 baseline and 2019 end-line surveys, the proportion of Gr.3 students able to decode invented words improved from 10.9% to 16.9%, and the proportion of Gr.3 students’ with reading comprehension improved from 29% to 33.3%.<sup>17</sup>

In light of the challenges described above, some recent, small improvements in learning outcomes should be celebrated. EGRA data (Figure 1) collected in 2021<sup>18</sup> show that G3 students demonstrated slight improvements in reading performance, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not the case for G2 students, indicating that younger students most likely were more adversely impacted by school closures and less able to take advantage of the alternative learning opportunities made available during those times.

Figure 1: Percentage of students reading fluently with comprehension

	2019	2021
Grade 2	14.4%	10.7%
Grade 3	34.1%	39.4%

Of particular interest is the finding from the EGRA national survey in 2021<sup>19</sup> that students who were able to benefit from alternative learning opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic or access learning resources via the MoE’s Darsak platform<sup>20</sup> or other educational channels had both higher reading fluency and comprehension than those who were unable to do so. This finding raises two questions of interest for the National Literacy Strategy:

**First**, what lessons have been learned from the experiences of students and families utilizing home learning resources?

Arabic literacy and numeracy: State of the art conference desk review. October 2019/EDUCATIONLINKS USAID)

<sup>17</sup> Stern, J., Abdelgawad, A., Fayaud, P., & Al-Jundi, R. (2019). Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative end line survey report. Prepared by RTI International for USAID/Jordan. Retrieved from [https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/Jordan%20RAMP%20Endline%20Report\\_Final.pdf](https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/Jordan%20RAMP%20Endline%20Report_Final.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Jordanian MoE. (2020). 2020-2021 National survey (EGRA and EGMA) findings. Examination and Test Managing Directorate, Test Directorate.



**Second**, what can we do to offer more equitable support to those families and children who could not access the types of distance learning that are currently available?

### **3.2.2 The state of literacy among fourth grade students (10 years) - World Bank report on learning poverty**

While the improvements in G3 reading performance shown above are encouraging, the results also show that more than 50% of older Jordanian students are still not reaching the desired level of reading proficiency.

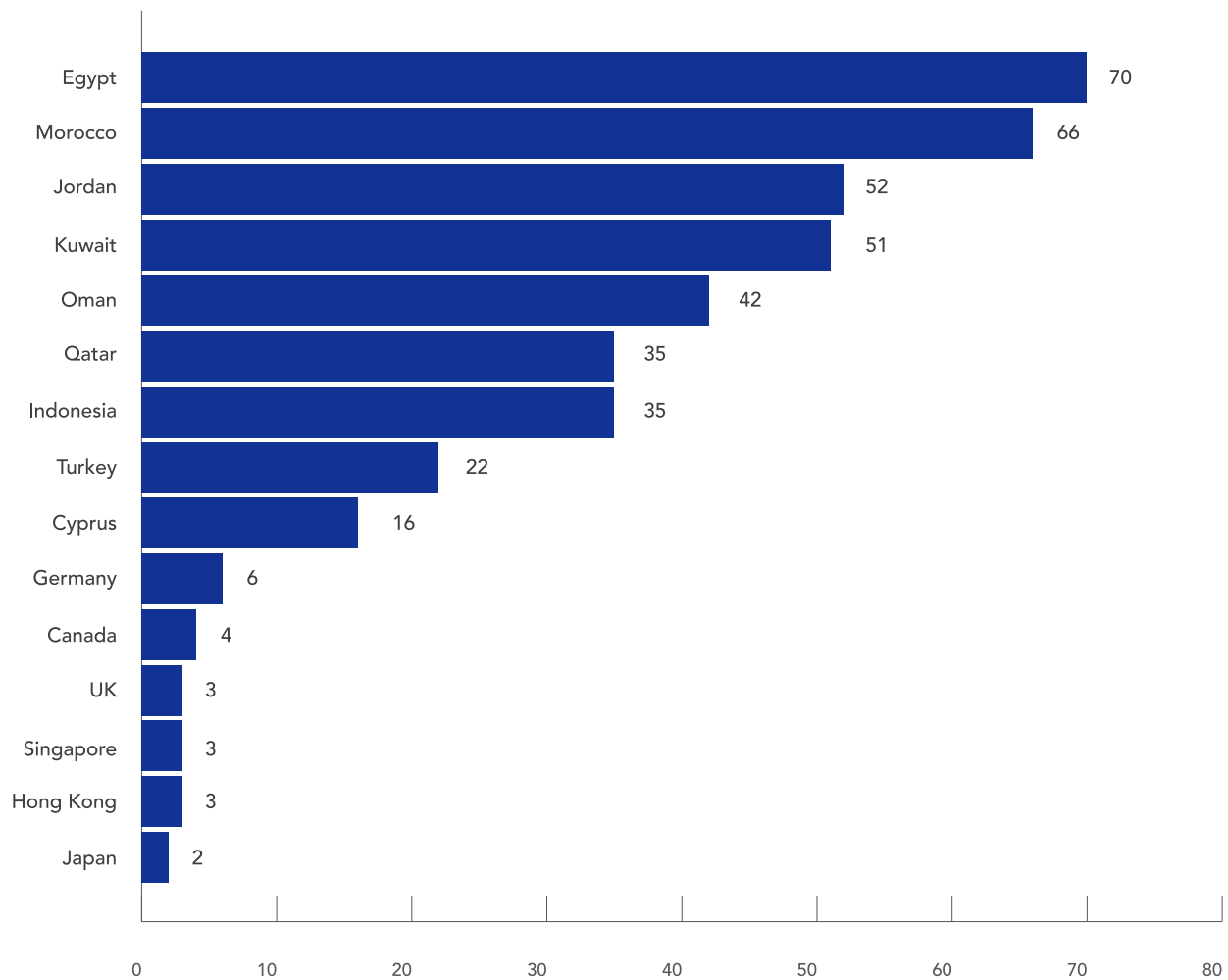
Moreover, the World Bank's Learning Poverty Report showed that while students in Jordan spend an average of 11.1 years in school, they acquire only 6.9 years of schooling in terms of achieving learning outcomes. Figure 2 illustrates that 52% of Jordanian children are unable to read a short, age-appropriate passage at the age of 10 and compares Jordan's achievement with those of other selected countries.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> 2021 National Survey full report. MoE/DET

<sup>20</sup> Darsak is a free learning platform created by the Jordanian MoE. It provides students in grades 1–12 with educational lessons through video clips organized and scheduled based on the Jordanian education curriculum. These resources are intended to help students continue their learning and follow up on their study materials.

<sup>21</sup> Data from the World Bank Human Capital Index.

**Figure 2: Percentage of 10-year-old students who are unable to read age-appropriate text (World Bank Learning Poverty Indicator)**



### **3.2.3 Results of Jordanian students (15 years) in the International Student Assessment Test - PISA 2018**

In addition to the above, the poor performance of Jordanian students in PISA 2018 partially reflects their poor acquisition of reading and writing skills in the early years of school. Jordan achieved some improvement in reading skills performance from 2008 to 2018, as demonstrated by the country's PISA results. However, those results also showed that 76% of 15-year-old students could read only at a basic level or below, and 41% of students are reading at a level below what is needed to participate effectively and productively in life<sup>22</sup>. In addition, on average, Jordanian students were reading three full grade levels below their peers in Singapore and almost two grades level below the OECD average. Only one in five Jordanian students performed at or around the average OECD reading scores.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> RAMP. (2019). End line survey report. Available at <https://jordankmportal.com/resources/jordan-ramp-endline-2019>.

<sup>23</sup> OECD. (2019). Education GPS Jordan-Country note. Retrieved from <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=JOR&treshold=10&topic=PI>

“

*On the 2018 PISA, a small group of 15-year-old Jordanian students demonstrated reading levels sufficient for growing into the world-class knowledge workers of tomorrow.*

”

The National Literacy Strategy will enlist all of Jordanian society to better meet the responsibility for equipping future generations for successful, prosperous, and fulfilling lives. It targets students in KG–G6 and identifies ways that their families, schools, and communities can support them. It adds a specific focus on language and literacy to the Human Resources Development Strategy and the ESP. The strategy also engages commitment, effort, and support from all concerned actors—educators, education sector managers and leaders, families, community leaders and organizations, and the private sector. Moreover, it makes clear the policies and activities urgently needed to more soundly build a foundation for success for current and future generations of young Jordanians.



## 4. NLS development methodology

### 4.1 Institutional arrangements and preparation of the national literacy strategy development plan

The Government of Jordan decided to start developing the NLS in 2020 and to put in place the necessary institutional arrangements for the strategy's development and subsequent implementation. This involved the mobilization of necessary partners and the formation of a Task Force that included representatives of a wide range of partners and stakeholders and was headed by His Excellency the Minister of Education. A technical committee was also created and included all government, supporting, and partner agencies. The Technical Committee conducted a preliminary analysis of the education system, focusing on the policies, institutions, and political and economic forces that affected the system's functioning and effectiveness related to Arabic literacy skills among students in Jordan.

