



# FINAL REPORT

## USAID READ WITH ME PROJECT

November 14, 2021

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Chemonics International Inc.

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OCTOBER 1, 2016 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2021

### Development Experience Clearinghouse Submission Information

<i>A. USAID award number</i>	Contract No. AID-176-C-16-00003
<i>B. USAID project title</i>	USAID Read with Me Project (RWM)
<i>C. USAID program area and program element</i>	Education (program area 3.2) Basic Education (program element 3.2.1)
<i>D. Descriptive title</i>	RWM Final Report
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<i>H. Date of publication</i>	November 14, 2021
<i>I. Language of document</i>	English

**Contract No.** AID-176-C-16-00003

**Cover photo:** Book distribution event in 2021 in Isfara with the Dushanbe Puppet Theater. (Credit: USAID Read with Me Project)

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# Acronyms

AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
AMEP	Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan
AR	Activity Result
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CBMU	Community Based Methodological Units
DCC	Donor Coordination Council
DED	District Education Department
DRS	Districts of Republican Subordination
DTF	District Training Facilitators
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
GBAO	Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HMU	Head of Methodological Unit
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRC	Methodological Resource Center
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSI	Open Society Institute
PSA	Public Service Announcement
RED	Regional Education Department
RTMC	Republican Teaching and Methodological Center
RITTI	Republican In-service Teacher Training Institute
RWM	Read with Me
SSME	Snapshot for School Management Effectiveness
STS	School-to-School International
TIC	Center for Information and Communication Technologies
TOT	Training of Trainers
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UCA	University of Central Asia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# Executive Summary

The USAID Read with Me project (RWM) improved reading outcomes for students in Grades 1 through 4 in more than 75 percent of schools across Tajikistan. This report details major achievements and lessons learned by the project over its five-year implementation period October 1, 2016, to September 30, 2021.

The project overview section highlights high-level activity results achieved, beneficiaries reached, and the project's major themes of engagement with the education system, including its focus on sustainability. It outlines the project's nationwide reach and emphasis on rural areas, and presents the results framework that guided implementation. Lastly, this section lists the "firsts" for Tajikistan that RWM supported and helped to introduce.

Next, the report lists the key main achievements across RWM's four activity result areas, including provision of reading materials, training, and mentoring, as well as the work to monitor progress and impact. Project-level indicators and results are presented under each activity result.

Separate sections for each activity result describe major achievements against the tasks, targets, and deliverables set forth in the RWM contract and activity monitoring and evaluation plan (AMEP):

- *Activity Result 1: Increase Availability of Reading Materials* details RWM's work in book development and distribution; building capacity for authors, illustrators, and designers; and development of Braille and large print books.
- *Activity Result 2: Improved Reading Instruction in Grades 1 through 4* highlights achievements in creating a training and methodological package, collaborating with regional Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) for in-service training and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for pre-service training, introducing the blended learning approach, and using Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRAs) as a nationwide assessment. Lastly, the section describes RWM's successes in stakeholder engagement.
- *Activity Result 3: Increased Innovations and Partnerships Supporting Literacy Outcomes* presents accomplishments in creating supplementary materials, strategic use of media, support to in-school and online learning environments, using mobile applications for widespread reach, and collaborating with the private sector.
- *Activity Result 4: Increased Government Support to Improve Reading* describes RWM's approach to mentoring, monitoring, and learning through Community-based Methodological Units (CBMUs) and advancements toward a digital learning ecosystem through Methodological Resource Centers (MRCs).

Following the achievements under each activity result, the report presents RWM crosscutting highlights in gender and inclusive education, communications, and coordination with the ministry and other implementing partners.

The final section presents lessons learned during implementation and specific recommendations for resolving identified constraints going forward.

Annexes A, B, and C contain, respectively, the project's final indicator results, list of key documents developed during implementation, and the Year 5 Annual Report.

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

The primary goal of RWM was to improve reading outcomes for students in Grades 1 through 4 in targeted schools across Tajikistan. Over the five-year implementation period, October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021, the project achieved this goal by focusing on four activity results (ARs), with the following high-level achievements:

Activity Result	Activity Results Achieved
AR 1: Increased availability of reading materials	80% of schools with increased availability of reading materials
AR 2: Improved reading instruction in Grades 1 to 4	75% of primary teachers in Tajikistan trained in modern reading techniques
AR 3: Increased innovation and partnerships supporting literacy outcomes	\$2 million leveraged through development of innovations and partnerships
AR 4: Increased government support to improve reading	85% of targeted teachers received classroom-based mentoring/coaching

RWM supported 3,001 schools, 28,415 teachers, and 665,830 students across the country in Tajik and Russian classrooms. To do so, the project utilized a cohort plan for school selection (Cohorts 1-4), adding on a new cohort each year to trainings and activities. In developing all project activities, RWM followed this results framework:

<b>Goal Statement:</b> Enhanced regional prosperity in the Central Asia Republics <b>Development Objective 3:</b> More effective and inclusive governance institutions that serve the public good <b>Intermediate Result 3.3:</b> Increased use of vital health and education services <b>Purpose:</b> Improve reading outcomes for students in Grades 1 to 4 in targeted schools in Tajikistan			
AR 1: Increased Availability of Reading Materials	AR 2: Improved Reading Instruction in Grades 1 to 4	AR 3: Increased Innovations and Partnerships Supporting Literacy Outcomes	AR 4: Increased Government Support to Improve Reading
<b>1.1</b> Quality, age-appropriate reading materials in Tajik and Russian that support learning standards <b>1.2</b> Capacity increased of local authors and illustrators to create mother tongue reading materials in the form of big books and trade books <b>1.3</b> Quality, age-appropriate reading materials developed in mother tongue languages that support learning standards and complement what is available on the market	<b>2.1</b> Reading strategies training packages designed <b>2.2</b> Training conducted for teachers, school directors, librarians, pedagogical instructors, and other educators on reading strategies <b>2.3</b> Supplementary reading material incorporated into instruction <b>2.4</b> Assessments implemented that track reading progress over time <b>2.5</b> Take-it-home/out-of-school reading enforcement activities implemented	<b>3.1</b> Innovative approaches developed to support reading instruction <b>3.2</b> Partnerships formed around literacy resulting in improved reading access and quality of learning materials and learning environment	<b>4.1</b> Dialogue increased about the existing environment for reading acquisition <b>4.2</b> Capacity built of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) and affiliates in the area of reading instruction and reading in content areas <b>4.3</b> Systems strengthened for teacher mentoring and coaching in the area of reading

Working through the ministry and its affiliates, RWM engaged the full education system of Tajikistan to establish and maintain innovative mentoring mechanisms for ongoing methodological support. RWM supported the ministry to effectively integrate this mentoring approach into the system from the beginning in planning and decision-making. For example, RWM engaged district education departments (DEDs) to establish CBMU's and teacher's support practices, TTIs and the Republican Teaching and Methodological Center (RTMC) on teacher in-service training and coaching and mentoring, the MoES for regular meetings for approvals and planning, and specifically with the Deputy Minister of the MoES for strategic support, such as aligning activities with the National Strategy for Education Development 2021-2030. By including institutions as partners from the start, RWM not only ensured they were part of activity development, but also that they had buy-in and a comprehensive understanding of every activity to ensure smooth implementation and uptake of reforms.

### COLLABORATION FOR SUCCESS

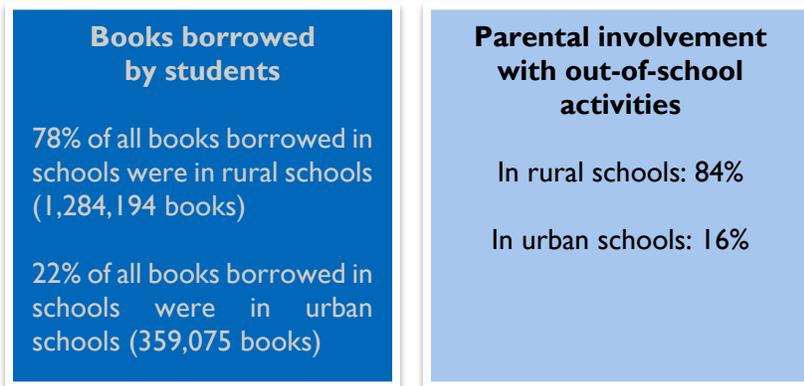
Following a meeting between RWM project leadership, USAID, and the MoES in 2020, the ministry announced on their website that they had “achieved unprecedented success in the implementation of the USAID Read with Me project.”

In addition to government partners, RWM's holistic approach to engagement included collaboration with students, teachers, librarians, school directors, parents, local businesses, and other donor projects. The project made optimal use of every fall, spring, and summer holiday to train teachers and administrators and engage with students. Communications covered an array of outlets to ensure maximum outreach, including public book donation events, literacy day programming, promotional outlets, TV episodes, and featuring project champions such as famous local author Azizi Aziz to increase interest and engagement. RWM took innovative approaches, resulting in several notable firsts for Tajikistan:

- Introduced new genres of informational, theater, and big books to Tajikistan
- Developed author capacity to create leveled books and printed age and grade appropriate books
- Printed children's books in Braille, marking the first time since 1990 that these types of books had been produced in Tajikistan; also printed informational children's books in Braille for the first time in Tajikistan
- Featured sign language interpretation in project-developed TV episodes, which parents and children from the deaf community noted was one of the first times a children's educational TV program in Tajikistan featured interpretation, as well as featuring Braille books on TV
- Worked closely with the MoES to conduct an internationally recognized, nationwide assessment for reading to promote a culture of evidence-based decision-making for education policies
- Creation of methodological videos, mobile applications, TV programs, and supplementary materials for the Tajikistan reading context
- Successfully piloted a blended learning approach for in-service training in the education system
- Introduced an approach that led to the systemic use of librarian logbooks

- Provided free learning games to children in the Tajik language, including the first mobile application for Tajik language acquisition
- Installation of Methodological Resource Centers for DEDs and regional education departments (REDs)
- Used regional book exhibition events to bring famous children’s book authors and illustrators to remote districts in the Districts of Republican Subordination (DRS), Sughd, and Khatlon regions for the first time

RWM had success in reaching 86% of remote schools in Tajikistan, the first time many of the schools ever received donor assistance, with positive results based on the EGRA endline. Some key statistics, based on data available from Years 3-5, demonstrate this reach of activities:



RWM provided comprehensive support to the entire system in promoting reading through:

- Pre-service and in-service training for primary grade teachers’ development
- Resources and training on the impact of RWM-supported materials provided to school administrators
- Provision of leveled books and technological equipment to schools, TTIs, and HEIs
- Provision of guides for parental engagement
- Engagement of students in summer camps
- Supplementary materials such as phonics awareness games
- Interactive materials such as radio programs and mobile applications for children

Throughout project activities, RWM integrated considerations of gender equality and inclusive education. For example, the project converted RWM-developed books into Braille and adapted them for large print. Additionally, through partnerships with stakeholders, the private sector, and other donors, RWM successfully leveraged 10 percent of its contract value, providing an even greater return to the education system. Leveraged funds included broadcasting of RWM PSAs and programs on national and regional TV and radio stations, reading corners, puppet shows for literacy days, operational cost savings, and collaboration with the World Bank and Curious Learning.

