

Notes on the Book Chain and Examples of Current REACH Projects

Book development

Although systematic data on textbook and supplemental book provision is lacking, available research shows that in many low and middle-income countries students have limited access to books. A survey of primary schools in eleven developing countries shows that 15 to 20 percent of pupils did not have a reading or math textbook.¹ In some countries, the percentage is much higher and especially acute when considering mother tongue texts. Limited financing, low demand, limited authorship capacity, and licensing and copyright issues, contribute to an inadequate supply of appropriate titles in underserved languages.

A potential response to this call might incentivize expanding access to already published titles and/or introduce activities to stimulate quality book production among local or regional publishing stakeholders.

Current REACH Projects: [Bangladesh \(IREX\)](#); [South Africa \(Room to Read\)](#)

Book forecasting

The lack of data on book demand and provision limits the ability to forecast book requirements and replenishments, plan procurement, secure adequate timely financing, negotiate with suppliers to reduce costs, pinpoint inefficiencies, and evaluate progress. A potential intervention might condition financing on the creation of an open-data system and/or a mechanism that supports and incentivizes improved use of available country data systems for book provision, resource mapping, gap analysis and procurement planning, and/or related activities.

Current REACH Projects: [Cambodia \(World Education\)](#)

Book procurement and financing

In an analysis of 32 low and middle-income countries, 56 percent of countries surveyed showed significant annual budget shortfalls and inadequate spending on textbooks and reading books at the primary level.² Countries exhibit different financing needs and require different types of support to meet minimum book standards recommended by experts. For some low-income countries, eliminating the funding gap via domestic expenditures would require a significant time investment while others might gain traction with investments in technical assistance, policy advocacy and/or co-financing arrangements.

A response to this call might consider targeting a country, or subset of countries, where incentivizing improvements in spending efficiency and/or policy-level changes to meet minimum book standards are feasible.

¹ UNESCO (2016). *Textbooks Pave the Way to Sustainable Development*. Global Education Monitoring Report Policy Paper 28.

² Results for Development (2016). *Feasibility Study for a Global Book Fund*, 2016.

Book Procurement

Although, it is recommended that at least 3-5 percent of a country's primary education budget is spent on textbooks, an analysis of 32 low-income countries showed that textbook and learning material spending was on average 2% of primary expenditures.³ Ineffective procurement processes, along with fragmented and unpredictable financing, results in inefficiency. Proposals in this category might focus on developing standard technical specifications for book procurement, pooled funding mechanisms, or other results-based approaches aimed at improving the predictability of demand and lowering book costs.

Current REACH Projects: [South Africa \(Room to Read\)](#)

Supply chain management of books

While supply chain and distribution issues vary by country, common challenges include poor management systems and loss and damage of books. Proposals might focus on the development of a results-based monitoring system that focuses on known points of vulnerability along the book value chain (i.e. within the functional areas of supply planning, forecasting and/or distribution), and that incentivizes more efficient performance through results-based financing. Results-based financing could then be targeted towards improvements along the chain and, ultimately, making texts accessible to children.

Current REACH Projects: [Cambodia \(World Education\)](#); [South Africa \(Room to Read\)](#); [Zambia \(World Bank\)](#)

Book Use

Reports show three main barriers that prevent the effective use of books: poor book quality, limited teacher training and reluctance to issue books to students. The impact of adequate provision of textbooks and reading books on learning outcomes is contingent upon appropriate book use in classrooms. For example, one study conducted in Uganda, showed that, despite the presence of textbooks in schools, students in 86 percent of classrooms did not actually use books.⁴

Proposals in this category, might consider incentivizing various levels of teacher training on how to incorporate books into lessons and other campaigns that optimize the pedagogical quality of books and motivate school level stakeholders to use books in the classroom.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) frequently lack the information necessary to monitor the book supply chain effectively. Moreover, institutional capacity to evaluate the book supply chain is frequently limited. Strong monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial to ensure that improvements in overall book availability are leading to improvements in the number of children with access to books and the support they need to use them effectively.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Wane, W., and Martin, G. (2013). Education and health services in Uganda: data for results and accountability—November 2013. Service delivery indicators. Washington DC: World Bank.