Working with the Task Force and Technical Committee, the **strategy development committee** set the terms of reference (TOR) for forming committees<sup>7</sup>, creating work plans, hiring consultants, defining roles, managing the stages of strategy development, and providing evidence and vision. It also supported the development of the strategy's content and managed the quality of deliverables and outputs. This committee consisted of experts representing RAMP; donor agencies (USAID and FCDO); partners, including the Queen Rania Foundation for Education and

<sup>7</sup> Education Links. (n. d.). Literacy landscape assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.edu-links.org/resources/literacy-landscape-assessment>.

Development (QRF); and international literacy experts from RTI.

The strategy development committee used the Literacy Landscape Assessment approach to assess the reality of literacy in the Jordanian education system. This approach provides comprehensive and flexible guidelines designed to identify and analyze the contextual factors affecting the acquisition of literacy for students in primary education in any educational system. The research inputs were adapted and developed according to the tools used in the “Literacy Landscape Assessment tools”, through which data on the reality of literacy in Jordan were collected and analyzed in the following areas:

- **Education sector**
- **Learning environment (formal and informal)**
- **Family and community.**

#### 4.2 Stages of developing a national literacy strategy

The strategy development plan was also guided and divided into stages in accordance with UNESCO’s Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Development. The strategy and implementation plan were developed separately, and the development for each component was divided into seven stages, as described below.



The following is a description of the strategy development stages:

### **Stage 1: Analysis of the education sector**

At this stage, the work focused on identifying the NLS pillars, collecting data on the status of students' performance and achievements in national and international literacy assessments, understanding the system's current ability to improve reliably students' performance in literacy, and benefiting from the existing literacy initiatives, experiences, and lessons learned (e.g., RAMP). In addition to learning about other countries' experiences in improving literacy skills, this stage involved an identification of current policies in other relevant government institutions. The outputs of this stage were the identification of future research needs (gaps), such as resource quality and reading time, and agreement on a high-level contents for the NLS.

### **Stage 2: Identifying the NLS vision, and strategic objectives**

This stage included a thorough diagnosis of the education sector issues drawing on data from national and international assessments and studies of educational access, quality, and equity. The factors in the home, community, and school that influence literacy were identified and analyzed, and relevant opportunities in addition to the identification of the internal and external threats. The “strategy working group” engaged stakeholders in defining the problem; proposing a vision and pillars of the NLS that could address the problem and contribute to achieving goals.

### **Stage 3: Identifying priorities, and designing programs**

This stage involved identifying the educational policy priorities, and programs that are essential to improve literacy and bring it to life for students. Of utmost importance was engaging the full range of stakeholders—public sector, private sector, and civil society—in defining how they could contribute to achieving the National Literacy Strategy's goals.

### **Stage 4: Designing the general framework of results**

At this stage, the general framework of results was developed in consultation with stakeholders. Participants identified the framework's strategic objectives and specific programs' objectives and activities in the short and long terms, conducted risk analyses and identified challenges, and mapped how stakeholders' interests were aligned with the intended actions and objectives. They also identified the key progress and performance measurement indicators. Budgets for the programs identified as necessary to achieve the strategic objective of improving literacy skills remain to be developed.

### **Stage 5: Writing the NLS document**

This stage included the processes of writing the document in Arabic and English, editing, technical design, and finally the document printing. Short versions of the NLS document will be developed for use with various official and international entities.

### **Stage 6: Launch of the NLS**

This stage included the launch event of the National Literacy Strategy by His Excellency the Minister of Education, and the participation of all the local, national, and international stakeholders in a big media event.

### **Stage 7: The NLS implementation plan, and the monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan (MEL)**

This stage included developing the action plan for the first year's implementation activities, including explicitly defining the roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities—specifically, who will be responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed—for each activity. The action plan will also include key implementation measures and implementation constraints, with key milestones for Years 2 through 5 of the strategy. Along with the development of the logical framework for programs, and the M&E plan.





## 5. Literacy Concept

Reading is an essential life skill, and students must first “learn to read” before they can “read to learn.” As students move through their learning phases, they will increasingly need to use different text types, such as literary, informational, and scientific texts. Therefore, students’ ability to acquire new knowledge and skills depends largely on their ability to read and extract meaning from different types of text.

Students must also read with automaticity (accuracy and speed) and demonstrate their learning through writing, which is a skill integrally tied to reading and comprehension. A low level of reading and writing skills will severely constrain a student’s capacity for self-learning and lifelong learning, which are essential skills to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and navigate the world as an adult.



According to the World Bank<sup>8</sup>, reading skills are developed through the following stages:

- **Emerging literacy:** At this stage, learners develop symbolic understanding, meta-linguistic awareness and basic decoding, where literacy complex pattern recognition becomes more rapid; and fluent literacy where comprehension takes over from decoding.<sup>9</sup>
- **Improved literacy:** This stage focuses on vocabulary of wide use, rapid retrieval of the meanings of words, and rapid decoding of new words. At this stage, the student's literacy level can be described as "reading fast enough to support comprehension."
- **Fluent Literacy:** In this stage, the student transitions from comfortable decoding to rapid word recognition. Harris and Hodges<sup>10</sup> accurately described reading fluency in 1995 as "liberation from the problem of identifying words that might hinder comprehension." Fluency requires not only the ability to read words quickly and accurately but also to reflect text structure and content when read aloud, through patterns of intonation, tension, and rhythm.

The OECD defines literacy as, **"Understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with texts to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society."**<sup>12</sup>

The NLS has adopted the OECD definition, as comprehensive and consistent with its vision and strategic goals. The strategy was developed so that its pillars and programs are in accordance with this definition.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas, M. S. C., Knowland, V. C. P., & Rogers, C. (2020). The science of adult literacy (p. 17). Working paper. Available from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33278>.

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO. (1978). Resolution 15.1 adopted by the General Conference at its twentieth session. UNESCO, Paris, France.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, T. L., & Hodges, R. E. (1995). The literacy dictionary: The vocabulary of reading and writing. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

<sup>11</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, (n. d.). Literacy. Retrieved from <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/literacy>.

<sup>12</sup> OECD. (2019). PISA 2018 assessment and analytical framework (Chapter 2). Accessible at <https://www.oecd.org/education/pisa-2018-assessment-and-analytical-framework-b25efab8-en.htm>.

## 6. The National Literacy Strategy Elements

There is a consensus about the importance of enhancing Arabic literacy skills for achieving cultural integration and transferring Arab culture to Arab youth, which will help them root and update their thinking processes in the Arabic language. Literacy, therefore, plays an important role in each student's understanding of his or her place in the world and shapes the country's identity as an Arab nation.



*“Our language is our identity, the language of the Holy Qur'an, the language of our civilization and revolution, and the language of literature and science”.*

*“Our language has preserved its heritage over the past centuries. It has the right to publish its content everywhere.”*

*—His Highness, Crown Prince Al Hussein Bin Abdullah II*



All partners and stakeholders are aware of the role of education and, more importantly, literacy in Jordan's future economic and social development, as well as their special status as ends in themselves. In 2011, Elizabeth King, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, stated that, **“Literacy has a unique position in an individual's learning journey. It is the introduction to their schooling and is their constant companion throughout. Deep and meaningful learning leading to fulfilling and productive engagement in society is not possible without proficient literacy.”**<sup>25</sup>

An OECD report<sup>26</sup> from 2015 quantified the impact of quality education on economic development. It indicated that providing every child with access to education and the skills needed to participate fully in society would boost GDP on average by 28% per year in low-income countries and 16% per year in high-income countries. In 2016, Harry Patrinos from the World Bank emphasized, **“Education is truly one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality, and it sets the foundation for sustained economic growth.”**<sup>27</sup>



*“The Arabic language is the nation's identity, the pillar of its unity, its culture and civilization, and the means of communication between its people. It is the official language of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution.”*

*—Jordanian Academy of Arabic Language*



<sup>25</sup> King, E. (2011, January 28). Education is fundamental to development and growth. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/education-is-fundamental-to-development-and-growth>

<sup>26</sup> OECD, Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2015). Universal basic skills: What countries stand to gain? OECD Publishing: Paris, France. doi:10.1787/9789264234833-en

<sup>27</sup> Patrinos, H. A. (2016, May 17). Why education matters for economic development. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/why-education-matters-economic-development>

The vision of the National Literacy Strategy is:

## 6.1 The vision

### **A generation of passionate readers**

The education system does not simply aim to graduate students who are merely capable of reading and writing. Instead, the aim is to embed reading into the identities of every generation that graduates from the Jordanian education system. We want our young people to love reading, writing, and the Arabic language. Literacy is not just a means to an end but a goal in itself.