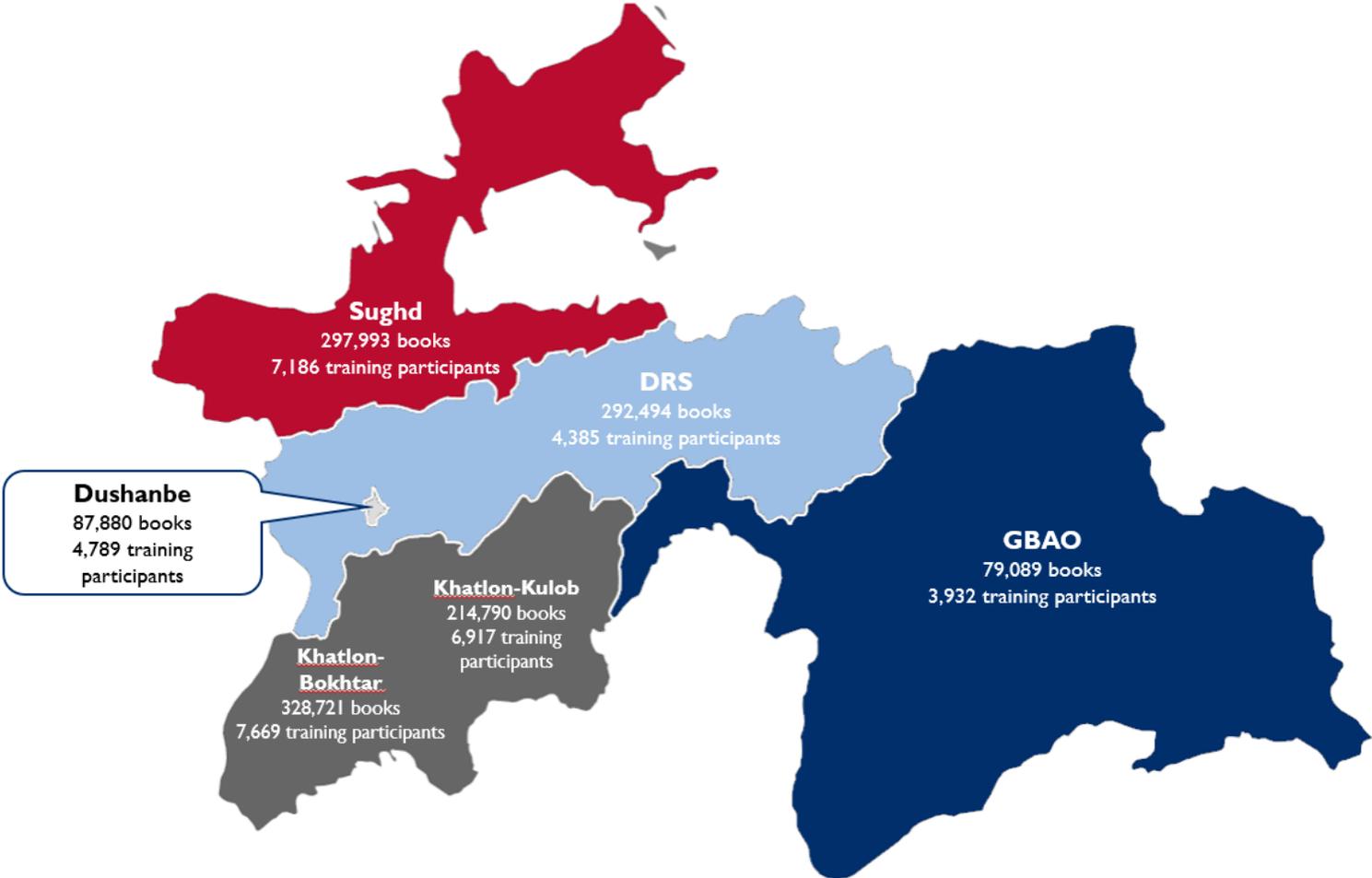
# BENEFICIARIES REACHED ACROSS RWM

RWM’S ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS BY COHORT

Cohorts	1	2	3	4	Total
Schools	198	840	955	1,008	3,001
Primary Grade Teachers	2,804	9,560	8,664	7,387	28,415
Primary Grade Students	69,412	240,373	193,312	162,733	665,830
School Directors	198	826	909	966	2,899
School Librarians	197	790	823	867	2,677

DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS AND TRAINING PARTICIPANTS (COHORTS 1-4)

TOTAL # OF PRINTED BOOKS: 1,308,720 TOTAL # OF PARTICIPANTS: 34,878



\*NOTE: NOT ALL PRINTED BOOKS WERE DISTRIBUTED UNDER RWM AS SOME PRINTED COPIES WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE TAJIKISTAN LTA PROJECT FOR DISTRIBUTION IN FALL 2021 OR LATER. ADDITIONALLY FOR TRAINING, SOME INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATED IN MULTIPLE TRAININGS, AND WERE COUNTED FOR EACH TRAINING.

# ACTIVITY RESULT I: INCREASED AVAILABILITY OF READING MATERIALS

## AR I RESULTS

RWM’s efforts to increase age-appropriate reading materials in Tajik and Russian and build the capacity of local authors and illustrators to create reading materials led to the following results:

AR I.1: Indicator #5 – Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided with USG assistance		AR I.2: Indicator #6 – Number of training programs to support reading book production provided with USG assistance	
Target: <b>870,500</b>	Life of Project: <b>1,387,121</b>	Target: <b>25</b>	Life of Project: <b>35</b>
Materials included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RWM-developed and procured books</li> <li>• Training modules for teachers, school directors, librarians</li> <li>• Training materials for national, regional, and school-level trainers (ToTs)</li> <li>• HEI training manuals</li> <li>• Formative assessment modules</li> <li>• Teacher toolkits</li> <li>• Authors guides</li> </ul>		Trainings across Dushanbe, Bokhtar, Sughd, Kulob, DRS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building workshops and roundtables for authors, illustrators, and designers</li> <li>• Peer review workshops</li> <li>• Workshops on types of books (decodable, information, etc.)</li> <li>• Workshops on publishing houses/review centers</li> </ul>	

## BOOK DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

RWM used a two-pronged approach to providing target schools with reading materials for primary grades. First, to meet the needs of schools included in the first two years of rollout, the project carried out a market survey and developed criteria to procure books available on the local market in collaboration with the MoES Material Development Working Group. Second, based on research and evaluation of available sources, the project built the capacity of authors, illustrators, and designers to develop and produce 85 books approved by the Ministry. For



- Types of Books Developed**
- Informational
  - Theater
  - Decodable
  - Levelled
  - Picture
  - Transitional
  - Chapter
  - Big Books

Pages from the three books created by students from the University of Central Asia’s (UCA) Green Community. The books incorporate the idea introduced by the project of “true, not true,” in which children see a statement on the first page and are encouraged to think it through as they read on.

example, finding that few digestible and affordable information books existed for children, the project developed a series of more than 20 titles of informational books adapted to children’s level and world understanding. In developing the informational books, including collaborating with Tajik Encyclopedia and UCA, the project incorporated new methodological approaches (see previous page).

To address the need for large-scale distribution, RWM created an effective distribution mechanism in coordination with printing houses and RWM regional offices. In this effort, printing houses distributed books for limited or no cost to storage facilities, and volunteers sorted and packed books for schools. Starting in October 2018, RWM distributed 139,497 books to Cohort 1 and 2 schools, followed by 58,027 copies in September 2019, 594,000 copies from October 2019 to September 2020, and 514,841 copies in April and May 2021. Alongside book distribution, RWM distributed training modules for teachers, directors, and librarians; parental engagement guides and booklets; DVDs with digital libraries; and instructional materials. Over the life of the project, RWM distributed more than 1.3 million books.



Book distribution efforts in GBAO (left) and Sari Khosor (above).

**BY THE END OF RWM,  
BOOKS AND MATERIALS DEVELOPED AND DONATED BY RWM**

BOOKS IN TAJIK	BOOKS IN RUSSIAN	PRINTED BOOKS DEVELOPED UNDER RWM	PRINTED BOOKS PROCURED BY RWM
1,242,143	66,577	804,893	503,827
1,308,720 IN TOTAL			
NUMBER OF IN-SERVICE & PRE-SERVICE MATERIALS DEVELOPED		NUMBER OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS PRINTED	
71		78,401	

## **BUILDING CAPACITY FOR AUTHORS, ILLUSTRATORS, AND DESIGNERS**

During the five years of RWM, the project continually worked with authors, illustrators, and designers to provide training, resources, and review support to produce 88 new book titles and encourage future production on the local market. Relatively new for Tajikistan, an international expert, hired by RWM, reviewed the developed content of the authors, illustrators, and designers in line with project-developed criteria based on international best practices. The project hosted capacity building workshops to introduce authors and illustrators to the criteria for writing books, guidelines for leveled books, and the varied types of books (such as picture, concept, big, chapter, poetry, fiction, informational, decodable, and transitional books). RWM developed criteria for new reading materials, such as the “Guide for Writers, Illustrators, and Designers of Children’s Books” and “Guidelines for Writing Children’s Books.” The project worked with an MoES working group of editorial, development, and review teams to review more than 100 draft manuscripts, including content on agriculture, family and households in urban and village settings, civic responsibility, hygiene and safety, gender equality, and inclusion for Grades 1 to 4. Over the course of the activities, project-supported authors applied the knowledge and skills learned. Notably, one author even developed 17 short stories for children outside RWM trainings.

Throughout the project, RWM continued to analyze the children’s book market to identify new genres and grade/age levels that could be introduced, to inform ongoing book development. The project also worked with two experts from the Education Development Institute and the Textbook Center to design a set of instruments to gather data on the available titles of books, by genre for primary grade students, both in the market and in school libraries. RWM held multiple roundtables with counterparts to



Author Azizi Aziz at a capacity building event for authors and illustrators.

discuss the current state of children’s literature and encourage collaboration between project-trained authors, illustrators, designers, and private sector publishing house representatives and bookstores to increase available materials on the market beyond the project.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF BRAILLE AND LARGE PRINT BOOKS**

For the last 30 years, visually impaired and blind children in Tajikistan did not have access to high-quality storybooks in Braille. The education system provided only textbooks for specialized boarding schools. RWM initiated collaboration with the Union of Blind People of Tajikistan and the public organization Mehrbakhsh to provide visually impaired children with the opportunity to read age-appropriate books and enjoy different stories to support them to enrich their imagination, learn about the world, and relate to their peers who are also reading these books

in Tajik. As a result of this collaboration, in Year 4 RWM adapted six project-developed titles into Braille and printed 100 copies of each title, donating books to the Republican Boarding School for Blind and Visually Impaired Children in Hisor; and other schools in Dushanbe, Bokhtar, Hisor, and Vahdat; and the Bokhtar Pedagogical University, which has classes catered to students who read in Braille. As RWM printed mostly fiction books in Braille in Year 4, RWM agreed with these partners to focus on printing more informational books in Year 5. The project selected 12 informational books spanning different genres and reading levels to convert into Braille and printed 80 copies of each (960 copies total), distributing them to specialized schools and classes serving children with visual impairments and NGOs in each region serving communities that read in Braille.

#### **BRILLE BOOKS SUPPORT LITERACY, ESPECIALLY DURING COVID-19**

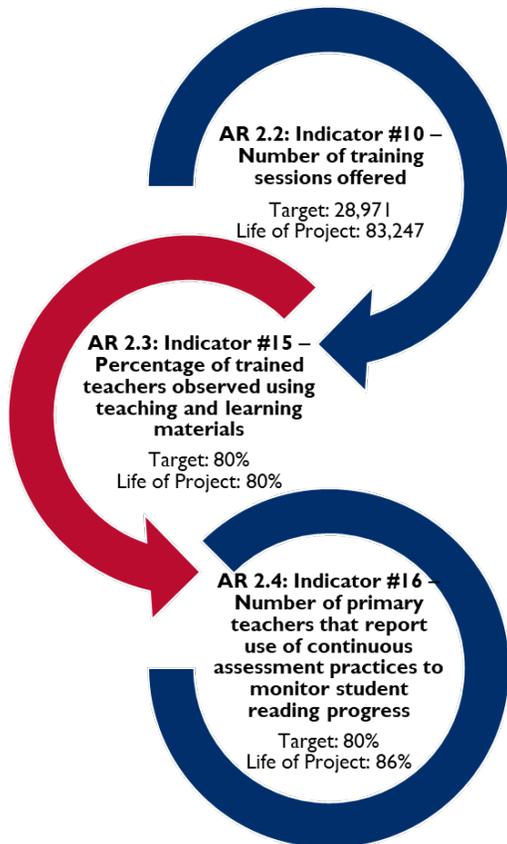
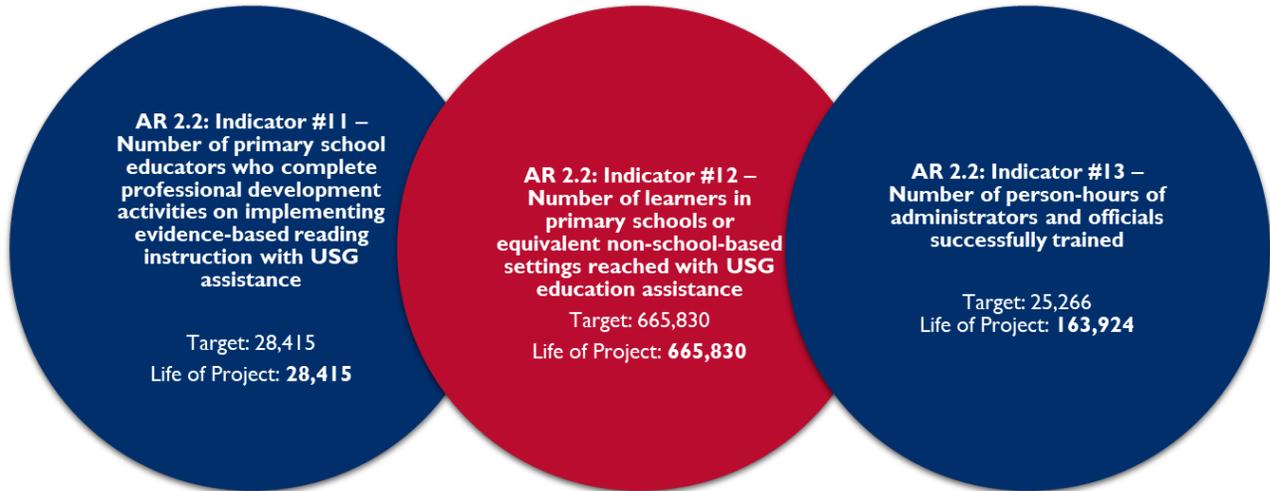
RWM's monitoring efforts found that the Braille books were well-received by students and their teachers. For example, Roziya Boboeva, who teaches a class that includes visually impaired students at School #5 in Bokhtar city, used the USAID-donated Braille books in home visits with her students when schools were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In one case, Roziya taught not only the student, Manija, but her mother and grandmother to read Braille as well so they could support Manija's continued education.

Additionally, in December 2020 RWM selected 16 titles of project-developed books for redesign and reprinting in a large print format intended to support children with visual impairments. Along with experts from the Union of Blind People and Mehrbakhsh, RWM visited the Republican Boarding School for Blind and Visually Impaired Children to pilot the selected books in large format. Together, the project and partners introduced four titles that had been redesigned as large print books for students and teachers in Grades 2 to 5. Based on this visit and feedback from the students and teachers, RWM redesigned the selected 16 titles to meet international criteria for large print books for children with visual impairments. In Year 5 RWM printed 360 copies of the 16 large print titles (5,760 copies total) and distributed them to specialized schools and classes for children with visual impairments, relevant NGOs, and inclusive education resource centers established by UNICEF.

