

**Evaluation of the Reading
and Leadership
Strengthening in South
African Schools for
Learning during COVID-19
and Beyond (REALS SA)
Programme (2021-2022)**

Final Report

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Title of the action¹:	Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning During Covid-19 and Beyond (REALS SA)
Location(s) of the action	South Africa: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo Provinces
Total duration of the action (months):	24 months
Total Budget for the Action	USD 2 534 382 (Includes UNICEF's contribution of USD 149 982)
Amount (in EUR) of requested EU contribution	EUR 2 Million (Estimated USD 2 384 400)
Objective of the Action	<p>Outcome: The Department of Basic Education, Provincial Departments and Schools are supported to respond to and manage the impact of Covid-19 on education for improved learning outcomes in Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 schools in selected provinces, including a focus on parental involvement and support.</p> <p>Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Department of Basic Education (DBE) efforts on continuity of learning, through traditional and innovative approaches. • Strengthen capacity of key stakeholders in the education sector and enhance access to learning materials. The focus in this area will be enhancing parental engagement, accountability, and leadership for sustainability through capacity building of district officials and School Management Teams on effective leadership during emergency and after (Kwa Zulu Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo).
Target group(s)	<p>Direct</p> <p>Output 1 and 2: 650 Schools</p> <p>Output 1 and 2: 292,500 learners</p> <p>Output 1: 65,000 parents/caregivers</p> <p>Output 1: 4,600 Teachers</p> <p>Output 2: 975 Principals & Deputies (SMT Members)</p> <p>Output 2: 3,250 School Governing Bodies Members (parents/caregivers)</p> <p>Output 2: Circuit Managers & Subject Advisors: 104 officials</p>
Final beneficiaries (direct)	<p>292,500 Learners of which at least 50% are girls</p> <p>4,225 School Governing Body (SGBs) and SMT (3,250 SGB and 975 SMT) majority of which are women</p> <p>65,000 parents</p>
Main areas of intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of the reading recovery programme for better learning outcomes • Support curriculum trimming as part of the overall recovery curriculum programme • Strengthen capacity of key stakeholders in the education sector and enhance access to learning materials

¹ Figures in this table are extracted from the REALS SA Description of Action. As will become visible in the contents of this final report, some figures are subject to have changed during the duration of the programme.

PREFACE

South Africa spends 6.2% of its GDP on education² - the largest allocation compared with other sectors – but its learning outcomes have not been commensurate with this level of spending. The challenge is not enrolment – the country has achieved near universal access to education, with gender parity, at primary and secondary levels. To address historical inequalities of a highly unequal education system inherited from colonialism and Apartheid, the government has prioritised education as a key area of investment and implemented policies and programmes, including the promotion of gender parity in education, i.e., equal access to quality education for all citizens, regardless of their gender. Despite progress, systemic challenges remain, and outcomes are extremely unequal. The majority of primary schools in South Africa are severely under resourced. Other serious challenges in the sector are a lack of accountability and technical capacity in the system. One of the outcomes of concern are literacy: almost a third of South African learners are still functionally illiterate in English by the end of Grade 6.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to make the already glaring inequalities in South Africa even worse. As part of the nationwide lockdown on the economy and social activities, schools in South Africa were closed, with some later shifting to online learning to compensate for the time that had been lost in the school year. While this may not have been a difficult shift for higher-income (quintile 4-5) schools, approximately 74% of children in South Africa attending lower-income (quintile 1, 2 and 3) schools and have limited access to IT resources and internet. Thus, school closures resulted in a devastating loss in teaching and learning time.

In spite of schools reopening, the challenge with learning losses remains and will be difficult to recover. For example, learners who were in Grade 1 in 2020 and lost approximately 4-6 months of learning time. Those same learners would have ideally been in Grade 2 in 2021, and again lost a significant amount of learning time. These losses are already anticipated to have displaced learners and their levels of literacy, especially in relation to previous generations. Even as children returned to school, the need for continued educational and gap bridging support remained a major imperative.

Through a programme called the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS-SA) Programme, UNICEF partnered with the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) to support the continuation of learning, particularly in lower quintile schools; as well as to contribute to the achievement of the DBE's pre-existing strategic ambitions around teaching capacity development and assessment. This is in alignment to UNICEF's cooperation with the DBE on achieving "quality basic education by improving the key determinants that impact the quality of education and educational outcomes...to confront South Africa's reading and numeracy challenges" (UNICEF, 2022). The European Union was the main funder. The National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and three other South African entities acted as implementing partners. The programme focused on three of South Africa's nine provinces (KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape) with direct support to 650 schools in total. The programme consisted of four sub-programmes with mutually reinforcing objectives: Leadership and Management; Recovery curriculum; Reading Recovery; and Assessment for Learning. The programme was implemented from 2021 to 2023.

The evaluation was conducted in early 2023, i.e. towards the end of the implementation period, and focused on the design and implementation of the programme. A mixed-methods approach was employed, drawing on programme documentation and data; seven school case studies; and interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. The report makes recommendations for the final stages of REALS-SA implementation as well as future similar initiatives that may be undertaken by UNICEF, DBE, NECT or others.

² The World Bank (2018) (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=ZA>).

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The evaluation is dedicated to those who are committed to improving education, including educators and funders; may this report provide insight and courage in navigating the complexities of education programmes.