## 6.2 The strategic objectives

The selected vision is expected to be achieved through the following two strategic objectives:

**Improve students' Arabic literacy skills.**

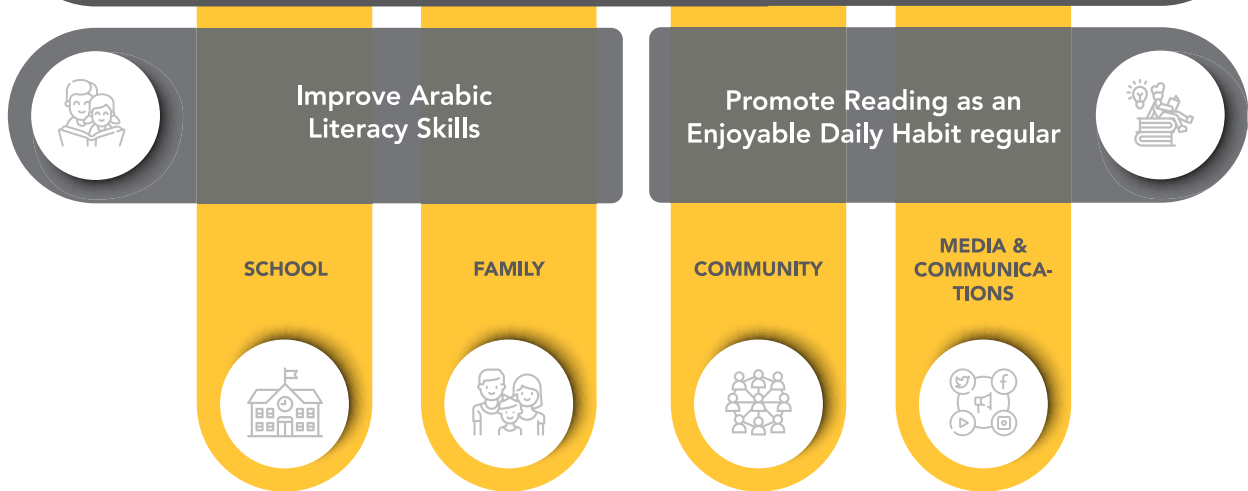
**Promote reading as an enjoyable and regular habit.**

Developing literacy is a lifelong journey. Passion, fluency, and understanding all develop as students' progress through their literacy journey. Similarly, the support and encouragement students' need to develop literacy skills must be equally adaptive and responsive, from the early years through KG, primary school, and beyond. The needs of all learners, especially those with special learning needs and disabilities and those who face any difficulties, must be identified and addressed. A supportive education system attuned to the needs of each student must exist throughout students' journeys to becoming competent readers and writers. Learning and reading resources must be available and adapted to the needs of students with special learning needs and disabilities. It is also necessary to support students' families so they can help their students grow and develop, and everyone involved in the educational system—whether at home, in school, or in the community at large—should work together to support students to become avid readers and writers. A full description of how this vision comes to life in a student's journey from early childhood through primary school is included in **Annex I**.

## 6.3 The National Literacy Strategy four pillars

Guided by this vision, the strategy four pillars are identified. These pillars are representing all the stakeholders and actors needed to achieve the National Literacy Strategy ambitious vision and its strategic objectives.

## A GENERATION OF PASSIONATE READERS



A future generation of skilled and passionate readers and writers needs to begin early to develop their literacy skills, and as those skills flourish, all students will see the joy of reading and writing as part of their daily life. It should be emphasized that all means all; no student should be excluded because of any learning needs, disability, or disadvantage they or their family face.

Dramatic improvements in both skills and passion for reading can be best achieved through the collective efforts of schools, families, and the wider communities all working in partnership.

Moreover, this collective effort needs to be publicized, promoted, encouraged, and reinforced through the variety of communication channels and media forms available in Jordanian society.

The four pillars upon which the strategic objectives and vision for literacy will be built are described in more detail below. Activities and key performance indicators relevant to the strategic objectives and four pillars are shared in Section 8 ("From Strategy to Action").



- **The School**

“

*Overall objective: To provide a stimulating and supporting school environment to improve students' literacy skills, leading to students' reading with fluency, comprehension, and passion.*

”

Creating a stimulating and supportive environment in school requires that several features and capacities of the education system align and come together in mutually reinforcing ways. Primarily, **education system leaders should announce and commit to improved literacy** as a priority objective. They should then **set realistic, ambitious, and measurable targets** based on their students' performance on school-level diagnostic assessments and national tests to improve students' learning outcomes and literacy performance in the basic learning stages. It is also necessary to have an effective accountability system in accordance with clear standards based on students' performance data on national and international tests.

The **general curriculum framework** defines what students should know and be able to do at each stage of their learning journey and allocates sufficient time for language and literacy learning and practice. **Teaching and learning materials (TLMs)** are aligned to the curriculum and map out the sequence of lessons needed to develop and deepen students' skills and convey what they should know. A rich collection of additional **supplemental literacy materials** provided through well-resourced school and classroom libraries and well-trained librarians providing literacy programs and activities that offer further opportunities for students to practice and apply their skills expose students to additional knowledge and make it possible to develop the habit of, gain an interest in, and discover the joy of reading.

Teachers' **instructional practices** bring the curriculum to life in their classrooms when they use materials effectively, providing many opportunities for students to practice, apply, and deepen their skill and passion for reading.

**Assessment strategies and tools** aligned with the curriculum allow teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, plan remedial activities, make informed educational decisions based on assessment findings, and monitor all students' progress toward efficient literacy. National assessments that are compatible with international standards allow the identification of how many students are meeting a specific standard of reading against common benchmarks. Furthermore, the General Assessment Framework (discussed in Section 7.4) ensures that assessments are available for different purposes and that they are used in appropriate grades and at appropriate times. Early **observation and monitoring** will lead to the identification of literacy difficulties.

**Multisensory interventions** that focus on the individual abilities of students with literacy difficulties can be effective in supporting students. The input of professionals trained on the assessment of and interventions for literacy difficulties is central to empowering other teachers to act as learning scaffolds for students in need of additional support.

To enable teachers to successfully weave together the above elements, **teacher professional development and coaching programs** ensure teachers have sufficient skills in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and know how to develop students' language and literacy skills in the academic form of the language. It is important that pre-service and in-service professional development programs are designed to enable teachers to grow professionally and assist them in developing and applying evidence-based instructional practices.

**School-based communities of practice and coaching programs** reinforce teachers' use of sound instructional methods and identify where teachers may need additional support to improve their practice.

**School leaders** are responsible for creating an environment in which expectations for good teaching practice and appropriate behavior are explicit, recognized, and reinforced.

Enrichment educational activities strongly emphasize supporting and improving reading skills in meaningful ways that include the following:

<sup>28</sup> Carpentieri, J., Fairfax-Cholmeley, K., Litster, J., & Vorhaus, J. (2011) Family Literacy in Europe: Using Parental Support Initiatives to Enhance Early Literacy Development. London: NRDC, Institute of Education.

- Providing entertaining ways for students to learn how to read and write beyond the textbook.
- Encouraging children to practice reading for pleasure and not treating it as a duty or chore.
- Supplementing what is taught in the classroom with leveled reading resources aligned with the official learning outcomes.

- **The Family**



*Overall objective: To promote a culture of reading within the family, spread the love of daily reading, and involve parents in helping their children acquire literacy skills.*



The government recognizes the importance of providing illiterate parents with literacy programs and improving their reading skills, which studies have proven to have a positive impact on improving children's reading skills.<sup>28</sup> It is especially effective when parents are trained on how to help their children to gain specific literacy skills and support them through social and emotional skills. Families recognize the importance of **language development** from an early age by talking and playing with their infants and toddlers in ways that help them develop early language and literacy skills. Working in partnership with their children's schools, families come to **understand what skills their children should be developing** as they progress through school.

Families learn what **good literacy instruction looks like** and support their schools and teachers in providing that instruction on a day-to-day basis. Families are in touch with their children's teachers, finding out what they can do at home to **reinforce the literacy skills** taught in school. Simple games, songs, and literacy-related activities are used regularly at home, and families try to make sure there are **books or other reading materials in the house**.

Some family members spend time in school, helping by telling or reading stories in classrooms or with small groups of students. Caregivers take children to **visit local libraries or other community centers** where books and literacy activities are available in print and digital forms.

Families **model reading for pleasure**, setting aside a time when everyone can read or be read to. If devices are available, parents or caregivers guide children to sites where high-quality literacy resources and games can be found. Some families supplement children's print experiences with **relevant applications, literacy resources, and games**. Families also receive support and encouragement to continue **at-home learning** practices developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, making Jordan's education system more resilient to such shocks.





- **The Community**



*Overall objective: To link all community resources and initiatives aimed at improving literacy skills to the activities of the National Arabic Literacy Strategy.*



**Community and religious leaders enthusiastically promote** literacy via speeches, events, and publicized engagement in literacy-related activities. A variety of agencies and institutions—including the MoE, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places, municipalities, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and foundations—coordinate more purposefully in support of the NLS.

**Public libraries** are increasingly established across the country, with ample stocks of children’s books on a variety of subjects of interest to young learners and of appropriate levels for emergent, beginner, and advancing readers.

**Publishers** are enlisted to collaborate with libraries or community centers to hold book fairs, reading contests, or other fun events focused on language and literacy. Best-selling children’s books are recognized and awarded prizes.

**Community-based organizations and private sector firms** collaborate with schools to support reading, such as by recruiting and providing **volunteers to tell or read stories** in class or with groups of students who need extra practice.

**Charitable foundations and private sector companies** raise funds to support reading events, increase stocks of books in public and school libraries, provide prizes for reading promotional events, and seek other ways to support community literacy activities.



- **The Media and Communications**



*Overall objective: To launch and sustain a national awareness campaign on the importance of reading that includes publicizing literacy-related events, offering access to reading resources, and supporting activities aimed at improving literacy skills.*



Stakeholders provide sufficient **communication and media resources** to systematically promote the NLS.