# ACTIVITY RESULT 2: IMPROVED READING INSTRUCTION IN GRADES 1 THROUGH 4

## AR 2 RESULTS

To improve reading instruction in Grades 1 to 4, RWM’s activities led to the following results:



AR 2.1: Indicator #9 – Number of reading training modules developed, including adapting modules to specific targeted groups	Target: 50 ~ Life of Project: 71
AR 2.2: Indicator #14 – Number of tertiary institution faculty or teaching staff whose qualifications are strengthened through USG-supported tertiary education programs	Target: 30 ~ Life of Project: 480
AR 2.4: Indicator #17 – Number of standardized learning assessments supported by the USG	Target: 12 ~ Life of Project: 12
AR 2.5: Indicator #18 – Number of reinforcement and out-of-school activities held	Target: 378,538 Life of Project: 1,629,744

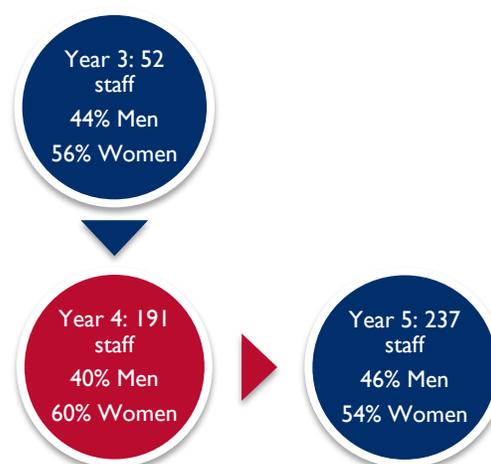
## CREATION OF THE TRAINING AND METHODOLOGICAL PACKAGE

Over the course of RWM, the project continually revisited and revised its training modules, based on aggregated feedback and current skill gaps. Initially, the project developed 11 teacher training modules in both Tajik and Russian languages to be in line with the MoES competency-based reading standards for primary schools published in 2017. RWM worked with the Teacher Training Working Group, comprised of representatives from Republican In-service Teacher Training Institute (RITTI), Republican Teaching and Methodological Center (RTMC), and the Academy of Education, to gain their feedback for integration into the modules. Based on additional feedback from national trainers and focus group discussions with regional trainers, RWM updated the teacher training package to make each module more concise, focus on practical application of the concepts, add crosscutting activities, incorporate RWM books, address out-of-class reading activities, and introduce innovations. Building upon these modules, RWM also developed training for school directors and librarians.

On March 31, 2020, the Education Board of the MoES approved RWM's revised training and methodological package. The package included 1) teacher in-service training modules, including teacher's module, trainer's guide, and teacher's toolkit; 2) school director training modules, including trainer's guide, school director training module; 3) school librarian training modules, including trainer's module, school librarian module, and librarian logbook; and the 4) Mentor's Guide and Classroom Observation Handbook. Before the Education Board's approval of the package, the Academy of Education, Education Development Institute of the Academy of Education, and the RTMC, had reviewed the package and given it positive feedback. On April 28, 2020, the MoES Collegium further approved the package. This approval ensured that the package was officially accepted by the MoES. To ensure inclusion in the system, RWM worked with RITTI to initiate formal integration of the approved package into the regular in-service training programs for primary teachers, school directors, school librarians, and head of school methodological units. To complete the inclusion process, the working group revised the programs and integrated the contents of the RWM package into the official training programs.

## COLLABORATION WITH HEIS FOR PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

Starting in 2018, RWM held meetings with the heads of the MoES departments responsible for vocational and higher education to discuss applying RWM's teacher training modules to develop a pre-service curriculum on modern and innovative reading instruction. Upon MoES approval, the project convened a working group of RWM technical staff, MoES responsible departments, and Pedagogical University and College representatives to develop the pre-service teacher training package. In the fall of 2019, the package for the pre-service four-credit teacher training was submitted for approval to the MoES. With MoES approval, RWM piloted the course in the 2020 spring term with the Tajik



Indicator #14 breakdown

Pedagogical College and Tajik State Pedagogical University in Dushanbe, Bokhtar State University and Bokhtar Pedagogical College, and Khorugh State University. A total of 10 faculty members and 230 students participated in the pilot. Following the pilot’s success, RWM collaborated with the Higher Education Department of the MoES on integrating the teacher pre-service training package into the mainstream teacher pre-service curriculum. As a result, on July 30, 2020, the Minister of Education and Science issued an order on integrating the teaching program “Technology of Developing Primary Students’ Reading Competencies” into the bachelor’s degree programs of pedagogical universities and colleges beginning in the second term of the 2020-2021 academic year. For the 2021 spring term, The 17 remaining institutions made the course a mandatory part of the curriculum for students studying to become teachers in universities and pedagogical colleges.



Participants engaged in HEI pre-service training delivered December 16, 2020.

Additionally, RWM established 15 methodological resource centers (MRCs) in pedagogical HEIs to support faculty and teachers to use technology to create modern lessons and train future teachers on how to effectively use modern teaching technologies, including multimedia resources. RWM procured and installed video conferencing equipment in five HEIs in different regions of Tajikistan that had existing technological capacity, as well as electronic whiteboards and desktop computers for HEIs that had lower capacity. An HEI in each region received video conferencing equipment to enable collaborative remote meetings with other HEIs in their region or nationally. Lastly, RWM identified individuals to be MRC master trainers and coordinators, and completed training of all 15 HEIs in 2020.

## **INTRODUCTION OF BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH**

A key RWM activity involved in-service training for teachers, school directors, and librarians. From the beginning, the project collaborated with RITTI to ensure the ministry’s competency-based curriculum was incorporated into RWM training. In this way, the project updated teaching methodologies from one of instruction (knowledge) to one of facilitating students’ learning (knowledge, skills, and attitudes). Using a training-of-trainers method, with national, regional, and school-level facilitators, RWM held large-scale training sessions from 2018 to 2019.



Example of blended learning at the CBMU-level.

During the course of RWM, the project identified the challenge of the lack of a training platform locally for teachers to learn independently, check their understanding of concepts via various activities, and evaluate their progress. Therefore, RWM coordinated with UNICEF, European Union, and

Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) to understand their requirements for digital platforms and developed a teacher and mentor digital platform that provides accessible retraining (named Bozomuzii Dastras). The digital platform can be used online and offline and gathers data on use and progress, while enabling RWM to monitor mentoring by collating data on classroom observations and mentor engagement. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, RWM accelerated the platform’s development alongside rollout of blended learning. The blended learning model uses a mixed approach to learning, including small-scale in-person training, guided self-study, and application in the context of classroom instruction. The project modified the blended learning activity, which initially was planned for piloting in few selected schools, to a rollout for all 7,000 Cohort 4 teachers. RWM introduced the blended learning approach to 125 district training facilitators in August 2020, who in turn trained the heads of methodological units and CBMUs.

The blended learning model is structured to promote reflection and build confidence to change teachers’ behaviors and classroom practices. On March 31, 2021, RITTI organized a national conference on “Modern Approaches to In-Service Teacher Training” and invited RWM to share the project’s blended learning approach. RWM introduced the approach in close collaboration with RITTI. From February to May 2021, RWM and RITTI developed a conceptual framework of Blended Learning for Teacher In-Service Professional Development. The conceptual framework outlines how to integrate blended learning into the in-service training system for all subjects, not just language instruction. The framework is important for other donor partners pursuing blended learning initiatives to ensure all donors are using one unified approach with the MoES. USAID LTA will build on the framework to institutionalize by working with in-service training structures and pre-service institutions to develop related training programs for primary teachers and future primary teachers.

#### LEARNING APPROACH

- Station 1. Community-based methodological units
- Station 2. School-based primary education methodological units
- Station 3. Digital teacher training digital platform
- Station 4. Implementation in the classroom
- Station 5. Creation of teacher’s portfolio

In 2021 the MoES approved the Evaluation and Attestation Working Group, consisting of 25 representatives, including management staff of RITTI and its regional branches, to evaluate the Cohort 4 teachers’ training outcomes. Based on the working group’s evaluation, RITTI issued an order for certification of the primary teachers who completed the RWM blended learning course and awarded certificates to 6,769 primary teachers from 1,008 Cohort 4 schools. In total, 22,039 teachers were certified over the life of the project via both in-person trainings and the blended learning approach.

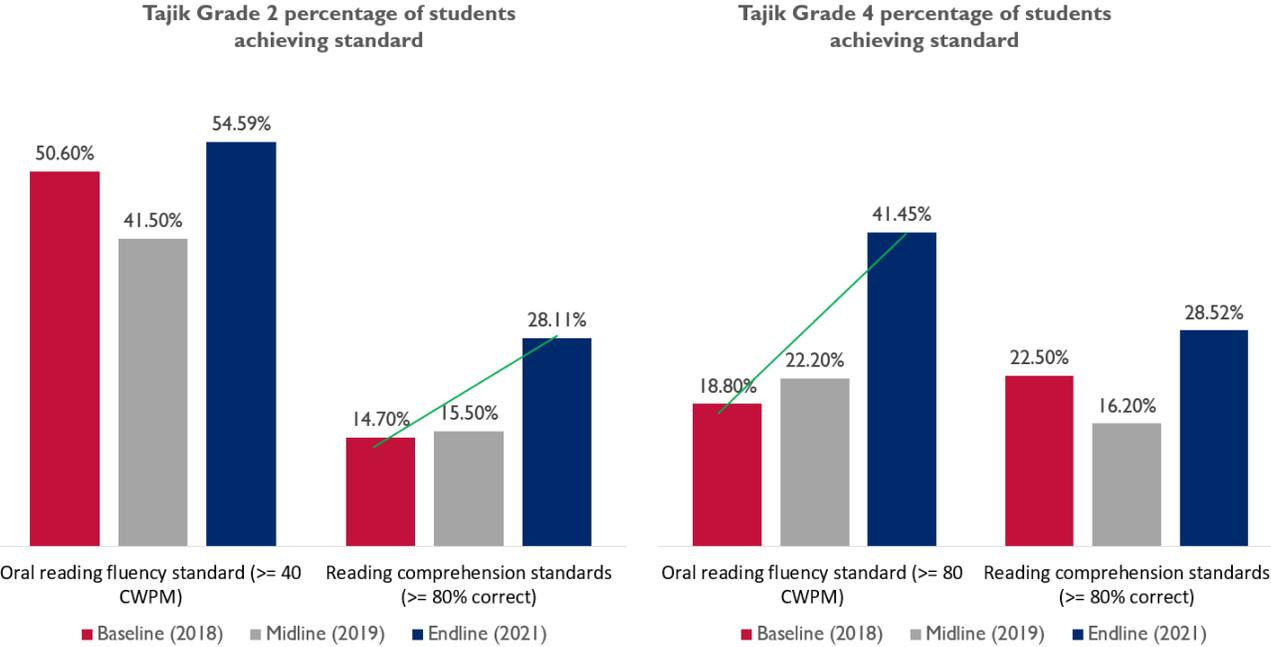
**PRAISE FOR THE BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH**

Following a RWM presentation, Dr. Qurbonzoda Khonali, the rector of RITTI, stated: “I have been closely involved and informed of this activity and visited CBMUs and schools that are applying the blended learning approach. I spoke to teachers and observed classes. Teachers fully support this training approach, and I observed how they demonstrated their knowledge and skills that they have learned in the classroom. Believe me, in my professional life, I observed hundreds of lessons, but here I was amazed seeing the level of teachers’ professionalism and students’ involvement in every minute of the lesson. This is a type of the reform that we needed to start earlier, and this is the reform that RITTI will implement to improve the services of professional development system.”

**EGRA AS A NATIONWIDE ASSESSMENT**

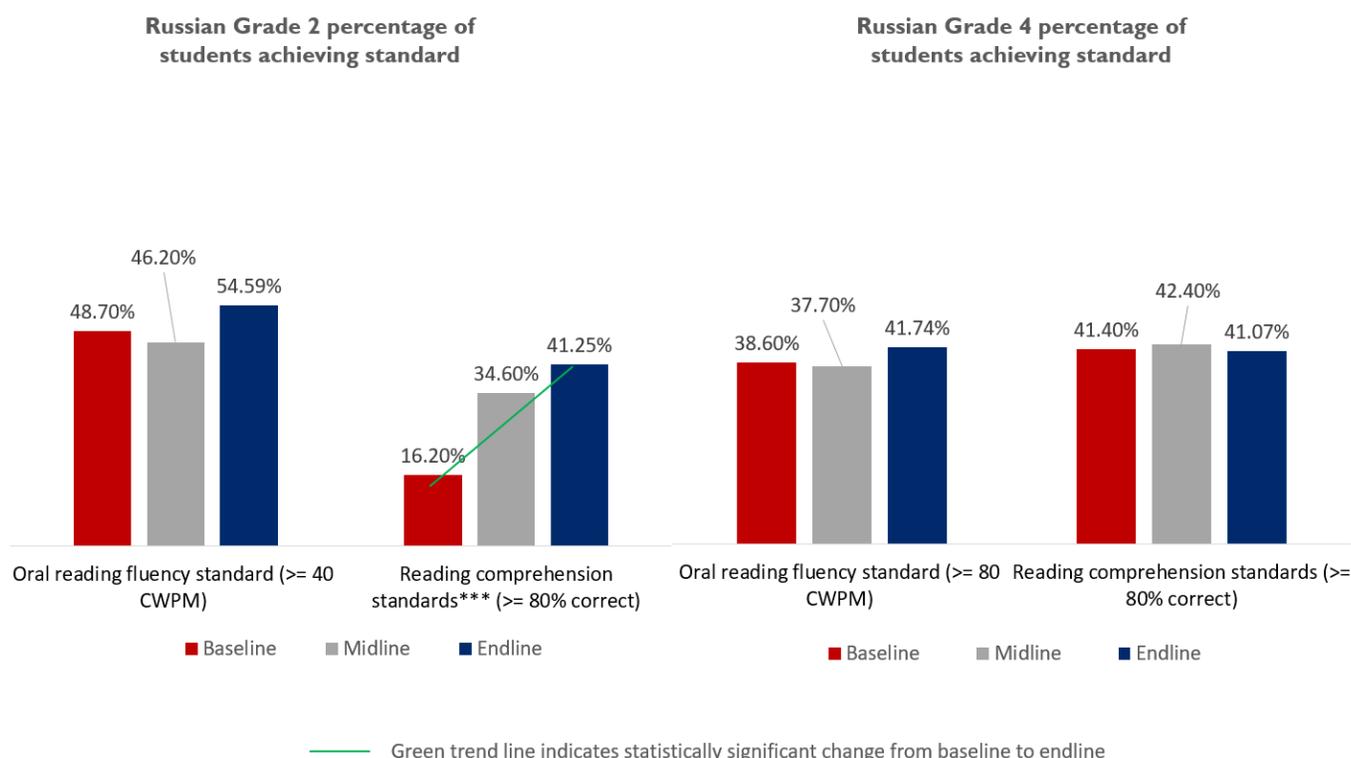
In April 2018, 2019, and 2021, RWM conducted a nationwide baseline, midline, and endline EGRA with School-to-School International. From baseline to endline, results found that all four groups of students — Tajik Grades 2 and 4 and Russian Grades 2 and 4 — showed significant improvements across measured areas. These results are shown below:

**Percentage of Students in Tajik Classes Reaching Reading Proficiency Benchmarks by Grade from Baseline to Endline**



Green trend line indicates statistically significant change from baseline to endline

## Percentage of Students in Russian Classes Reaching Reading Proficiency Benchmarks by Grade from Baseline to Endline



These gains were shared across the genders, as noted below:

### Percentage of Students in Tajik Classes Reaching Reading Proficiency Benchmarks

Subtask	Tajik Grade 2				Tajik Grade 4			
	Sex	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Sex	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Achieved oral reading fluency standard	Female	53.7%	48.2%	59.4%	Female	22.2%	27.4%	45.5%
	Male	47.6%	35.1%	49.7%	Male	15.4%	17.0%	37.4%
Achieved reading comprehension standard	Female	16.9%	20.0%	29.3%	Female	18.9%	16.7%	28.2%
	Male	12.6%	11.3%	26.9%	Male	25.9%	15.7%	29.0%

### Percentage of Students in Russian Classes Reaching Reading Proficiency Benchmarks

Subtask	Russian Grade 2				Russian Grade 4			
	Sex	Baseline	Midline	Endline	Sex	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Achieved oral reading fluency standard	Female	49.3%	47.0%	61.0%	Female	49.3%	47.0%	61.0%
	Male	48.3%	45.6%	50.1%	Male	48.3%	45.6%	50.1%
Achieved reading comprehension standard	Female	20.0%	35.8%	46.3%	Female	20.0%	35.8%	46.3%
	Male	13.1%	33.6%	37.7%	Male	13.1%	33.6%	37.7%

Other key findings from the EGRA endline assessment include:

- The proportion of students meeting benchmarks increased significantly from baseline to endline in three of the four groups of students assessed.
- Tajik and Russian Grade 2 rural students saw the greatest proportion of gains on EGRA subtasks over time, while urban students, especially Tajik Grade 2 and Russian Grade 4, saw the fewest.
- Geographic subgroups varied in performance. When examining the student groups struggling most in each language by grade level by language, three common themes were language spoken at home, homework, and having family members who cannot read.
- When teachers used instructional practices promoted by RWM, students made greater gains.
- When teachers used selected assessment practices promoted by RWM, students made greater gains, yet many types of evaluation methods remain underutilized.
- Experienced and trained teachers tended to be associated with improved ORF scores.
- Parental involvement predicted better reading outcomes.
- The level of resources available was associated with improvements in ORF.

After the baseline and midline reports, RWM held validation and dissemination workshops with the MoES and other stakeholders in the education community to introduce the process and results of the EGRA assessment, discuss the findings, and develop recommendations on how the results could be used to support or determine policy objectives. Following the endline report, RWM held a validation workshop with the MoES to present the successful results. Completion of the EGRA provided RWM, the MoES, and regional and district education departments with a nationally representative “snapshot” of reading performance in Tajikistan. This data-based analysis ensured that the project was able to adapt activities to meet the needs of schools and students.

## SUCCESS IN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to working with teachers, school administrators, and the institutions cited above, RWM successfully engaged other stakeholders in children’s reading development, including children themselves. Below, we present an overview of major achievements related to stakeholder engagement and participation:

### Number of Participating Students, School Staff and Parents Disaggregated by Region

Region	#of schools that held events	# of Participating Students	# of Participating School Staff	# of Participating Parents
<b>Bokhtar</b>	853	1,083,951	94,391	90,983
<b>DRS</b>	459	634,846	53,299	41,166
<b>GBAO</b>	420	164,083	38,114	34,656
<b>Kulob</b>	717	653,726	71,737	67,311
<b>Sughd</b>	601	192,282	30,543	23,490
<b>Dushanbe</b>	43	59,828	4,733	3,178
<b>Total</b>	3,093	2,788,716	292,817	260,784

\*Data available for Years 3-5

### Activities and Events Held, Disaggregated by Region and Type of Activity

Region	Open class	Poetry reading	Conference	Class hour	Literary club	Discussion	Competition	Event	Books' exhibition	Extracurricular reading	Book's week	Other (performance, meeting, session, excursion)	Total # of Events
<b>Bokhtar</b>	125	84	63	99	99	89	823	579	316	145	124	22	2,568
<b>DRS</b>	123	103	79	42	52	67	618	310	60	46	84	67	1,651
<b>GBAO</b>	122	73	78	57	72	98	826	519	85	70	115	57	2,172
<b>Kulob</b>	166	72	61	101	141	83	991	1,019	121	45	117	165	3,082
<b>Sughd</b>	178	78	50	113	57	74	160	323	154	68	176	50	1,481
<b>Dushanbe</b>	54	37	33	20	0	36	51	54	28	24	12	7	356
<b>Total</b>	768	447	364	432	421	447	3,469	2,804	764	398	628	368	11,310

\*Data available for Years 3-5

Activities that contributed to these results included:

- Librarian logbook** – The logbook was developed for the school librarian to register books borrowed by primary grade students and all activities held by the school that support and promote reading. It also provides guidance on how to best display age-appropriate books furnished by the project, encourage children to use the library, and organize activities that will promote reading
- Parent Engagement Guide** – The guide is for school principals, librarians, and primary grade teachers to engage with parents. RWM also created a booklet encouraging parents to read at home with their primary grade children.
- International Literacy Day campaigns** – The campaigns consisted of events in all five regions to raise awareness about the importance of reading while donating books to schools. RWM engaged the Puppet Theater to perform an interactive play at each event, and students from the schools also performed skits, songs, and poems about the importance of reading. Notably, the Puppet Theater performed two additional shows free of charge at a boarding school for orphaned children in Khujand and the regional theater in Khorugh.



Activity at a summer camp in Guliston.

The performance in Khorugh was the first time that the puppet theater had visited Khorugh since the civil war in Tajikistan, making the performance a special moment for those in attendance. Due to COVID-19, RWM pivoted the 2020 events into a day of television programming with national children’s network TV Bahoriston.

- **Summer camps** – RWM donated 240 books per camp to 28 out-of-city camps, conducted a “Best Reader” activity with the Additional Education Center in 2018, and trained 234 school-based summer camp counselors in 2019 to reach 115 schools (not held in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on large gatherings). The summer camps provided students with a less formal environment outside of the classroom to practice their reading skills through interactive and engaging games, helped children who may be struggling with reading to dedicate more time to learning in a more relaxed environment, and showcased reading as a fun activity.
- **Book Exhibitions at Children’s Libraries** – Following the donation of 1,350 USAID books to 15 Children’s Libraries in December 2020, RWM coordinated with the Ministry of Culture to conduct a series of book exhibition events for primary grade students to promote the availability of these books in Children’s Libraries. Events occurred in February and March 2021, and incorporated girl’s empowerment as part of Women’s History Month.

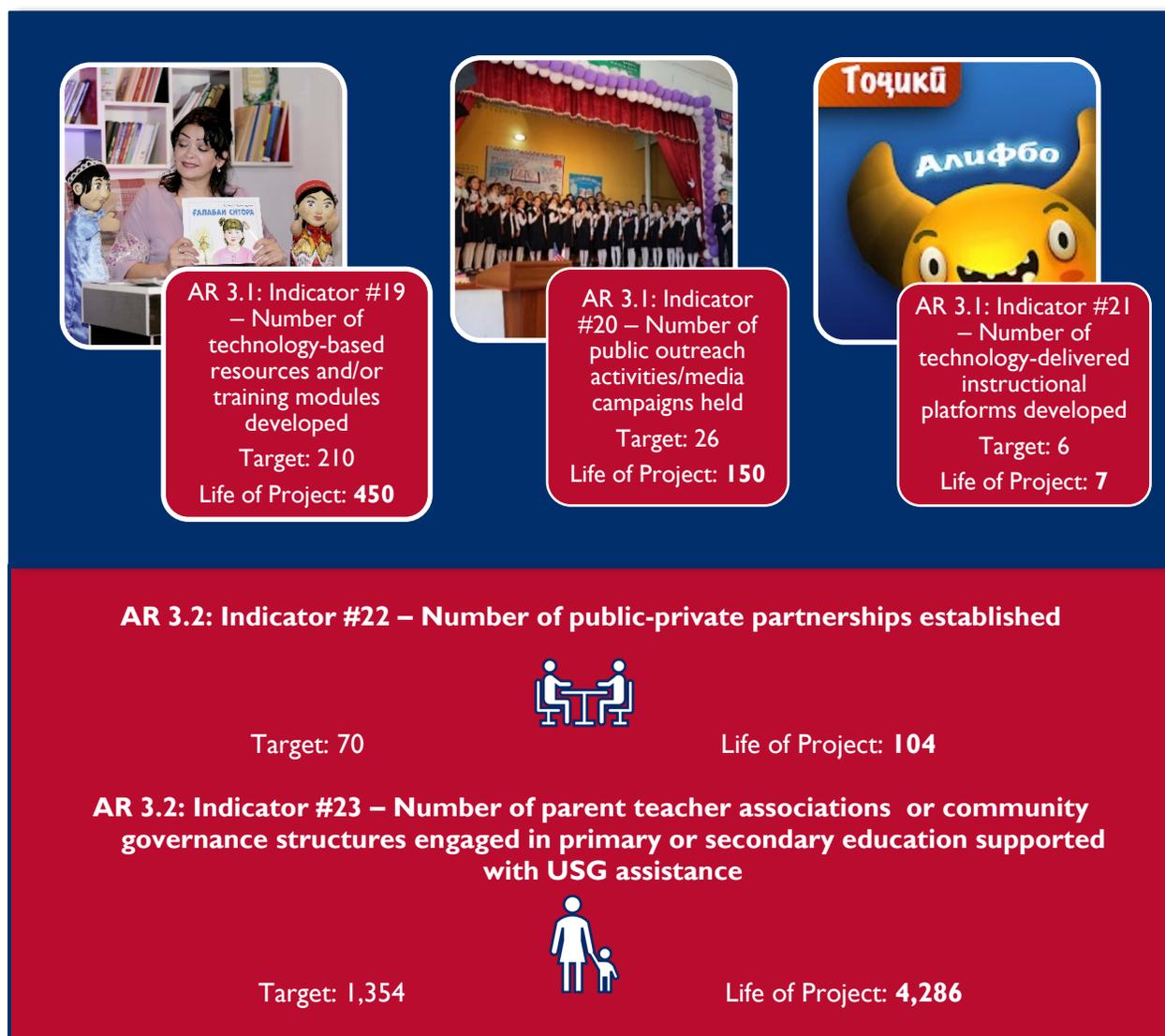
#### **CHILDREN’S LIBRARY SELECTION AUGMENTED**

During these events, representatives of the Children’s Libraries expressed their appreciation for the donated books and willingness to be included in other project training events to incorporate these methods into their own activities. Some libraries mentioned that their libraries had not been able to purchase a children’s book in recent years, so the RWM-donated books were critical to updating their children’s selection.

# ACTIVITY RESULT 3: INCREASED INNOVATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING LITERACY OUTCOMES

## AR 3 RESULTS

RWM developed innovative approaches and supported partnerships that contributed to the following results:



## FUNDS LEVERAGED: \$2 MILLION



Note: Literacy Days is <1% (actual 0.31%). It is valued above as 1% in order to include in the diagram.