Sustained communications involving **multiple, diverse, and mutually reinforcing messages and channels** publicize the NLS and all relevant activities. The government creates a central digital website of literacy resources offering a curated collection of materials linked to other existing or developing resource offerings.

**Posters, fliers, and electronic communications** are used to promote literacy activities, and social media are leveraged to encourage and spread enthusiasm for reading.

**Mass media** (television, radio, and social media) are used to promote literacy and publicize NLS events and accomplishments. National leaders, celebrities and influencers, sports stars, and other public figures demonstrate their support and **publicly model a love for reading**. **Key performance indicators are publicly tracked, and data are shared** and discussed with all parts of Jordanian society that hold a stake in monitoring and achieving success. **Examples of success**—in school, at home, and in the community—are publicized and celebrated.



## 7. Building on what has been achieved

It is important to recognize that the NLS is not starting from scratch. Numerous important reforms and investments have already been made in improving educational opportunities for young people in Jordan. Several of the most significant investments that are expected to directly contribute to realizing the NLS's strategic objectives are summarized here.

### 7.1. Pre-school enrollment

The government is investing extensively in the expansion of K2, with the MoE adding an average of 142 classrooms annually<sup>29</sup>, in addition to prioritizing children's preschool learning through school readiness programs implemented annually by the MoE. The Ministry is also working in cooperation with private sector institutions, donors and partners to achieve universal and mandatory access for all 5-year-olds.

### 7.2. The Ministry's programs implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and learning loss

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoE resorted to distance learning in order to continue the learning process in the midst of a pandemic, and the "Darsak" learning platform was established, as well as two TV channels dedicated to broadcasting lessons covered the core subjects – Arabic,

<sup>29</sup> Education Strategic plan 2018-2025

English, Mathematics and Science – for grades 1-12.

The MoE conducted comprehensive learning assessments to guide the educational planning, and provide quality remedial programs for all students. Teachers were trained to ensure that teaching is adapted to student learning levels so that they can make up for and recover the learning loss.

### 7.3. Curricula and TLMs

The National Centre for Curriculum Development (NCCD) has consulted broadly with experts and specialists to update the national curriculum framework for G1–grade 12 (G12). The NCCD subsequently developed **competency-based** curricular frameworks for the KG learning cycle and other learning subjects, focusing on skills and knowledge development and specific areas relevant to the Arabic language—especially listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking. An integrated set of TLMs that aim to achieve the targeted learning outcomes in the new curricula is currently under development. RAMP specialists will participate in the TLM development process to ensure coherence with the new curricula and integrate the evidence-based reading methods for early grades from the curricula.

### 7.4. Supporting reading materials

To improve the foundational literacy skills of students in early education, the MoE, in cooperation with USAID, provided 600 primary schools with leveled reader kits compatible with official learning outcomes for K2–G3. The MoE also trained teachers on how to use the kits effectively and will observe and assess their impact on children's reading practice. In addition to many other initiatives that aim to improve children literacy skills, such as: The knowledge pathway, The letters' journey App., Antura and letters' App., and the children's mobile library, ....etc.

### 7.5. Learning assessments

The recently developed Early Grades General Assessment Framework provides an overview of all assessments to ensure they are fit for purpose, avoid redundancy, and help identify assessment needs. Additionally, RAMP developed **formative and diagnostic assessment procedural guidelines** for early grades teachers. These guidelines will help teachers measure the extent to which students have mastered reading skills and analyze relevant data to create teaching plans and remedial plans based on the **actual level of students' performance**.

The MoE also conducts several national assessments to identify the performance standards for students' learning of literacy skills. These include the Third Grade National Test, Lot Quality Assurance Sampling, and EGRA. The results of these tests are intended to help decision makers at the MoE level, field directorates, and schools improve student learning by addressing weaknesses and strengthening strengths, identifying which field directorates are most in need of support,

and building development plans to improve student learning. The MoE, educational development councils, and Parent–Teacher Councils (PTCs) monitor the implementation of those development plans for directorates and schools and ensure they are accountable for students’ test results.

### **7.6. Teachers’ professional development**

The policies governing the teaching profession are being reformed to improve the teacher selection and recruitment processes, the provision of teacher professional support and growth opportunities, and teacher evaluation and career advancement. The e-platform for online access to resources and learning opportunities for teachers that was put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic has been enthusiastically embraced by more than 100,000 teachers. It now provides certified teacher professional development programs aligned with the teacher ranking system.

To enhance the efficiency of new teachers before they enter the teaching profession, the MoE—in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education, Pre-Service Teacher Education in Jordan (USAID/PRESTIJ), and Queen Rania Teacher Academy (QRTA)—endorsed the pre-service teacher diploma. A curriculum for this diploma has been developed, including new training paths specifically for Arabic language teachers (G4–G6), and it was disseminated to four public universities in 2022.

In addition, the MoE, in cooperation with RAMP, trained early grade teachers and built their capacities in the following areas:

- The most up-to-date methods for teaching reading skills.
- Formative and diagnostic assessment strategies and the adaptation of teaching plans based on assessment results.
- How to identify the main learning outcomes and focus on them in teaching plans.
- How to teach according to the actual level of students’ performance.
- The identification of struggling students and provision of appropriate support, whether in terms of learning or psychosocial and mental health.

The MoE is also providing remedial programs to support students who fall behind and face difficulties in the first years of learning in school. These programs will enable these students to catch up so that they can succeed in the following years. All these programs have been fully institutionalized in the formal education system in Jordan.

### 7.7. Educational supervision and coaching

To support the work of educational supervisors in field directorates and to coach teachers in their schools, many teachers with experience and outstanding performance were promoted to the rank of senior or expert teacher. The Ministry worked to build the capacities of supervisors, senior teachers, and school principals in several areas, including assessing teachers' training needs, designing and implementing training, and coaching skills.



### 7.8. Special and inclusive education

In the 10-year Inclusive Education Strategy, the MoE and the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sought to provide education service for all students and to activate inclusive education for students with disabilities. It also aimed to increase awareness of the importance of providing educational opportunities that accept diversity and supportive teaching and learning environments for all students.

The MoE, in cooperation with RAMP, prepared an action plan aimed at supporting the Ministry to achieve the following objectives in its new 10-year Inclusive Education Strategy:

- Designing and implementing programs aimed at building the capacities of school principals on inclusive education and raising public awareness about inclusive education and children with disabilities.
- Ensuring the provision of pre-service and in-service continuous professional development programs for employees on inclusive education, including training on specialized services.
- Adapting and translating reading books into braille for blind students in specialized schools.





### 7.9. Parental engagement

The value of the important links between the education system, schools, and families that were reemphasized as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response has been confirmed, and these links will continue to be highlighted. The MoE created the online learning platform JO-LEARN, which is intended to be one of the most important means of communicating with parents and providing them with support to continue their home learning activities effectively. The JO-LEARN Platform will be used to communicate with parents and inform them of the learning expectations of their children. It will also serve as a platform to advertise school activities and homework and distribute videos demonstrating strategies for parents to help their children.



### **7.10. Community support**

The MoE implements multiple programs involving the local community in efforts to improve learning, such as Local Educational Councils. Each council involves a group of schools (i.e., the network), and membership consists of representatives of the local community, parents, students, and teachers, led by a member of the local community. In addition, Educational Development Councils operate at the field directorate level and include the leaders of school networks, the Director of the Field Directorate, and the Head of the Supervision Unit, among others. Each Educational Development Council is headed by a member of the local community, who supervises the development and implementation of school improvement plans and implements various volunteer programs that focus on vulnerable children, children from host communities (including illiterate parents), and the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools.



## 8. From Strategy to Action

Given the strategic orientation summarized for each of the four pillars, and building on what has been achieved. This section specifies the activities needed to put the NLS into action. These consist of a mix of policy and institutional changes that will have lasting effects, as well as strategic, targeted activities that will operationalize this strategy. These activities are grouped as follows: activities that can be quickly implemented to lay a foundation for longer-term success and those that will build on early wins.

### 8.1. The School

- **Early opportunities**

#### A. Curricula and TLMs

- Ensure synergy between the national curriculum framework, TLMs, and the NLS objectives.
- Determine the levels of proficiency in reading skills that students in G1–G6 are expected to achieve and include them in the curricula and TLMs.
- Increase instructional time for Arabic literacy skills and reading practice, and invest the time allocated for better learning.

<sup>30</sup> Westland, J. (2015, May 15). The importance of quick wins. Project Manager. <https://www.projectmanager.com/blog/importance-quick-wins>



## **B. School libraries and reading resources**

- Provide school or classroom libraries with essential reading materials for each student (e.g., decodable readers, leveled readers, supplemental reading materials) that were specifically designed to teach reading.
- Provide fictional and realistic storybooks that are appropriate in terms of language and grade level.
- Ensure that all the books that students need are available, accessible to everyone, suitable, affordable, and of sufficient quality to make them last for a long time.
- Ensure that students with disabilities have access to accessible texts (i.e., texts designed specifically for use by people with disabilities).
- Ensure diverse reading material types are available.
- Provide programs to build the capacities of teachers and librarians on reading activities.