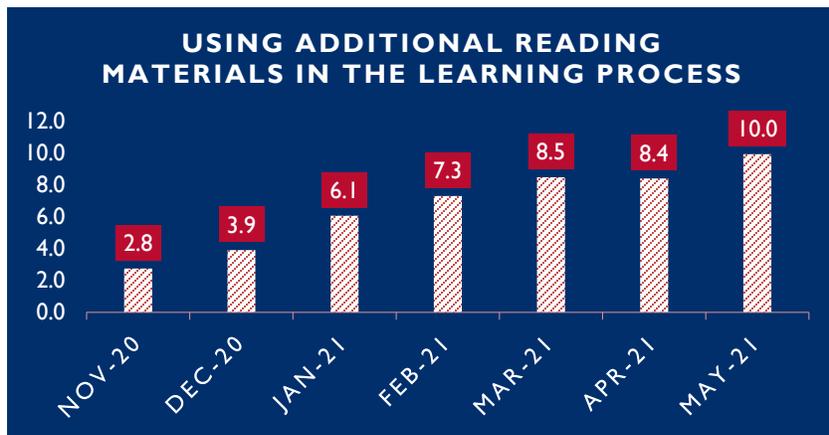
### CREATION OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

One of the critical challenges identified in primary grade education in Tajikistan was the lack of supplementary reading materials. While children’s books are a core component to reading, they are not always lesson-specific and focused on developing and practicing particular reading strategies according to the stages of reading. In 2020 the project conducted a review to define the needs of RWM-trained teachers compared with the concepts presented in the in-service teacher training program and shortcomings based on the EGRA midline findings. Based on this, RWM developed supplementary materials (see box below).

#### LIST OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS DEVELOPED

- 50 leveled one-page reading cards in both Tajik and Russian
- 12 reading comprehension and eight vocabulary posters
- 50 picture dictionaries in Tajik and 48 picture dictionaries in Russian
- Russian-language folding calendar
- Best practice guide for incorporating supplementary materials into mother tongue reading instruction
- Instructional guide on development and usage of simple technology-based resources that support the teaching of reading in primary grades
- 96 methodological videos for in-service teacher training with practical demonstrations
- Four methodological videos for directors and four methodological videos for librarians
- 34 audio books and two animated books
- Russian (“Zvukovichki”) and Tajik-language phonetic games

To evaluate the effectiveness of materials, RWM conducted a longitudinal analysis from November 2020 to June 2021 through 2,693 classroom observations on the “use of supplementary learning materials” in randomly selected Cohort 4 schools. The data (see chart below) showed success with gradual improvements in using supplementary reading materials in teaching and learning processes. Most teachers received higher scores starting from March through May 2021, due to the distribution of newly produced supplementary materials and mentoring support on implementation of these materials.



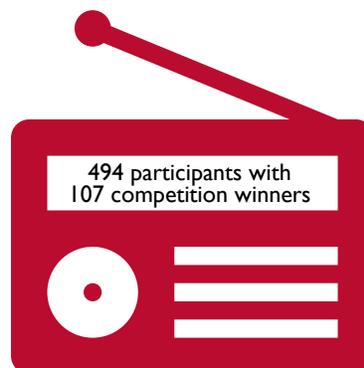
### STRATEGIC USE OF MEDIA: TV AND RADIO

Recognizing that a large part of the population had access to a TV and much less to the internet, RWM was creative in its use of media. To start, the project recognized the value of using public service announcements (PSAs). Initially, RWM developed eight PSAs on the importance of reading with children, which aired with support from a letter from the MoES to the Committee of Television and Radio of Tajikistan. The PSAs ran through Tojikiston, Safina, and TV Bahoriston (children’s) stations beginning in January 2019 approximately three times a day at no cost to the project. Coverage increased in September 2019, when the MoES issued a letter to the Regional Governors of Khatlon, Sughd, and GBAO granting support to air the PSAs on regional television networks across Tajikistan. In 2020 RWM developed six new PSAs with themes on the importance of reading: 1) the importance of creating child-friendly and engaging reading environments at home; 2) the need for parents to set a good example for their children by reading together and often; 3) reinforcing the connection between reading and succeeding in other subjects in school; 4) promoting the culture of reading in the community and within the extended family; and 5) providing tips for parents on how to support their children with improving their reading skills at home. To increase engagement, RWM also involved a Tajik Olympic medalist in one of the new PSAs.

Additionally, in May 2020 RWM initiated a collaboration with TV Bahoriston, a national children’s television network widely accessible across Tajikistan with more than 2 million viewers. Together, RWM, TV Bahoriston, and the Dushanbe Children’s Puppet Theater created two television programs for primary grade students: “I Can Read Fluently,” which uses the characters of the RWM-adapted “Feed Me” application to explain the letters of the Tajik alphabet and “Time to Read,” which features a RWM book read-aloud by well-known Tajik actors and two puppets. In

total, 166 episodes were filmed and aired, featuring themes based on the books, such as caring for the environment and nature, gender equality, raising awareness about disability and inclusion, managing emotions, friendship, space, and diversity.

Lastly, RWM coordinated with Radio Vatan in the fall of 2020 to launch a radio program featuring RWM books. Each episode featured a RWM book read-aloud, followed by a radio announcer answering phone calls from children who asked questions about the book. 90 distinct programs were aired, and each program featured at least one winner who was invited to the Radio Vatan studio to pick up a certificate signed by Radio Vatan, the MoES, and RWM, as well as a project book. The collaboration was so successful that in June 2021, Radio Vatan began to independently finance the radio show, with the project providing only extra books and certificates for winners.



## ENSURING MULTIPLE ENVIRONMENTS FOR LEARNING: IN SCHOOL AND ONLINE

During the life of the project, RWM continuously sought to create various environments for learning, both in person and online. One major success for in-person reading environments was the creation of reading corners. Reading corners are child-friendly spaces in schools that allow children to read in an environment that is less formal and academic than the typical classroom. Based on RWM's concept note, the MoES issued a regulation that stated how the Reading Corner competition should be organized, how many schools should participate, and how the winners should be selected, as well as issued an order to all REDs/DEDs requesting that they engage schools to participate in the contest. In response, 230 schools participated in the first round across Dushanbe, DRS, Sughd, Bokhtar, Kulob, and GBAO. DEDs supported the competition by equipping some reading corners with furniture and reading materials. Further, schools, DEDs, and a district government contributed furniture, resources, and reading materials valued at more than \$48,000 for the development of the 230 Reading Corners, while parents, community members, NGOs, and the private sector contributed more than \$10,000. From the entries, 54 winners were selected to receive digital reading and teaching materials from RWM to complete creation of the reading corner (see example below).

To support online environments for accessing reading materials and learning, RWM collaborated with the Center for Information and Communication Technologies (TIC) under the MoES. In this collaboration, the TIC uploaded RWM's approved methodological materials to its [website](http://mjtik.tj/bibl.php)<sup>1</sup>, created a digital library to hold all the teaching and learning materials developed by RWM over the past five years that are accessible offline (and provided on USBs to schools), and submitted 16 project-developed books to the Global Development Library.

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<sup>1</sup> TIC website: <http://mjtik.tj/bibl.php>



“I read these books with pleasure. I read them all, but I still come back to them. The stories in the books are very fascinating, colorful, interesting, there are books even in Russian, some with translation into English. So we can not only represent the described characters from drawings, but at the same time learn new words in Russian and English. My parents loved the books I borrow from our reading corner. My mother constantly asks me to bring these books, because she herself is fascinated and reading them with me.”

— Parpieva Rayhona,  
4th grade student at school #53 in Isfisor village, B. Gafurov district, Sughd region

## MOBILE APPLICATIONS FOR WIDESPREAD REACH

RWM recognized the opportunity to use mobile applications to increase children’s interest in reading through interactive games and characters. First, the project identified a mobile application called Feed the Monster, which was developed and adapted into more than 40 languages by U.S. non-profit Curious Learning. RWM engaged Curious Learning to localize and adapt the application (renamed Feed Me in Tajik) into the Tajik language to help children with basic language acquisition and early reading skills by reinforcing what teachers explain in the classroom. In August 2019, RWM shared Feed Me with the MoES Education Board, which subsequently issued an order endorsing the mobile application’s use in all the schools across Tajikistan. In December 2019, RWM uploaded Feed Me onto Google Play, making it publicly available for free download and the first mobile application for Tajik-language acquisition. RWM publicized the application in school monitoring calls and Viber groups; distributed 176,000 promotional leaflets through schools, banks, and Tcell stores; sent promotional messages to 230,000 customers via ZET-Mobile; and created a one-minute promotional video. In addition, RWM collaborated with the popular fast-food restaurant Southern Fried Chicken to distribute a promotional leaflet with every item ordered from the children’s menu. To date, the mobile application has been downloaded 11,500 times.

In addition, in 2020 RWM began developing a mobile application, Kitobdust, to feature 18 RWM books for Grades 1 and 2 alongside reading comprehension games. Each grade has three reading levels, with three books corresponding to each level. After the user reads all books within that reading level, the user plays games related to phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Upon MoES approval, RWM coordinated with TV Bahoriston to feature a promotional video for Kitobdust after each “Time to Read” episode and with Radio Vatan to promote Kitobdust during each “Let’s Read Together” program and on their Facebook page. District training facilitators introduced CBMU member school teachers to the application, and all schools received promotional leaflets during the Quarter 3 book distribution. To date, Kitobdust has been downloaded more than 12,900 times since launching in March 2021.



Pamphlets for the Feed Me and Kitobdust applications.

Kitobdust has been downloaded more than 12,900 times since launching in March 2021.

### SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Not only did RWM develop relationships with government institutions and international donors (see Coordination Section), but the project also succeeded in developing partnerships with the private actors, described below, to impact primary grade reading.

**55 Group.** RWM signed a memorandum of understanding with 55 Group, a private investment and consulting company in Tajikistan focused on emerging businesses in the Tajik market. 55 Group provided guidance to RWM on how to promote the project’s products, particularly mobile applications, to the target public audience and supported RWM with engaging the private sector in public outreach and events.

**TV Bahoriston and the Dushanbe Children’s Puppet Theater.** Over multiple years, RWM had a close partnership with TV



Episode of “I Can Read Fluently” with simultaneous sign language interpretation.

Bahoriston and the Dushanbe Children’s Puppet Theater, most notably to film and produce episodes of “I Can Read Fluently” and “Time to Read.” TV Bahoriston began airing RWM’s promotional video for Kitobdust in April 2021 after each “Time to Read” episode. The Puppet Theater also accompanied RWM for the series of International Book Day events in 2019 and virtually in 2020 to organize performances for students.

**Radio Vatan.** In October 2020, the project began collaborating with Radio Vatan to launch a radio program featuring RWM books. Beginning on October 26, Radio Vatan aired 24 episodes through December, with a total of 58 children, ranging from pre-kindergarten to Grade 6 from Dushanbe, DRS, Sughd, and Khatlon-Bokhtar, calling into the live program to answer questions about the books. From January 1 to March 31, 2021, an additional 63 programs were broadcast, with all winners receiving certificates and RWM books. Radio Vatan featured all winners on their Facebook page, including adding links to promote RWM’s [Feed Me](#)<sup>2</sup> and [Kitobdust](#)<sup>3</sup> mobile applications. Starting in June 2021, Radio Vatan began to independently finance the radio show, with the project providing only extra books and certificates for winners.

**Telecommunications companies, banks, and restaurants.** RWM coordinated with telecommunications companies, banks, and restaurants to organize outreach to their customers. As a result, Megafon sent more than 300,000 SMS messages to customers with a link to download the application. Tcell and ZET-Mobile sent more than 230,000 SMS messages. RWM also collaborated with the First MicroFinance Bank, Halyk Bank, International Bank of Tajikistan, and Southern Fried Chicken to distribute promotional leaflets at their branches across the country.

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<sup>2</sup> Feed me download link:

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eduapp4syria.feedthemonsterTajik&hl=en\\_US&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eduapp4syria.feedthemonsterTajik&hl=en_US&gl=US)

<sup>3</sup> Kitobdust website: <http://kitobdust.tj/>

# ACTIVITY RESULT 4: INCREASED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO IMPROVE READING

## AR 4 RESULTS

RWM worked to increase dialogue about the current environment for reading acquisition, strengthen the capacity of the MoES and other relevant entities, and enhance the system for teacher mentoring and coaching in reading. The project achieved the following results:

AR 4.1: Indicator #25 – Number of administrators and officials successfully trained with USG support  
Target: 2,368 ~ Life of the Project: **9,432**

AR 4.1: Indicator #26 – Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve primary grade reading programs or increase equitable access  
Target: 6 ~ Life of the Project: **7**

AR 4.2: Indicator #27 – Number of training programs provided to education officials with USG assistance  
Target: 21 ~ Life of the Project: **24**

AR 4.2: Indicator #28 – Number of curriculum (packages)/standards modified and approved incorporating reading with USG assistance  
Target: 3 ~ Life of the Project: **4**

AR 4.3: Indicator #29 – Total number of teacher/educators/teaching assistants who received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support  
Target: 18,008 ~ Life of the Project: **23,400**

AR 4.3: Indicator #30 – Percentage of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance  
Target: 80% ~ Life of the Project: **97%**

## COMMITMENT TO MENTORING AND MONITORING

Understanding that mentoring and monitoring were essential to achieving and measuring materials and training progress, RWM prepared a conceptual approach at the beginning of the project (see box). RWM built upon the existing system structure to increase its effectiveness, amplify current and new procedures for methodological support, and emphasize an approach based on support for teachers, rather than one of inspection. Combined with a project-developed Guide for Mentors and Training Package, using a training-of-trainers approach, RWM trained 3,387 school-based mentors (heads of methodological units (HMUs), deputy directors, and high-performing teachers) from all Cohort 1, 2, and 3 RWM schools in November 2019. Through an order with the MoES, Saturday

**EVERYONE'S INVOLVED:  
SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING MODEL**

- Head of the Methodological Unit for primary classes: in-school reading coach
- Deputy director for primary classes and School director: support to the HMU
- Primary methodologist in the DED: monitoring
- Primary specialists from the regional in-service Teacher Training Institute: technical support
- RTMC: technical oversight/supervision

Methodological Days were made mandatory, to hold training and methodological discussions to support teachers trained by the project to reflect and apply modern reading methodologies in the classroom. After the order, each year HMUs, supported by the deputy director, observed lessons and provided direct feedback to teachers in Saturday sessions.