## **C. Assessment of students' literacy performance**

- Develop a general framework for assessment that includes performance standards for literacy learning, includes all types of assessment (i.e., diagnostic, formative, and summative), and required tools.
- Build teachers' capacities in analyzing evaluation results and using them to monitor students' progress, identify the causes of poor literacy skills, and prepare remedial programs for students encountering difficulties in learning literacy.
- Complete the work in conducting the diagnostic study with clear learning indicators that help in measuring learning.

## **D. Evidence-based literacy teaching strategies <sup>31</sup>**

- Develop teacher-training programs to build their capacities in applying differentiated instruction strategies (i.e., teaching literacy skills to students in groups according to their needs).
- Build the capacities of G4–G6 teachers to support literacy development through other subjects and emphasize the importance of literacy across all other subject curricula.
- Create an online platform for teacher resources as a trusted repository of evidence-based teaching practices.
- Require Arabic language teachers to use MSA in Arabic language classes and subsequently expand this directive to include all teachers of other subjects taught in Arabic.
- Require teachers to use MSA inside and outside the classroom, starting in KG and subsequently expanding this directive to include the primary grades.

<sup>31</sup> Stern, J., Dubeck, M., Piper, B., & Jukes, M. (2022, January). Instructional support for effective large-scale reading interventions. Findings from the Learning at Scale Study. <https://ierc-publicfiles.s3.amazonaws.com/public/resources/BRIEF-2-%20Instructional%20Support2.pdf>

## **E. Inclusive education**

Provide professional development for teachers in the following areas:

- Mechanisms for identifying children with learning difficulties and methods of supporting the learning of reading skills and referral to special education services.
- Ensure teachers have opportunities to share good practices regarding time spent teaching reading skills in the classroom, the nature of reading materials, and the level of support provided.

## **F. Educational leadership**

Build the capacities of educational leaders in the following areas:

- Developing and implementing learning improvement plans and identifying financial needs to implement these plans.
- Defining reference indicators and literacy standards at all levels of learning, from KG to G6.
- Coordinating with other leaders in the field directorates and schools to identify the main objectives in their development plans to improve literacy outcomes and achieve high-quality education for students.
- Following up on achieving these goals using student assessment results and/or classroom observation data to provide additional support when needed.
- Ensuring that the right people or entities are held accountable for the results of student assessments and/or classroom observations.
- Providing teachers and schools with a combination of support and supervision.

## **• Medium-term opportunities to build sustainable success**

### **Curricula and TLMs**

- Include clear learning standards for literacy skills in the National Curriculum Framework.
- Ensure that learning materials are written using the most updated evidence-based literacy learning methods.
- Ensure that learning materials (e.g., textbooks) are inclusive, taking into account students with special needs and gender, and focusing on the use of ICT as a learning tool.
- Ensure literacy is a cross-cutting theme in all learning subjects.
- Provide educational materials to meet the needs of students in remedial support programs.

## **School libraries and reading resources**

- Facilitate students' access to reading resources—including leveled readers—that are compatible with the learning outcomes of the reading skills included in the official curriculum.
- Provide libraries with various books and stories for children with different interests.

## **Students' literacy performance assessments**

- Align national literacy performance and learning standards with international competencies in literacy.
- Align all literacy tests with national reading performance and learning indicators and standards at all levels (classroom, school, field directorate, and country).
- Conduct regular national or regional (field directorate-level) literacy assessments for G2, G4, and G6.
- Ensure that reading tests are included for students with disabilities and that any necessary equipment is provided.

## **Evidence-based teaching strategies**

- Improve KG and early grades teachers' performance in teaching and assessing literacy skills.
- Build the capacities of G4–G6 teachers in supporting the development of reading skills through other subjects.
- Provide ongoing training and support for teachers focused on using educational materials, developing MSA language skills, and responding to students' special learning needs.
- Develop the coaching system to be integrated, monitored, and evidence-based and meet the professional needs of pre- and post-service teachers.

## **Inclusive education**

Provide professional development programs for teachers in the following areas:

- Implementing support strategies for developing pre-reading skills among children with mild, moderate, and advance learning difficulties.
- Providing students with severe reading difficulties with intensive courses over a specified period.

## **Educational leadership**

- Prioritize the objective of “improving students' literacy skills” in leaders' annual plans at the school and field directorate levels and institutionalize an accountability system.
- Provide adequate financial allocations for teacher support and coaching and training activities based on actual needs.
- Provide a sufficient number of educational supervisors and senior teachers.

## • Policy and operational implications

The School pillar is ambitious because it requires the simultaneous development and acquisition of TLMs, teacher training, and ongoing support. Yet, when structured pedagogy is in place, teachers will feel supported and motivated by the changes they see in their students' Arabic literacy skills.

It is assumed that the following policy implications will be embedded in and taken into consideration within the strategy:

- Increase the time allocated for reading classes.
- Ensure literacy is a crosscutting theme across all learning subjects.
- Build teachers' capacity and improve their use of literacy assessment strategies and tools, analyzing assessment results, and designing remedial interventions.
- Review the textbook and educational material distribution policies to ensure that these materials reach all field directorates at the appropriate time and in the appropriate quantity.
- Increase the financial allocations for purchasing library books and enrich school libraries with reading materials compatible with the reading learning outcomes included in the curriculum.
- Facilitate procedures for acquiring books for school libraries.
- Create a new agenda for assessing students' literacy skills and competencies at all levels (classroom, field directorate, national, and international).
- Mainstream the evidence-based electronic supervision system established through RAMP.
- Review referral procedures and assessments for students with learning difficulties and students with disabilities and train teachers on these procedures and assessments.

## • Challenges

- Some of the school-level changes will be unfamiliar in the upper grades and may not be embraced. If that happens, the early grades' recent experience adopting these ideas and can serve as a model.
- Funds and logistics for some of these opportunities need to be arranged.
- The MoE to provide financial and logistical support for the following programs:
  - Developing gender-sensitive TLMs, suitable for students with special needs, as well as e-learning technologies.
  - Building professional development programs for teachers to enhance their capabilities in several areas, including designing assessment tools, analyzing test results, and leveraging the results to provide remedial support for low-performing students.
- The MoE's reading resources selection and acquisition bylaws and regulations might be an obstacle for donating reading materials from national, community, and private institutions.
- There is a need to establish coordination mechanisms among the different government and private agencies implementing the strategy.

## 8.2 The Family

### • Early opportunities

- Conduct awareness sessions for schools about the importance of proactively engaging families to increase their participation in developing their children's literacy.
- Activate MoE programs aimed at raising parental awareness in the following areas:
  - Providing courses for parents/caregivers to enable them to support the development of their children's reading skills.
  - Including families in support and interventions for children with learning difficulties.
  - Encouraging students to visit any libraries available in their local communities.

### • Medium-term opportunities to build sustainable success

- Expand parental involvement programs to include students in G4–G6 and increase participation in parent–teacher councils (PTCs) meetings.
- Raise family awareness about the importance of daily reading activities at home to improve their children's Arabic skills.
- Help families learn ways they can support their child's literacy development (e.g., shared books, language games, appropriate applications, electronic resources).
- Create a specialized digital literacy platform to serve parents and students.
- Conduct programs to support parents who have children with disabilities to identify their children's developmental characteristics.
- Support community culture and raise awareness of the importance of allocating a portion of family income to buy books and stories.

### • Policy and operational implications

A policy and operational shift is needed to ensure that families and schools are considered as partners in developing children's literacy skills. Some existing practices (e.g., PTCs can be refined, and parental involvement programs can be expanded for G4–G6.

### • Challenges

- The need to ensure families feel that the National Arabic Literacy Strategy applies to all students in Jordan, not just those who attend public schools.
- The ability to reach parents and motivate them to participate in literacy activities at school.
- The inability of families to allocate portions of their family income to buy stories and books.
- The lack of public libraries in local communities.
- The fact that parental involvement programs are limited to KG and the first three grades.

## 8.3 Community

- **Early opportunities**

- Share the National Literacy Strategy with national agencies, institutions, and communication organizations to support the strategy's realization.
- Organize book fairs in schools and link them to important occasions, such as the International Day of the Arabic Language and Literacy Day, among others.
- Distribute books and implement reading initiatives at the school level.
- Support book-ownership initiatives through activities aimed at introducing students to different types of books and enabling them to choose and own what suits them.
- Support public libraries to offer reading materials and software that are appropriate for learners with reading difficulties.
- Activate the Reading Incentive Program.

- **Medium-term opportunities to build sustainable success**

- Coordinate and network with all organizations and bodies that aim to improve the literacy skills of young people.
- Promote literacy in speeches, events, and publicized engagement in literacy-related activities by community leaders.
- Increase private sector and foundation support to increase stocks of books in public and school libraries to support reading events.
- Collaborate with publishers to hold book fairs, contests, and other literacy-related activities at libraries and community centers.
- Support literacy activities (e.g., buddy reading, oral storytelling, neighborhood libraries) through community-based organizations and the private sector.
- Dedicate a national week for reading.
- Open public libraries in rural areas (Ministry of Culture) to include books suitable for all ages and levels.
- Establish mobile libraries between governorates.
- Encourage volunteering (such as a shadow teacher for students with disabilities).
- Support community infrastructure accessible to students with disabilities (e.g., enable them to access libraries and public places).
- Form a national literacy committee with representation from all institutions and allocate financial resources for it.

- **Policy and operational implications**

Communities are diverse, and it is expected that ideas for literacy activities will be too. To unify and have a shared goal, the strategy's vision and two strategic objectives should guide planning. Also, organizations that host literacy-related activities should have a means to share their efforts widely (e.g., social media), and annual awards should recognize programs and outreach.

- Add activities aimed at improving reading skills to the annual work plans of the MoE's Department of Educational Activities.
- Form a national reading committee that includes representatives of all relevant authorities and allocate financial resources to sustain its work.

- **Challenges**

Many of the literacy activities and promotion in the community will be local and may appear to be small in scope, but collectively, they will have substantial influence. Therefore, momentum needs to be generated so that efforts do not seem isolated. This will require coordination between the various governmental and private agencies.

## **8.4 Media and communications**

- **Early opportunities**

Form a joint media team with representatives from the MoE's Media Directorate and RAMP specialists working together to design a media plan for the NLS.

- **Medium-term opportunities to build sustainable success**

- Promote literacy and publicize the strategy by mobilizing mass media.
- Enlist communication resources to systematically promote literacy.
- Model a love for reading at all levels of society, including public figures.
- Conduct a national awareness campaign on the importance of reading and supporting activities to improve reading skills.
- Conduct an awareness campaign to increase teachers', families', and students' knowledge about the learning standards and expectations.
- Conduct awareness campaigns to increase students' knowledge about quality reading materials at various developmental stages.
- Increase media programs that promote literacy and reading.
- Conduct a wide media campaign aimed at promoting the development of a culture of reading as part of daily life at home.



- **Policy and operational implications**

- Embrace the fact that some aspects of media are planned, while others are more spontaneous (e.g., social media posts). To ensure a balance between sustained messaging and creativity, suggested wording that can be used as-is or adjusted should be readily accessible.
- Ensure that the people tasked to model their love for reading and the Arabic language are a mix of Jordanian leaders, celebrities, average citizens, and influencers.
- Form a media team with representation from the central and field directorates levels to work on raising community awareness (i.e., among students, teachers, families, and local communities) about the importance of literacy and reading.
- Ensure the MoE allocates an appropriate budget to enable the implementation of the media and communication activities.

- **Challenges**

Many influential methods of communication in use at the time of writing this strategy did not exist 5 years ago. Instead of imagining the forms of communication that will be influential throughout the 5 year covered by the strategy, it is better to state that being responsive to evolving media options is a goal. The communication and media strategy will need to include means to track and monitor these types of events, articles, advertisements, programs, and other channels.

## 9. General Framework for Results, Performance Indicators, and Key Objectives

### The vision: A Generation of passionate readers

#### 12.1. Strategic objectives and key performance indicators

##### Strategic Objective 1: Improving Students' Arabic literacy skills



Increase percentage of G1 students ready to learn



Increase percentage of G3 students reading with fluency and comprehension.



Reduce the proportion of ten-year-olds who cannot read and comprehend a short text appropriate for their age (Learning Poverty Index, World Bank)



Increase of G6 students demonstrate reading skills commensurate with successfully accessing and using information in diverse forms and across a variety of subject areas.

##### Strategic Objective 2: Promoting reading is an enjoyable regular habit



Increase in the number of book titles published for young readers (appropriate for KG–G6).



Increase the number of families in which family members read to their preschool and primary school-age students.



Increase in the number of community-based reading and writing opportunities and activities.

To achieve the strategic objectives, it is important to attain the results listed below according to the strategy's four pillars. This will be done by implementing the programs and activities described below and monitoring the relevant performance indicators.

## Pillar I: School

**Strategic Objective:** To provide a stimulating and supporting school environment to improve students' literacy skills, leading to students' reading with fluency, comprehension, and passion

Activities and Programs	Performance Indicators
<b>Curricula, reading materials, and TLMs</b>	
<p>Develop a competency-based literacy curriculum that includes clear, holistic, and gender-sensitive learning standards.</p> <p>Distribute educational learning materials in appropriate quantities to all schools at the right time.</p> <p>Ensure students can access leveled readers and other resources that are appropriate to students' reading levels and compatible with the official curriculum.</p>	<p>Provision of a competency-based literacy curriculum that includes clear, holistic, and gender-sensitive learning standards.</p> <p>The percentages of teachers and students in the target group who received the full set of TLMs in a timely manner and in sufficient number.</p> <p>The number of leveled readers and decodable readers appropriate for the target group and compatible with the official curriculum distributed to schools.</p>
<b>Teacher professional development</b>	
<p>Improve teachers' performance in teaching literacy skills.</p> <p>Build the capacities of new teachers in literacy teaching strategies.</p> <p>Train teachers on methods of detecting difficulties in learning reading skills.</p>	<p>The percentage of target group teachers who successfully complete the requirements related to effective literacy teaching strategies.</p> <p>The percentage of new teachers from the target group who complete accredited training programs in literacy teaching strategies.</p> <p>The number of students in the target age range who receive remedial support programs to improve their reading skills.</p>
<b>Educational supervision (mentoring and supporting)</b>	
<p>Create an evidence-based mentoring and supporting system that is included in daily school operations to meet teachers' real needs for educational support.</p>	<p>The percentage of schools in the target group that regularly organize communities of practice led by the school's expert teacher.</p> <p>The number of educational supervisors who regularly hold cluster-level communities of practice.</p>

## Pillar I: School

**Strategic Objective:** To provide a stimulating and supporting school environment to improve students' literacy skills, leading to students' reading with fluency, comprehension, and passion

Activities and Programs	Performance Indicators
Learning assessment	
Provide appropriate diagnostic assessment tools.	<p>The percentage of schools in the target group where teachers use appropriate diagnostic assessment tools.</p> <p>The percentage of teachers who use assessment data to improve learning and performance.</p>
Implement regular literacy tests at the ministry, Field directorate, and school levels.	<p>The percentage of schools in the target group where national assessment results are shared and discussed at various levels (e.g., school development teams, PTCs, and Educational Development Councils).</p>
Educational leaders	
<p>Build the capacities of educational leaders in preparing learning improvement plans and determining financial allocations for the implementation of these plans.</p> <p>Ensure that improving students' literacy skills is a priority and an accountable goal in the annual plans of field directorates and schools.</p>	<p>The percentage of educational leaders who successfully complete the requirements of educational leadership programs (programmatic and financial planning).</p> <p>The number of coordination meetings involving school leaders in the target group held to identify the main objectives in their development plans to improve literacy outcomes and achieve high-quality education in their schools and Field directorates.</p> <p>The number of school leaders in the target group held accountable for their students' results on national and international tests.</p>

## Pillar 2: Family

**Strategic Objective:** To promote a culture of reading within the family, spread the love of daily reading, and involve parents in helping their children acquire literacy skills

Activities and Programs	Performance Indicators
<p>Strengthen Parental Involvement Programs and expand their application for students in G4–G6.</p> <p>Enable families to participating in supporting and implementing interventions for children with learning difficulties.</p>	<p>The percentage of parents in the target group who can define the reading learning outcomes that their children should achieve according to their age and performance level.</p> <p>The percentage of parents in the target group who participate in school activities, including open days, developmental characteristics sessions, and PTC meetings.</p> <p>Parents' awareness of the importance of making reading a daily family activity and participating in it is increased.</p>

## Pillar 3: Community

**Strategic Objective:** To link all community resources and initiatives aimed at improving literacy skills to the activities of the National Arabic Literacy Strategy

Activities and Programs	Performance Indicators
<p>Link and involve all institutions and organizations to support achieving the NLS goals.</p> <p>Allocate a national reading week aimed at celebrating reading and highlighting its importance through intensive reading activities at school, at home, and in the community as a whole.</p> <p>Support book-ownership program initiatives targeting students to help them acquire books through the establishment of pop-up libraries that children visit as part of field trips and choose books to own.</p> <p>Host reading activities in libraries to increase children's appetite for reading by helping them learn how to choose books and encouraging them to start building their home libraries.</p>	<p>The percentage increase in the number of institutions, organizations, and companies from the public and private sectors that support the activities of the NLS.</p> <p>The percentage of children in the target group who participate in reading activities inside and outside the school.</p> <p>The percentage increase in private sector support for reading activities inside and outside the school.</p>

## Pillar 4: Media and communication

Strategic Objective: To launch and sustain a national awareness campaign on the importance of reading

Performance Indicators	Activities and Programs
<p>Organize a national awareness campaign on the importance of reading and support activities aimed at improving reading skills.</p> <p>Introduce the NLS to improve Arabic literacy skills, in addition to its components and activities, through publications, videos, meetings, and advertisements.</p> <p>Support the MoE in disseminating and raising awareness of learning outcomes.</p>	<p>The percentage increase in the number of media programs and articles promoting reading and its importance.</p> <p>The number of dissemination activities implemented by the MoE to introduce the strategy, its objectives, and activities.</p> <p>Teachers', parents', and students' knowledge about learning standards is increased.</p> <p>Students' knowledge of qualitative reading resources is increased.</p>



## **10. Alignment and Reinforcement of the NLS Objectives across the Educational System's Elements**

### **10.1 Alignment of the NLS objectives across the educational system's elements**

To ensure system coherence in aligning existing activities within the reform effort to ensure that they are mutually reinforcing, the following procedures are recommended:

- Form an inter-technical committee to follow up and implement the NLS. This team should not only act as a steering committee to approve major changes but should also be extensively involved in the more detailed strategy implementation process. This level of involvement will allow it to identify interdependencies or small constraints that may not be evident at the strategic level.
- The team should be given the authority and flexibility to participate in a detailed or strategic manner as needed, depending on the nature of the obstacles and opportunities encountered. Team members with diverse expertise will be critical. Implementation stakeholders must be able to coordinate regularly and closely, beyond the meetings of high-level steering committees.
- Identify “synergies between the elements”. Each NLS activity to improve reading skills should be analyzed according to its interdependence with other elements of the strategy. Sub-activities or guidelines should be suggested where possible to further strengthen the elements.
- Conduct a review of current literacy improvement initiatives. This review should look at potential synergies between the different initiatives, including resources that could be shared, as well as any unnecessary duplication of efforts.