RWM combined this approach to mentoring with adaptive monitoring to ensure quality data and visibility into training and materials use and impact. In 2019 RWM began monitoring schools with representatives from DEDs, REDs, and TTIs. During these visits, representatives from the MoES affiliates were required to complete RWM’s monitoring and evaluation form, which collected information about activities being implemented at the school level, based upon training RWM had provided, and ensured books were recorded and being used effectively in libraries and classrooms. The project found that involving methodologists from DEDs in monitoring had a positive impact on their professional development, even motivating some district-level affiliates to support non-RWM schools with incorporating RWM strategies and activities.

**CBMU calls by region from June 15 – July 15, 2020**

Region	Number of CBMUs	Number of CBMU members	Number of phone calls
GBAO	80	335	560
DRS+Dushanbe	116	1,163	812
Sughd	86	636	602
Bokhtar	77	634	539
Kulob	57	449	380
Total	416	3,217	2,893

In 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, RWM engaged 68 of the district mentors who had previously conducted in-person mentoring visits in a phone-based mentoring initiative. Over the course of a month, district mentors completed 2,893 calls to 416 CBMU mentors (approximately seven mentoring phone calls per CBMU mentor). From February through March 2021, RWM supported 512 CBMUs around the country to conduct at least six methodological meetings (via 215 DTFs) with the school-based mentors from all RWM-supported schools. These workshops and meetings focused on using formative assessment strategies and supplementary reading materials in the classroom. Cohort 4 CBMUs also focused on an outcome assessment of the blended learning teacher training program and a review of teacher portfolios. See the box below for other examples of engaging mentors virtually.

**ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF ENGAGING MENTORS VIRTUALLY IN THE REGIONS**

- In Kulob, RWM regional staff organized a Viber group for district mentors and CBMU mentors and announced a quiz with 35 questions based on RWM’s teacher training modules.
- In Bokhtar, RWM staff encouraged all district mentors to purchase smartphones and create email accounts to help them stay connected during the prolonged work-at-home period.
- In Sughd, the RWM team stayed in touch with trainers through an active Viber group and regular conference calls to discuss creative ways teachers were supporting their students’ continued education during the pandemic.

Through this approach, RWM created a supportive community of practice at schools and promoted sustainability at the regional and district levels by ensuring DEDs, REDs, and TTIs were well informed and directly involved in the approach.

## COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING THROUGH CBMUS

To further the effectiveness of its mentoring and engagement approach, in June 2020 RWM convened a working group consisting of staff from the MoES and the RTMC to develop a regulation to strengthen methodological support at the jamoat and school level and to build the capacity of HMUs to create local communities of practice through community-based methodological units (CBMUs). CBMUs are schools that serve as an anchor in their location (usually jamoat) for nearby schools and as a hub for methodological support. On July 27, 2020, the MoES officially approved and issued the regulation by making the community-based mentoring approach an official, mandated part of the education system. The regulation defines the structure, procedures, and processes for the CBMUs' support.



RWM trainer Salima Ismatova, a primary grade teacher in the Varzob region, held remote mentoring calls with primary grade teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to using CBMUs for training Cohort 4, RWM also used them in its mentoring approach for all four cohorts. RWM introduced the community-based mentoring approach to enable the establishment and strengthening of communities of practice for nearby schools to provide access to on-the-job professional development. In March 2020, RWM engaged 68 of the project's most qualified national and regional trainers and assigned them as district mentors for each of the 68 districts in Tajikistan based on their locations. The project delivered orientations to the district mentors, including how to establish CBMUs and provide mentoring support to these newly established units. District mentors worked with DED methodists for two days to introduce the new mentoring system. Together, the DED methodist and the district mentor then defined one (and in cases of a large jamoat, two) core schools to serve as a CBMU and assigned surrounding schools as members of these CBMUs. Primary education methodists then invited the heads of the CBMUs (HMUs from the schools) and deputy directors to a one-day orientation meeting. Together with the DEDs, RWM created 419 CBMUs with 2,994 member schools. Following the initial orientation meetings, CBMUs and member schools adapted mentoring plans where the CBMUs met every other week to share successes and ask for methodological support to overcome any challenges.

Once set up, in October 2020, RWM initiated the process of training Cohort 4 teachers through 216 CBMUs dedicated specifically to Cohort 4. The training for Cohort 4 teachers started on October 19, 2020, and continued through April 30, 2021. The training program consisted of 10 rounds of small, in-person workshops at the CBMU level delivered by project-trained DTFs.

The CBMU-level workshops were followed by one to two weeks of practical application of the new concepts and supported by integrated coaching and mentoring (observed by the DTFs during classroom observation visits and via the digital teacher training and mentoring platform portals).

## **SUPPORTING A DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM: MRCs**

As part of its sustainable approach and creative use of technology, RWM established methodological resources centers (MRCs) across Tajikistan. Created to serve as a venue for professional development of teachers and a community of practice, the centers featured an electronic whiteboard, a document camera, a projector, and a computer. RWM prioritized rural districts for MRC installation to complement technologies that exist in many regional centers. After procuring and installing the equipment, the project provided training on how to use the equipment, particularly, to integrate modern teaching approaches and technology into reading instruction. In 2019 RWM conducted a training for 47 national and regional trainers for MRC coordinators and IT specialists from DEDs, as well as primary methodists and primary teachers from where MRCs were established. From January 6 to 11, 2020, RWM supported 22 MRCs across Tajikistan (21 established by RWM and one additional established independently by the DED in B. Gafurov district) to organize and deliver training for 571 primary HMUs, IT specialists at schools, and primary grade teachers from schools surrounding the MRCs.

The project continued establishing MRCs in Years 4 and 5 and held accompanying trainings for MRC coordinators. By the end, RWM established 42 school-based MRCs, six MRCs in the Teacher Training Institutes, and 15 MRCs in HEIs, collaborating with USAID LTA to ensure coverage across every district of Tajikistan. Accompanying training created a platform for the use of technology as a tool for effectively delivering pedagogical outcomes and strengthened the mutual collaboration of IT specialists with school and district methodists. By the end of the project, one CBMU in each district was equipped with an MRC to provide a technical base for methodological support.

### **CBMU PROCESS PROVES SUSTAINABLE**

RWM received positive feedback from DEDs and REDs. For example, district counterparts in Bokhtar mentioned that the CBMU process was sustainable for them from a budget perspective, as it requires relatively few resources compared to a centralized training approach. During RWM hosted seminars in March 2021, REDs and DEDs agreed to involve teachers from other school subjects (aside from Tajik language) to create a similar mentoring structure as prescribed by the CBMU regulation.



Example of teacher and students using MRC equipment and applying training.

# CROSSCUTTING ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

## GENDER AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Starting from Year 1 work planning sessions in November 2016, gender integration has been a consideration in RWM activities.

A major success for inclusive education during RWM activities included the project’s collaboration with the Union of the Blind and Mekhbakhsh. Starting in April 2019, RWM met with Union of the Blind to identify options for providing RWM reading materials in large print and in Braille. In consultation with the Union of the Blind, RWM selected RWM-procured and RWM-

developed books to print in Braille and distribute to relevant schools and institutions. In February 2020, RWM printed children’s books in Braille, marking the first time these types of books had been produced in Tajikistan since 1990. To commemorate this milestone, RWM collaborated with the Republican Boarding School for the Blind in Hisor to host a book donation event with their blind and visually impaired students who will use these Braille books.



Manija and her teacher Roziya Boboeva, from Bokhtar, reading together.

RWM also developed a success story about primary grade student Manija, who is visually impaired and used RWM Braille books to learn how to read. The success story featured the efforts of teachers like Manija’s who value additional Braille resources for their students, as well as emphasized the need for additional children’s books in Braille.

In November 2020, RWM organized a meeting with Union of the Blind and the public organization Mekhbakhsh to discuss further collaboration to convert 12 RWM-developed books into Braille. Together, RWM and the entities selected the titles that were most appropriate for converting into Braille, as well as discussed how to describe illustrations in Braille books. In addition, RWM visited the Hisor Boarding School for visually impaired students with representatives of the Union of the Blind and Mekhbakhsh to pilot new large-print books with students and faculty. In Year 5 RWM printed and distributed 12 titles of project-developed books in Braille (80 copies each) and 16 titles in large print (360 copies each). In September 2021 RWM and LTA organized an event with the Hisor Boarding School for children with visual impairments to commemorate the development of additional books for their students. The public event included book donations and the participation of the U.S. Ambassador, USAID, and Minister of Education and Science.

Additional gender-related and inclusive activities by RWM include:

- Integration of gender-related concepts into criteria for evaluation of existing reading materials
- Training for authors, illustrators, and designers during book development to ensure women, girls, and children with disabilities were pictured not stereotypically in stories
- Revision of teacher training modules to include recommendations related to phonics, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary for teachers with visually or hearing-impaired students in their class
- Ensuring a gender balance in selecting regional and school facilitators and working group members
- Inclusion of 11 state boarding schools for orphans that include children with disabilities as part of Cohort 2 schools, including teacher participation in training events and receipt of books
- Raising gender awareness through six project-developed PSAs aired on national television that emphasized the importance of reading and strengthening the role of parents, while challenging gender stereotypes
- Highlighting successful RWM activities with children with disabilities to raise awareness through success story videos on USAID, U.S. Embassy, and social media platforms
- Development of 20 audio books based on seven Tajik language books and sections of 18 Russian language books to increase accessibility
- Integration of the international campaign, “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence,” during RWM’s two-day seminar for staff from the RED, DEDs, and Institute of Professional Development in GBAO in 2019 by informing participants about the purpose of the campaign to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls around the world
- Ensuring inclusive education incorporated into January 2021 literacy day programming by organizing a roundtable with TV Bahoriston featuring MoES representatives, authors, illustrators, teachers, and active students. One invited student was Manija from Bokhtar who shared her love of reading and read in Braille during the roundtable. Viewers noted that this was one of the first times that Braille had been featured on national television.
- Commemoration of Women’s History Month with a series of events in March 2021 in the Khatlon region featuring the theme “What Do I Want to be When I Grow Up?” The events encouraged both girls and boys to imagine a future for themselves beyond typical gender stereotypes. Famous children’s book author Azizi Aziz and illustrator Bakhtiyor Qaharov facilitated the events, including using the project-developed book “100 Occupations” as a basis for this discussion. Children participated in an art contest where they depicted their desired future professions, and Aziz also introduced project books to the children featuring a girl or woman protagonist

A main partner for RWM in gender equity and inclusive education throughout the project was UNICEF. Over the years, RWM worked with UNICEF to learn from their research and collaborate on activities. For example, in 2019 RWM utilized UNICEF’s guide on inclusive education to incorporate practical guidance for teachers into RWM’s updated training modules. In Year 4 and 5, RWM partnered with UNICEF to provide sign language interpretation for two

RWM-developed television shows that TV Bahoriston began broadcasting. Importantly, parents and children from the deaf community remarked that this was one of the first times a children’s educational TV program featured sign language interpretation.

Donor coordination and collaboration also included the following:

- Meeting with the Asian Development Bank to discuss their gender assessment study in Tajikistan in Year I
- RWM involvement in the Gender Theme Group meeting held by UN Women Tajikistan in Year I
- RWM participation and recognition in the Fourth International Conference on Inclusive Education organized by UNICEF, OSI, and the MoES
- RWM participation in UNDP’s report-out on the findings of their situational analysis on children’s and women’s rights in Tajikistan
- Hosting a meeting with the USAID/Central Asia mission and other USAID implementing partners as part of USAID’s review of gender issues in Tajikistan in preparation for the new 2020-2025 regional programming strategy
- Participating in RITTI’s two-day online international conference on inclusive education in May 2021

Notably, during Year 5, RWM staff participated in the monthly DCC Working Group meeting chaired by UNICEF and other development partners and MoES staff to develop an updated National Concept Note on inclusive education.

## POWER OF COMMUNICATIONS

RWM utilized the power of communications and outreach to significantly raise awareness on the importance of reading and enhance use of the project-developed books, materials, and resources. Presented below is a variety of the mediums RWM utilized for communications.

**Public outreach events.** RWM engaged national and regional-level media to ensure coverage of project events and activities on television networks, newspapers, radio, and social media. Specifically, the project conducted extensive media outreach and released press releases for its five International Book Day events in April 2019 and five Literacy Day events



Children enjoying an International Book Day event in the Qubodiyon district.

in September 2019. During Year 5, RWM held a series of small public outreach events to commemorate the project providing books to Children’s Libraries under the Ministry of Culture for the first time. Also, RWM organized a series of public book donation events in each region in collaboration with the MoES. One event was organized in each region, with a final culminating event in the remote district of Baljuvon in Khatlon, where the project celebrated the delivery of more than 1.3 million books to schools since 2018.

**National competitions.** During Year 2, RWM conducted The Best Reader Competition in Summer Camps, which led to the production of a press release with children’s quotes, four short videos broadcast on national and local television, and one article published in the *Hakikati Kulob* newspaper. In Year 4 RWM and the MoES partnered to launch the Best Reading Corner Competition among schools of Tajikistan. This was the first such initiative in Tajikistan, generating media attention, particularly at the regional level. Finally, in Year 5 RWM was recognized in the President’s Office national competition Furugi Subhi Donoi, when books chosen by the children and displayed in the televised competition were those developed by the project and donated to schools. In addition, RWM trained authors were invited to participate in the competition as judges.

**Outreach campaigns.** Over the life of the project, RWM developed 14 PSAs to promote the importance of reading. RWM also recorded a project song “Read with Me,” based on a project-developed book of the same title. This song was well-received by students and teachers and featured during book exhibition events and promotional products. Additionally, RWM conducted various outreach to promote the Feed Me and Kitobdust mobile applications. The outreach included a promotional video, SMS messages to customers, leaflet distribution in branch locations, and promotion on social media networks of local private sector partners at telecommunication companies, banks, and restaurants.

Additional forms of outreach included TV and radio broadcasts. RWM closely collaborated with TV Bahoriston to air a short read-aloud series “The Book Speaks,” based on nine books developed by RWM, with each book broadcast seven times a week. As TV Bahoriston is widely accessible across Tajikistan, the series provided primary grade students with the opportunity to continue improving their reading skills and engage with reading in a new format, particularly during the COVID-19 school closure. Additionally, RWM worked with TV Bahoriston and the Dushanbe Children’s Puppet Theater to produce and broadcast two educational programs, with 130 episodes of “Time to Read” and 36 episodes of “I Can Read Fluently.” RWM also collaborated with Radio Vatan to develop the radio program “Let’s Read Together” for children with 63 installments, each featuring a read-aloud of a different RWM book.



Shohzoda Zaripova, a fourth-grade student, winner in “Let’s Read Together” competition in Radio “Vatan”.

Following each read-aloud, there was a live competition with children calling the program to answer reading comprehension questions. Winners received a USAID-donated book.

During the life of the project, RWM regularly prepared and featured success stories (including on teacher training events, summer camps, and Braille books). Notably, RWM's success story about Manija who learned how to read in Braille with the help of the USAID-donated Braille books was featured by USAID/Washington for the Agency-wide social media toolkit for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in December 2020. The project also continually used Facebook, YouTube, USAID's website, and Flickr to share stories and other project updates.

#### **EXAMPLES OF RWM VIDEO SUCCESS STORIES (LINKED)**

- Education Programming for Everyone: USAID Develops TV Programs with Sign Language Interpretation
- USAID Success Story from Bokhtar, Tajikistan (Manija's story)

### **COORDINATION WITH OTHER IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS**

In addition to successful coordination with the private sector, RWM also regularly collaborated with other donors and local stakeholders. During Year 1, RWM engaged with a multitude of stakeholders to introduce the project and discuss synergies and coordination. In nearly 70 meetings, RWM met with organizations and projects that included the USAID Quality Reading Project; the USAID and Aga Khan Foundation Economic and Social Connections: A Multi-Input Area Development Financing Facility for Tajikistan (ESCO-MIAD) project and USAID/AKF THRIVE; the World Bank; UNICEF; Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking Association; the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and the National Library, Asian Development Bank, and the Women Entrepreneurship for Empowerment Project. The project also engaged with NGOs, including Neki and Service Center for Children with Disabilities.

Overall, RWM's key stakeholder was the MoES and the ministry's affiliates, including the Tajikistan education system. This included the Deputy Minister of Pre-Primary and General Secondary Education, Head of the EMIS unit, National Testing Center, Dushanbe and regionally based state universities and pedagogical colleges, and the Writers Union. On July 31, 2017, the project received a signed memorandum of understanding between the MoES and USAID, marking the formal implementation of the project. Throughout implementation, RWM held regular USAID RWM MoES Quarterly Partners meetings with the project's main point of contact with the MoES, the Deputy Minister, and the project's working groups to continue to seek buy-in, from early stages of activity conceptualization through the process of activity rollout. With USAID, the project held monthly meetings with the Deputy Minister to discuss progress of ongoing activities, seek initial approvals for anticipated activities, and discuss forward-looking plans for appropriate timing and advance notice of approval requests. The RWM team also developed strong relationships with regional and district education personnel, conducting many meetings in the regions to build trust and close coordination. Additionally, RWM regularly participated in Local Education Group meetings and contributed to the development of the National Strategy for Education Development 2021-2030.

### KEY RWM REVIEWS

- National Strategy for Education Development 2021-2030
- Education Rapid Needs Assessment (ERNA) survey and methodology, ERNA draft report, and COVID-19 National Education Response Plan
- National Concept on Assessment
- National Concept on Inclusive Education
- Mid-Term Education Action Plan 2018-2020

Moreover, through active participation in the Development Coordination Committee (DCC) Education working group, facilitated by UNICEF, the project successfully coordinated with counterparts to support the government to develop the National Strategy on Education development (2020-2030), Mid-Term Education Plan (2020-2023) and to ensure leveraged resources maximized cost efficiency and advanced sustainability. Meetings were utilized to coordinate assessment approaches, related interactions with the MoES, and in 2020 and 2021, response to support the education sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. To support these outreach efforts, RWM

distributed UNICEF’s COVID-19 communication materials to all 1,008 Cohort 4 schools during its 2020 book distribution. In April 2020, RWM cooperated with CARITAS, who delivered DVDs with all digital teaching and learning materials and RWM books to 803 RWM target schools in the Khatlon Oblast, when CARITAS was delivering hygiene products to district health centers as part of their COVID-19 response. During the project, due to RWM’s successes and stakeholder awareness, the project was regularly asked to contribute technical feedback and insights (see Key RWM Reviews box).

A continual partner over the life of the project for RWM was UNICEF. In addition to the collaboration on inclusive education described above, RWM also worked with UNICEF to identify a common approach for school-based methodological resource centers in schools and TTIs, collaborating on introducing blended learning approaches in teacher professional development, and creating reading books based upon the animation series “Sanduqchayi Zulbiyo” (Magic Box). Based on this children’s animation series, RWM collaborated with UNICEF and the Open Society Institute to develop 20 books based upon the content and characters. For this effort, RWM engaged an international expert to provide technical assistance to authors, illustrators, and designers contracted by OSI and UNICEF, who also managed the book approval and printing process. In total, 2,000 copies of each title were printed, totaling 40,000 books printed through the partnership. RWM also worked closely with UNICEF, EU Quality Education and Support Programme I, and the World Bank to utilize their Teacher’s Guide on Formative Assessment for printing and dissemination to all RWM schools. Through this collaboration with the World Bank, RWM leveraged \$250,000 spent by the READ-2 program on the development of these modules.

Over the life of the project, RWM signed memoranda of understanding with 29 organizations (see box).

### MOUS SIGNED DURING RWM:

- Aga Khan Foundation, Tajikistan
- Dushanbe Puppet's Theater
- 22 Higher Education Institutions
- Tajik National Encyclopedia
- TV Bahoriston
- University of Central Asia
- UNICEF, Tajikistan
- ZTE Telecom Company

# LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section addresses key lessons learned during implementation and RWM’s approach to resolving the identified constraints. It also includes recommendations for future education projects or initiatives to build upon RWM’s achievements.

## **LESSON 1: UTILIZE REGULATIONS TO ATTAIN BUY-IN AT THE NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVELS**

While RWM collaborated regularly with the MoES for activity approvals, the project learned that to achieve local level buy-in of large-scale activities, regulations were key. For example, to create the local CBMUs, RWM convened a working group consisting of staff from the MoES and the RTMC to develop a regulation that defined the structure, procedures, and processes for the CBMUs’ support. The regulation was officially approved and issued by the MoES on July 27, 2020, making the community-based mentoring approach an official, mandated part of the education system. This was a critical step in ensuring the sustainability of RWM approaches and international best practices. Other examples include a Ministry Order on school-based mentoring Saturday Methodological Sessions (#269 dated January 17, 2019) to make the sessions mandatory, as well as regulations for summer camps and to promote reading corners.

## **LESSON 2: ENSURE APPROACHES ARE DEMAND-DRIVEN AND ALLOW TIME FOR REFLECTION**

Driven not only by the virtual environment created by COVID-19, but also international research on in-service teacher training, RWM adapted its training approach in Year 4. In years 2 and 3 RWM invited teachers for a 72-hour training in the summer vacation, during which all modules were covered and teachers returned to school to apply what they learned. However, in Year 4 the project changed its approach to smaller “bite-sized” training events spread over time, which allowed teachers to reflect in-between sessions, receive ongoing mentoring to support their classroom application and share experience with their peers. By doing this, RWM brought training closer to the teacher’s workplace, made the venue and trainings more accessible, and linked sessions more closely to professional needs.

## **LESSON 3: UTILIZE EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES AND CONTINUAL DATA COLLECTION TO ADAPT**

In addition to the continuous classroom observations and mentoring RWM completed, the EGRA was crucial to providing data for activity adaption. Specifically, reading comprehension for Tajik Grade 2 students increased only 0.8% from baseline to midline and for Tajik Grade 4 students it decreased by 6.3%. RWM developed additional reading materials that focused on improving student fluency, comprehension and vocabulary in the Tajik language. For example, RWM adapted

its training modules to introduce the “what, when, how” approach, that is, what you teach, when you teach, and how you teach. The project introduced a revised formative assessment approach piloted by the World Bank READ 2 project and a differentiated instructional approach, with a focus on the learning environment and different modern pedagogy reading strategies that provided more time for focused reading tasks in the classroom. RWM worked with partners to provide additional coaching and mentoring, including encouraging teachers to allow students more time to answer comprehension questions to enable thinking processes to take place, which resulted in an increased performance of students in both Tajik Grade 2 (an increase of 13.39%

#### **LESSON 4: EXPANDING THE UNDERSTANDING OF INNOVATION TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT WITH READING**

Initially, the project focused on a more basic idea of technology use in classrooms, but refocused to identify approaches that gained a degree of coverage. Hence, RWM expanded this to develop interactive features and tools to increase children’s engagement. For example, RWM used 18 book titles to create the mobile application Kitobdust, which included games on phonic awareness, reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary alongside the books. In the creation of the game, RWM considered the end user as well, for example, ensuring there were interesting avatars and opportunities to compare results with friends. In another example, RWM identified a mobile application originally developed for an All Children Reading Challenge, Feed Me, and adapted it for the Tajik language by changing words, sounds, and narration while keeping the characters and the graphics. The project expanded this application’s success with parents and children to develop 36 TV programs (one for each letter in the Tajik alphabet) featured on national TV, which became very popular. In addition, RWM made 100 TV programs where project-developed books were read aloud, using well-known actors interacting with puppets to aid comprehension of the story. RWM successfully used innovations to ensure that while doing something outside school (e.g., playing a game or watching TV, etc.), children were also reading and exposed to books.

from baseline to endline) and Tajik Grade 4 (an increase of 6.02%).

#### **LESSON 5: CONTINUALLY BUILD ON PARTNER ENGAGEMENT TO INCREASE CAPACITY AND OWNERSHIP**

From the first meetings with DEDs and local authorities to discuss activities, goals, and timelines, RWM received feedback from these stakeholders that they typically did not see long-lasting results from the projects, or ever considered it “their project” rather than “X donor project.” RWM addressed this from the beginning, with training for school directors and teachers, mentoring these stakeholders to be active and learn about the project and following up regularly with how teachers were reacting to new information. In Cohort 1 training,

### REGIONAL TEAMS, LOCAL INITIATIVES

Regional teams also pursued local initiatives with counterparts based on opportunities in their regions. In Khorugh in April 2020, RWM’s regional team organized a meeting for parents in the Ismaili center about RWM activities and how parents can support children to improve their reading outcomes. More than 400 parents attended the meeting.

### LESSON 6: FLEXIBILITY IS KEY, PARTICULARLY

In Year 4 and 5, the COVID-19 pandemic required a major shift in RWM’s approach to programming. Originally, RWM had planned training for teachers, school directors, and librarians, as well as a final book distribution and corresponding public outreach events during the summer months, but none of this was possible. Nonetheless, RWM adapted. The project facilitated smaller CBMU sessions with safety protocols; took public outreach efforts online through TV programming, including a full literacy day on TV as well as continual airing of radio programs where books were read aloud; and adapted mentoring and monitoring support to remote calls and Viber groups to maintain contact between teachers and mentors.