## 10.2 Adapting to changes in all system elements

System consistency should be ensured on an ongoing basis and not only during strategy design. Moreover, any system elements that undergo changes should be adapted to the rest of the system to ensure that these changes are reflected and responded to in a timely manner. To achieve this, the following recommendations are provided:

- Make use of the inter-functional team to review and follow up on the strategy regularly. This team should include individuals from different departments and organizations who are directly involved in implementing the strategy. Membership should not be limited to individuals involved in the overall decision-making process. The team should be empowered to make small changes to the strategy regularly to ensure consistency and to make broader proposals to the Task Force.
- Establish clear communications. There must be clear ways to communicate the strategy and for potential partners to communicate directly with the strategy team. These methods may include the following:
  - Developing a website or a dedicated space on the MoE website.
  - Regularly issuing newsletters or making news about the latest developments available to the public.
  - Establishing email addresses or social media accounts to allow public communication with the strategy team.
- Conduct regular reviews of the strategy. These reviews should be conducted regularly and be driven by clear research questions. The reviews should be conducted more frequently during the early stages of strategy implementation given the uncertainty inherent in these stages.

## II. NLS Implementation Stakeholders

The stakeholders involved in implementing the NLS have been identified and categorized as governmental agencies, semi-governmental institutions, international organizations, private sector, and local community organizations. They are listed below.

MoE	Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Social Development	Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research & Universities	Ministry of Municipal Affairs	NCHRD	National Council for Family Affairs
The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Greater Amman Municipality	Arabic Language Academy	House of Representatives
Crown Prince Foundation	Queen Rania Foundation	Queen Rania Teacher Academy	Shoman Foundation
UNESCO	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	USAID	FCDO
World Bank	NCCD		

### Annex I

#### Terms of Reference of the National Literacy Strategy Task Force and Other Committees

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (TOR) document is to define the roles of the official committees that will work on developing and implementing a comprehensive 5-year national strategy to improve Arabic literacy skills among students in kindergarten 2 to grade 6. This document clarifies the structures and functions of the various levels of work to be implemented by National Literacy Strategy (NLS) committees, their tasks in relation to the planned activities, the nature of the challenge entrusted to them, and the intended results and outputs of the work. The complex nature of this effort requires collaboration among several interrelated national teams, including a NLS Task Force, a Technical Committee, and a. This requires the formation of the following:

- A higher Strategic Task Force composed of key change-makers in the education sector who can activate this visionary strategy to improve literacy skills in the Arabic language.
- A Technical Committee that will work to develop implementation plans to achieve the strategic direction presented by the Task Force.
- A Technical Secretariat that will oversee the strategy development process and facilitate communication with the government, stakeholders, and donors.
- The NLS development team

Below is a detailed description of the committees; Members, roles and responsibilities:

### **First: The NLS Task Force**

A Task Force will be formed to oversee the work of the Technical Committee and other sub-specialized technical committees, to provide strategic leadership and decision-making at the policy level, and to work to ensure that priorities are met, recommendations implemented, and work pursued. The Task Force's membership will include the following roles and organizations:

1.	H.E. Minister of Education
2.	H.E. President of the National Centre for Curriculum Development (NCCD)
3.	H.E. Educational and Technical Affairs Secretary General (SG)
4.	H.E. Administrative and Financial Affairs SG
5.	H.E. Ministry of Culture SG
6.	H.E. Jordanian Arabic Language Academy SG
7.	Queen Rania Teacher Academy Executive Director
8.	Shoman Foundation Executive Director
9.	H.E. President of the National Center for Human Development
10.	Amman Municipality Libraries Director
11.	Professor Dr. Abdel Kareem Haddad/ Literacy expert - University of Jordan
12.	Professor Dr. Mohammad Hawamdeh/ Literacy expert - Yarmouk University
13.	Educational Planning and Research Managing Director (MD)
14.	Curriculum and Textbooks MD
15.	Educational Supervision and Training MD
16.	Examination and Testing MD
17.	Development Coordination Unit Executive Director
18.	Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Initiative (RAMP) COP
19.	RAMP Capacity building and sustainability Senior Advisor - RTI International

The Task Force, represented by its members, will be responsible for making strategic decisions and directing the Technical Committee. It will also be authorized to form specialized technical committees to support it. The functions of the Task Force president and members are summarized as follows:

1. **President:** This role will chair Task Force meetings, direct discussions according to the scheduled agendas, and push toward achieving the desired results.
2. **Vice President:** The Educational and Technical Affairs SG shall be the Deputy President of the Task Force in the President's absence. The Vice President will actively participate in all meetings and decision-making similar to other committee members when he is not acting on behalf of the President. He will also chair the Technical Committee.
3. **Representatives of the Ministry of Education:** These representatives' role will include enriching discussions with their experiences, directing strategic decisions, and participating in reviewing progress and achievements.
4. **A Representative of the Private Sector and Local Community:** The person in this role should have comprehensive experience in promoting reading, spreading culture, and providing support to libraries in Jordan. They will be responsible for presenting an advanced and evidence-based vision for disseminating the culture of reading in the Arabic language and new proposals, so that external contribution will include raising the ceiling of strategic objectives, in line with international expectations.
5. **Observer Members:** These members will be permitted to attend and participate in Task Force meetings and to receive all information provided to Task Force members, including meeting minutes. They will not be permitted to formally vote on matters submitted for a vote.

## **Task Force Roles and Responsibilities**

His Excellency the Minister of Education will call the Task Force to meet at least quarterly throughout the strategy development period, and each meeting will follow a renewed agenda that focuses on the following:

1. Making high-level, evidence-informed decisions on the vision definition and parameters of the NLS.
2. Providing strategic directions.
3. Advising on policies and priorities.
4. Posing research questions or other activities the Task Force wants to be addressed.
5. Reviewing high-level deliverables of the Technical Secretariat and the Technical Committee.
6. Identifying and endorsing strategic insights based on research and asking the Technical Committee to advance these into costed plans.
7. Guiding strategic communication (internal and external).
8. Holding stakeholders and governance components accountable.
9. Following up on strategy implementation.
10. In the end, the final delivery of the project's overall deliverables will rely on the Task Force's aspirations, leadership, and drive for change.

## Second: The NLS Technical Committee

A Technical Committee will be formed to develop the NLS. It will be headed by the Educational and Technical Affairs SG, and its membership will include the following roles and organizations:

1.	H.E. Educational and Technical Affairs SG
2.	H.E. Administrative and Financial Affairs SG
3.	H.E. NCCD Executive Director
4.	National Center for Human Resources Development (NCHRD) researchers
5.	Head of the NCCD's Arabic Language Curriculum and Textbooks Team
6.	Shoman Foundation Representative
7.	Ministry of Culture Representative
8.	Ministry of Higher Education Representative
9.	Curriculum and Textbooks MD
10.	Education Quality and Accountability Unit Director
11.	Curriculum Director
12.	Textbooks Director
13.	Teachers Professional Development Policies Director
14.	Educational Supervision Director
15.	Testing Director
16.	Educational Research Director
17.	Early Childhood Education Director
18.	Education Media Director
19.	Head of the Arabic Language Curriculum Director
20.	Arabic Language Curriculum Specialist
21.	Head of the Digital Media Division
22.	Development Coordination Unit Representative
23.	Arabic Language Supervisor
24.	School Principal
25.	Queen Rania Foundation for Education and Development (QRF)
26.	USAID Representative
27.	FCDO Representative



## **The NLS Technical Committee**

The Technical Committee, in cooperation with the educational experts from the supporting bodies (RAMP & QRF), supports the Taskforce by following up and reviewing the strategic visions and ideas derived from the research conducted by the supporting bodies. To develop cost-effective plans to implement the strategic vision. In addition to supporting and participating in the following tasks:

1. Conducting a preliminary analysis of the system on the policies, institutions, and political and economic forces that affect the effectiveness of the educational system related to the Arabic language reading skills of students in Jordan.
2. Conducting a preliminary analysis on literacy teaching and learning in the school environment.
3. Conducting a preliminary analysis on reading activities and practices in home and community settings (outside the school environment and formal learning).
4. Proposing a potential theory of change.
5. Establishing the logic framework, including impact, outcomes, outputs, target value, means of verification, and activities.
6. Reviewing the first version of the strategy.