RWM invited primary grade advisors from the DED as participants and in the next year with Cohort 2, they were trainers, with a leadership role. RWM connected DED advisors, managers, and methodological unit leaders through Viber for real-time problem solving, and supported the staff to create emails to receive model updates. Additionally, RWM involved DED primary grade advisors as regional trainers to engage them more and ensure they received daily updates on issues, models, etc. In addition, the EGRA midline results and analysis was shared with all DEDs, enabling to understand what best practice they should encourage in schools to enable stronger reading outcomes, such as getting library books to students’ homes so they read with their parents and encouraging more widespread reading activities at school. Now, teachers call DED advisors for direct support, increasing advisors’ feeling of responsibility for their respective regions. Now, these stakeholders consider it “everyone’s project.”

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORK BEYOND READ WITH ME

#### **Continue sustainable, systemic approaches in support to the education system**

- CBMUs were established through a Ministry Regulation, and District Education Departments support this critical link between the district and their schools by contributing a portion of the district budgets. To ensure long-term establishment, support in the short-term could include facilitator time and travel cost coverage. Projects can coordinate with USAID LTA, which aims to provide a list of trainers to RITTI and regional branches at the jamoat level. The goal would be for the RITTI and its regional branches to hire these trainers via contracts, with time and travel costs covered with public funds, to deliver trainings at a local level to maintain the communities of practice that these

CMBUs facilitate. It would also be beneficial if one or two staff at the CBMU schools received additional payment for coordinating CBMU activities.

- To reach rural populations, align locations of CMBUs with jamoats, as the location of CMBUs may be a predictor in the improvement of rural student performance.
- Utilize the criteria RWM developed with partners for developing children’s books as a basis for future development of reading materials.
- Build capacity of REDs to coordinate and promote mentoring and monitoring.
- Support differentiated instruction by providing teachers with a clearly structured curriculum that aligns learning outcomes with the competence-based standards.

### **Continue development of a digital ecosystem in education**

- Continue support to developing the digital ecosystem and blended learning environment, such as scaling TV programs and Puppet Theater activities to other subjects beyond reading.
- Create user-friendly systems that can effectively share access with local partners and stakeholders, for real-time analysis and adjustments to training and mentoring support.
- Continue working with RITTI in the development of the digital platform and content, to ensure ownership and administrative capacity and sustainability once updates are made to the platform. This approach combines coaching with in-service training and proved to be more effective and well-liked by trainees.
- Support awareness, understanding, and positive results to be attained through assistive technology use, particularly for children with disabilities; and collaborate with UNICEF/ Islamic Development Bank on opportunities for use of technology in schools and training to teachers on technology use.

### **Strategy for new approaches**

- Identify constraints throughout the system — not only can teacher development be addressed with application and module cycles and digital training, but also pre-service course expansion to ensure future teachers are exposed and trained to practice the same pedagogical approaches as teachers receive through in-service training
- Improve upon needs-based learning, using the Teacher Competency Framework, using classroom application and research to encourage self-learning and sharing of teacher-driven results.
- For the different approaches the project introduces, ensure there are mechanisms and training available to staff, such as an initial pilot with the team, who then work with counterparts from a position of contextual understanding.
- As teachers do not have time to practice during large training events, continue “bite-sized” training approach and ask them to practice significantly between sessions and provide coaching as part of the classroom application.

### **Expand the concept and application of inclusive education**

- Ensure future projects and initiatives build off of the Inclusive Education concept note, to expand the definition and understanding of inclusive education; utilize multimodality and Universal Design for Learning approaches to ensure broader approaches to the way teachers and students learn.

- Continue to support the development and creativity of leveled books, which are even more relevant to children’s lives, and represent girls as main characters
- Expand teachers’ use and appreciation of socio-emotional learning strategies and identify ways to monitor and correct cases of more punitive approaches. For example, encouraging struggling students rather than use negative strategies, which was associated in the endline EGRA with poorer learning outcomes.
- Provide linguistic support to marginalized populations, such as students that speak a different language at home and in the classroom, by improving teachers’ proficiency in their language of instruction, and by supporting teachers to use guided group strategies (defined by their formative assessment approaches) in the classroom that support students to achieve greater self-regulated learning. Careful use of levelled texts and other supplementary resources such as bilingual children’s dictionaries may also support this group.

### **Build on successes of partnership engagement and leverage**

- Utilize partnerships with local businesses to provide additional technology and equipment to CBMUs, to build capacity and expand the number of centers.
- As PTAs are able to involve businesses in fundraising, projects could provide indirect support by creating guides for PTAs on how to invite and engage local partners.
- Engage parents and the private sector to ensure students have access to books they can take home, which gives them more opportunity to practice reading given the limited classroom time allotted.
- Ensure institutions are constructively involved in the activities, from the national to the jamoat level.
- Plan for regular meetings at the regional levels, involving District Education Departments, to ensure detailed information on what schools should do to improve learning outcomes is shared and activity solutions are customized at the local level.

### **Continue to improve and adapt tools for assessment**

- To continue raising ORF scores, classroom-based activities should include phonics support, comprehension support, language match, and better understanding which types of evaluations teachers use and their relationship to learning, especially in formative cases.
- To encourage behavior change in teaching, RWM found success in encouraging teachers to practice more participative instructional practices, including differentiated instruction and guided group strategies, as well as focus on reading pedagogy in a more systematic structured way.
- Add additional evaluation questions to assessments regarding Uzbek-speaking students’ homework and reading habits.
- Update tools to assess discrepancies in Russian-language schools between language of instruction, home language of students, and home language of teachers. Where discrepancies are high, provide additional support to those students and teachers.
- Incorporate a more extensive socioeconomic status index in assessments.

- Continue to improve teachers' use of a range of formative assessment practices and strategies to adapt teaching and learning to better suit students' needs, and to inform the planning and implementation of differentiated instruction.

# ANNEX A. PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TRACKING TABLE

RWM's final indicators are presented in a matrix below, and the Performance Indicator Tracking Table is submitted as an attachment.

Performance Indicators	Actuals						Target
	Year 1 FY2017	Year 2 FY2018	Year 3 FY2019	Year 4 FY2020	Year 5 FY2021	Cumulative Total	Length of Project
ES 1.1 (1) - Percentage of learners who demonstrate reading fluency and comprehension of grade level text at the end of grade 2 with USG assistance.	N/A	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 50.60%	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 41.5%	N/A	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 54.59%	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) +3.99%	+10% CWPM  +15.1% Reading Comprehension
		Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 14.70%	Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 15.5%		Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 28.11%	Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): +13.41%	
		Russian Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 48.70%	Russian Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 46.2%		Russian Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) 54.59%	Russian Language: (ORF >= 40 cwpm) +5.9%	
		Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 16.20%"	Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 34.6%"		Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 41.25%"	Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): +25.05%"	
ES 1.2 (2) - Proportion of students who by the end of the primary grade cycle (grade 4) demonstrate that they can read AND understand the meaning of grade level text.	N/A	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 80 cwpm) 18.80%	"Tajik language: (ORF - 80 cwpm) 22%	N/A	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 80 cwpm) 41.45%	"Tajik Language: (ORF >= 80 cwpm) +22.65%	+16% CWPM  +15.1% Reading Comprehension
		Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 22.50%	Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 16.2%		Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): 28.52%	Tajik Reading Comprehension: (>=80% correct): +6.02%	
		Russian Language: (ORF >=80cwpm): 38.60%	Russian language: (ORF - 80 cwpm) 37.7%		Russian Language: (ORF >=80cwpm): 41.74%	Russian Language: (ORF >=80cwpm): +3.14%	
		Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 41.40%"	Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 42.4%"		Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): 41.07%"	Russian Reading Comprehension (>=80% correct): -.33%"	

Performance Indicators	Actuals						Target
	Year 1 FY2017	Year 2 FY2018	Year 3 FY2019	Year 4 FY2020	Year 5 FY2021	Cumulative Total	Length of Project
ES 1.10 (5) - Number of primary or secondary textbooks and other teaching and learning materials (TLM) provided with USG assistance	0	21,719	222,838	589,749	552,815	1,387,121	870,500
(6) Number of training programs to support reading book production provided with USG assistance	6	11	9	6	3	35	25
(9) Number of reading training modules developed, including adapting modules to specific targeted groups (i.e., teachers, librarians, school directors, pedagogical instructors, training institutes, other educators)	30	26	8	5	2	71	50
(10) Number of training sessions offered	0	11,304	18,239	4,588	49,116	83,247	28,971
(11) Number of primary school educators who complete professional development activities on implementing evidence-based reading instruction with USG assistance.	0	4,449	10,511	6,068	7,387	28,415	28,415
ES 1.3 (12) Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school based settings reached with USG education assistance	0	0	309,785	193,312	162,733	665,830	665,830
ES 3.2.1-43 (13) Number of person hours of administrators and officials successfully trained.	0	15,774	80,354	29,540	38,256	163,924	25,266
ES 3.2.2-42 (14) Number of tertiary institution faculty or teaching staff whose qualifications are strengthened through USG- supported tertiary education programs.	0	0	52	191	237	480	30
(15) Percentage of trained teachers observed using teaching and learning materials	0%	0%	68%	84.7%	87.2%	80%	80%
(16) Number of primary teachers that report use of continuous assessment practices to monitor student reading progress	0%	0%	80%	89.80%	89%	86%	80%
ES 3.2.1-34 (17) Number of standardized learning assessments supported by the USG	0	4	4	0	4	12	12
(18) Number of reinforcement and out-of-school activities held	0	36	204,379	753,702	671,627	1,629,744	378,538

Performance Indicators	Actuals						Target
	Year 1 FY2017	Year 2 FY2018	Year 3 FY2019	Year 4 FY2020	Year 5 FY2021	Cumulative Total	Length of Project
(19) Number of technology-based resources and/or training modules developed	0	10	76	133	209	450	210
(20) Number of public outreach activities/media campaigns held	0	4	23	7	116	150	26
(21) Number of technology-delivered instructional platforms (i.e., hardware, software, training platforms, mobile devices) developed	0	0	1	2	4	7	6
ES 3.2.5 (22) Number of public private partnerships established	0	0	8	13	83	104	70
ES 1-13 (23) Number of parent teacher associations (PTAs) or community governance structures engaged in primary or secondary education supported with USG assistance	0	0	718	1,753	1,815	4,286	1,354
(24) The amount of funds leveraged from public-private partnerships	\$0	\$165,000.00	\$421,296.97	\$918,013.17	\$507,805.65	\$2,012,656	\$1,500,000
ES 1.12 (25) Number of administrators and officials successfully trained with USG support	0	652	3,601	2,679	2,500	9,432	2,368
ES 3.2.1-38 (26) Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed or modified to improve primary grade reading programs or increase equitable access	0	0	3	3	1	7	6
(27) Number of training programs provided to education officials with USG assistance	0	9	3	9	3	24	21
(28) Number of curriculum (packages)/ standards modified and approved incorporating reading with USG assistance	0	0	3	1	0	4	3
ES 3.2.1-31 (29) Total number of teacher/educators/teaching assistants who received intensive coaching or mentoring with USG support	0	0	10,975	3,749	8,676	23,400	18,008
CBLD-9 (30) Percent of U.S. Government-assisted organizations with improved performance [indicator added in Y4]	0	0	0	95%	97%	97%	80%

# ANNEX B. KEY DOCUMENTS

## TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

Sections A-C can be found on DEC. For Section D, the file library has been provided to USAID.

### A. DELIVERABLES – ANNUAL REPORTS

- A1. FY2017 Annual Report
- A2. FY2018 Annual Report
- A3. FY2019 Annual Report
- A4. FY2020 Annual Report
- A5. FY2021 Annual Report is included in the Final Report as an Annex

### B. DELIVERABLES – QUARTERLY REPORTS

- B1. FY2017Q1 Quarterly Report
- B2. FY2017Q2 Quarterly Report
- B3. FY2017Q3 Quarterly Report
- B4. FY2018Q1 Quarterly Report
- B5. FY2018Q2 Quarterly Report
- B6. FY2018Q3 Quarterly Report
- B7. FY2019Q1 Quarterly Report
- B8. FY2019Q2 Quarterly Report
- B9. FY2019Q3 Quarterly Report
- B10. FY2020Q1 Quarterly Report
- B11. FY2020Q2 Quarterly Report
- B12. FY2020Q3 Quarterly Report
- B13. FY2021Q1 Quarterly Report
- B14. FY2021Q2 Quarterly Report
- B15. FY2021Q3 Quarterly Report
- B16. FY2021Q4 Quarterly Report

### C. DELIVERABLES – OTHER

- C1. FY2017 Baseline EGRA Report
- C2. FY2019 Midline EGRA Report
- C3. FY2021 Endline EGRA Report

### D. KEY TECHNICAL MATERIALS – EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- D1. Teacher Training Electronic Platform
- D2. Training on Enabling Learning
- D3. Mobile Applications
- D4. 96 methodological videos
- D5. All books developed by RWM
- D5. Audiobooks
- D7. Public Service Announcements
- D8. TV Programs: Time to Read and Let's Read Together
- D9. Animations
- D10. Russian language phonetics game
- D11. Tajik language phonetics game

- D12. 50 Tajik language one-page reading cards
- D13. 50 Russian language one-page reading cards
- D14. 50 Tajik language one-page picture dictionaries
- D15. 48 Russian language one-page picture dictionaries
- D16. Tajik language instruction manual for supplementary reading materials
- D17. Russian language instruction manual for supplementary reading materials
- D18. Russian language Reading Calendar
- D19. 12 reading strategy posters in Russian
- D20. 12 reading strategy posters in Tajik
- D21. 8 vocabulary strategy posters in Russian
- D22. 8 vocabulary strategy posters in Tajik

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