### **Third: The Strategy Development Team**

The Technical Committee, in cooperation with educational experts from supporting bodies RTI and QRF, will support the Task Force by following up and reviewing the strategic visions and ideas derived from the research conducted by the supporting bodies. This team will also develop cost-effective plans to implement the strategic vision, in addition to supporting and participating in the following tasks:

Conducting a preliminary analysis of the policies, institutions, and political and economic forces that affect the educational system's effectiveness related to the Arabic language reading skills of students in Jordan.

1. Conducting a preliminary analysis of literacy teaching and learning in the school environment.
2. Conducting a preliminary analysis of reading activities and practices in home and community settings (i.e., outside the school environment and formal learning).
3. Proposing a potential theory of change.
4. Establishing the logic framework, including the impacts, outcomes, outputs, target values, means of verification, and activities.
5. Identifying milestones in years 2, 3, 4, and 5 for example (in line with the log-frames)
6. Preparing the NLS 5 years implementation plan, along with logic framework and the M&E plan.

## Annex 2

### Jordan's National Literacy Vision

#### Introduction

Literacy has a unique position in a student's learning journey. It is the introduction to their schooling and their constant companion throughout. Deep and meaningful learning is not possible without proficient literacy. Having a solid command of language, both written and spoken, is necessary to develop, comprehend, debate, and share ideas.

Beyond their utility, reading and writing have their own place as goals in themselves. The Arab world has a long history of exploring and weaving worlds and meaning with its language through poetry, stories, and prose.

The Jordanian Ministry of Education recognizes the pivotal role literacy plays in not only its students' lives but also Jordan's identity as an Arab nation. And so, through this strategy, we aim to develop:

#### A generation of passionate readers

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##### A generation of readers

We do not aim to simply produce graduates capable of reading. We want reading to become **part of their identity** and be reflected in every generation that graduates from the Jordanian education system.

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##### Passionate

We want our readers to **love reading** and the **Arabic** language. It is not just a means to an end but a **goal in itself**.

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We recognize that developing literacy is a journey that will change form throughout a child's life. Passion, fluency, and understanding all shift as a child progresses through their literacy journey and will show up differently from child to child. Similarly, the support and encouragement a child needs to develop literacy skills must be equally adaptive and responsive, from the early years through kindergarten, primary school, and beyond.

We envision a supportive ecosystem that will accompany our students through their journey to becoming competent readers and writers. All players in the ecosystem, whether at home, in school, or in the community at large, work together to support each child to become an avid reader and writer. This relationship between the players is not always through formal instruction but can be through less-formal means of practice and exposure.

To illustrate this, let's explore Rasha's journey learning to read and write, from her early years through to late childhood.

## **Early childhood**

The early years are a pivotal and extraordinary time in a child's literacy development. While a child may not necessarily be reading and writing, their brains are laying the foundation for a long and complex literacy journey. She is learning her first words, hearing how language is structured, and understanding the passion and excitement that can come from stories.

### **At home**

Rasha loves hearing her grandfather's stories. Whenever she visits his house, he always tells her stories of when he was a young child, just like Rasha. He's so expressive when he tells the stories, and sometimes, he's very funny too.

Her parents also tell her stories, but these come from the colorful storybooks they have at home. She now gets excited whenever she sees her parents pull out a book before bed. These stories sound different to Rasha, as the words they use are sometimes new, and the sentence structures are different to her grandfather's. She still likes them though, because they're usually really exciting and have colorful pictures too.

Rasha really enjoys watching cartoons, even though they speak differently than her parents. Her mum told her that this was because they spoke Formal Arabic and that she will learn more about it when she goes to school. Rasha thinks her mum is very clever, because she always answers her questions and explains things very clearly to her.

## **Kindergarten 1–2**

### **At school**

Rasha loves going to her kindergarten. Not only are there other children she can speak with, but the teacher is very nice and speaks just like they do in the cartoons she watches. She learns some of the Formal Arabic words her mum told her about, and she learns that some of them are similar to how she speaks with her parents.

Her favorite activity is when the teacher lets them use playdough to shape the new letters they are learning. Sometimes, the teacher lets them write the letters in sand too, which she also thinks is fun.

### **At home**

When she gets home, Rasha always tells her dad what she learned at kindergarten. He listens and asks her questions, even though he's very busy. At first, Rasha didn't know how to answer them, but now she can tell him the story of what she does at school every day. He always smiles and laughs when he hears it.

Now, Rasha's mum lets her read some of the books herself. She doesn't always know all the words, but she points out the letters she recognizes. She sometimes makes up stories from looking at the pictures in the book too. She makes sure she's very careful when handling the books though, because her mum told her to be respectful and not tear them.

When her parents are busy, Rasha's older brother sometimes reads stories to her as well. He's in grade 6, and she thinks he can read very well. When she learned how to write her name at kindergarten, he was the first person she showed. He was very proud but told her that she was putting too many dots on the "Sh", and she only needed three. They both laughed, but now she knows that the "Sh" only has three dots, like a triangle.

## Grades 1–3

### At school

Rasha was very excited at school when one of the new words she learned in Arabic class was repeated again in science: “Solid”. While she didn’t quite understand the word at first, it became a lot clearer when in science class, they did an experiment with water and a rock. Now whenever she thinks of the word “Solid,” she thinks “rock” and immediately remembers what it means. She’s also gotten a lot better at understanding Formal Arabic words. At first, it was difficult because the teacher would only speak in Formal Arabic. The teacher, however, would always explain what the new words meant in Colloquial Arabic. Now she can understand everything the teacher says and can even speak like her sometimes.

Her favorite part of the day, though, is reading time, when all the students in the class sit and listen to the teacher read them a story. The teacher then asks them questions about what they just read together.

### At home

Rasha’s new favorite activity is playing on her mum’s smartphone on the new app her teacher recommended. The app has a number of games in it, including some counting games and somewhere she traces out the new words she learned in school.

Rasha’s mum recently heard about the “Take Ten Minutes to Read” campaign. Since then, she has spent 10 minutes every day sitting on the couch reading a book or an article she found online. Rasha wants to be just like her mum, and so, she sits down next to her every day and flips through one of her storybooks, trying to read what she can.

### In the community

A national campaign was launched in partnership with several organizations, booksellers, and libraries called “Take Ten Minutes to Read.” The campaign includes a number of events, including group storytelling and children’s plays. Rasha was initially excited about the fun characters that were part of the campaign’s branding. However, her favorite part became the fact that her parents come to the events with her, as many of the events also target adults, such as book discounts, meetings with authors, and book discussions. While Rasha sits down to listen to a storyteller, her mum might attend a lecture by one of the authors. When they are both finished, they talk about their different experiences. While Rasha does not understand everything about her mum’s talk, she really enjoys talking with her and sharing in her excitement.



## Grades 4–6

### At school

Rasha has started struggling a bit recently at school. While Rasha still enjoys Arabic class, she's finding it more difficult to follow along in the discussion the students are having in class. Her teacher noticed this from one of the regular check-ins she has with her students. Rasha was a little upset about this, but her teacher told her it was perfectly normal and that everyone learns differently.

Soon after that, Rasha started attending a new class with some of the students from her class but not all of them. In this class, they take turns reading alone, then with the teacher, and then as a group. It was different from her class but fun. After a few weeks, Rasha wasn't lagging behind the rest of her class anymore and no longer needed to attend the extra classes.

Rasha also loves writing stories. Sometimes, she makes them up and even draws the characters. Other times, she remembers the stories her grandfather used to tell her and tries to write them too.

She writes her opinions sometimes as well. The teacher asks the students a question, and she has to write a whole paragraph about it. Although she finds it hard sometimes, she thinks it's really interesting, especially when it's a topic she likes, like science.

### At home

Rasha's teacher told her parents that Rasha was struggling with reading comprehension. The teacher told them that it was perfectly normal, and she just needed a little bit more practice, specifically through developing her vocabulary. So they were asked to read some of the leveled reading books she got from school with her, ask her to talk about what she understood, and explain the words that she didn't know. This, coupled with her extra classes, meant Rasha was back on track in no time.

Once Rasha got through her struggle with reading, her new favorite spot in the house became the reading corner her mum had set up for them. It is a cozy corner of the house with a chair and good lighting. She spends much of her time just sitting there completely engrossed in a book, either one from school or one she borrowed from the library.

In the community

Rasha's new favorite activity is going to the library with her dad. Every weekend, he takes her and her brother to choose any book they want. She loves the selection. Sometimes, she picks a fantasy book with magic, and other times, she picks one about the history of the Arab world. Her brother really likes mystery and science books, so he always gets those.

She was really excited when her brother took part in a short story competition for all the schools in the municipality. The prize was any three books of his choice from the local bookstore. Not only did he win, but he also selected a book for her! It was a fantasy book about a girl who could fly. She was so excited, she read it the same day he got it.



## Conclusion

Rasha's journey paints a picture of the type of journey we envision for all our students in Jordan. A journey that has the support of teachers, parents, community members, and the media alike. Where each child is exposed to text and language from different sources. Where struggling children have avenues for remedial learning. Where schools and parents work together to ensure complementary support. Where technology is not just used as a way to entertain children but instead as a targeted tool for their development. This is the journey this strategy aims to create, through reaching each of the players in a child's life and providing them with the necessary materials, education, and support.