ACRONYMS

AFL	: Assessment for Learning
ATP	: Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS	: Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements
CM	: Circuit Managers
COGTA	: Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COVID-19	: Coronavirus Disease
CSO	: Civil Society Organisation
DAC	: Development Assistance Committee
DBE	: Department of Basic Education
DH	: Department Head
DPME	: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
EC	: Eastern Cape
EFAL	: English First Additional Language
ESC	: Evaluation Steering Committee
EU	: European Union
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GET	: General Education and Training
KZN	: KwaZulu-Natal
L&M	: Leadership and Management
LMS	: Learner Management System
LP	: Limpopo Province
MP	: Mpumalanga Province
MTSF	: Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	: National Development Plan
NECT	: National Education Collaboration Trust
NNSSF	: National Norms and Standards for School Funding
NRC	: National Research Council
NW	: North West Province
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEDS	: Provincial Education Departments
PIRLS	: Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PM	: Project Management
PMT	: Project Management Team
PSA	: Performance Solutions Africa
PSC	: Programme Steering Committee
PSRIP	: Primary School Reading Improvement Programme
QAF	: Quality Assurance Framework
RC	: Recovery Curriculum
REALS SA	: Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South Africa
SA	: Subject Advisor
SABC	: South African Broadcasting Commission
SADTU	: South African Democratic Teachers Union

SGB : School Governing Body
SLA : Service Level Agreement
SMT : Senior Management Team
TOC : Theory of Change
TOR : Terms of Reference
TT : Technical Team
TUT : Tshwane University of Technology
UKZN : University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNEG : United Nations Evaluation Guidelines
UNICEF : United Nations Children's Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South Africa (REALS SA) Programme was conceptualised and implemented in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system and learners. The South African education system was already struggling with underperformance and inequality when Covid-19 crisis and school closures hit, exacerbating the challenges. The loss of learning time, combined with systemic factors and the unprecedented nature of the situation, highlighted the urgent need for support interventions to ensure continued learning. Informed by, and in an attempt to correct this, the REALS SA programme was launched in 2021 in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education (DBE), the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the European Union (EU), with the aim of improving literacy rates and strengthening leadership in the education sector, particularly during times of crises.

The programme focused on quintiles 1, 2, and 3 schools in South Africa, and had several objectives. First, it aimed to support the DBE's efforts to continue learning through both traditional and innovative approaches. Second, it sought to support curriculum trimming as part of a larger curriculum recovery programme, with a focus on developing a quality assurance framework and capacity building. Third, the programme aimed to develop training and coaching programmes for school leadership, governance, and districts, with a focus on accountability, emergency response and parental involvement. Given that this programme was intended as a recovery programme, it did not exclusively work with education officials, but instead focused on building the capacity of caregivers and stakeholders involved in teaching and learning such as principals, teachers, SMT members and education officials. The 4 main workstreams or pillars of the programme were: Reading Recovery; Recovery Curriculum; Assessment for Learning (AfL); and Leadership and Management.

Evaluation objectives

The evaluation focused on the design and implementation of the REALS SA programme, with an aim to understand whether the programme was designed and implemented in a way that would contribute meaningfully to achieving its intended outcomes and inform future educational programmes of a similar nature. The evaluation did not assess the impact of the programme as this is not feasible given the timing of the evaluation and the design of the programme.

Methodology

This was a theory-based evaluation which applied participatory, utilisation-focused and equity approaches. A Theory of Change (ToC) and logical framework were employed to construct the evaluation matrix, which facilitated the tracking of implementation results. A subset of OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability) were applied with a gender and equity analysis framework to capture and report on both dimensions.

The evaluation employed a mixed method approach of both primary and secondary data collection. The evaluation conducted desk reviews of programme documents and wider literature, and conducted focus groups and interviews conducted at both programme and school case study levels, and an online survey. The biggest challenges faced were limited programme monitoring data and documentation, and poor engagement from education officials.

Key findings

In terms of relevance, the REALS SA programme benefited from the collaboration of EU, DBE, UNICEF and the NECT in their respective programme governance and management roles. Leveraging each institution's strengths and positioning, the programme was able to work directly within and through the education system, drawing on the experience of similar work in the South African context, with international funding and expertise. The programme had a logic strong enough to translate into a coherent ToC through a co-creation process with programme stakeholders and role-players. Nevertheless, the programme's design had potential for improvement, particularly due to unmet assumptions, notably underestimating the time required for implementation. Most participants understood the programme's intent. Gender and equity sensitivity was intended in some workstreams, with the recovery curriculum being the only one to explicitly achieve it. Overall, this was a relevant programme whose design aligned with stakeholders and context, yet underestimated risks that strained implementation.

In terms of effectiveness, planned activities were largely successfully implemented, although time constraints impacted completion rates. Most targeted participants were reached, with a few remaining activities that could potentially reach more participants. Where data was available, the training and coaching sessions, as well as the produced materials, have been described as relevant and useful by the recipients. There have been early reports of the training content filtering into daily practices, such as the use of reading resources or school management, although the SMT survey also suggested that it is not always easy to apply leadership training (albeit relevant and easy-to-understand) in a school environment. The materials that have been received are being adequately used, except for the reading resources where training has not been received yet. The effectiveness of the "train the trainer" design in the AfL workstream is uncertain, with an enthusiastic response by those trained, but limited evidence of the education system's ability to facilitate the necessary next layer of implementation without the support of the implementing partner.

In evaluating the efficiency of the programme, it is notable that while there were some successes, there were several challenges that impacted on the quality of programme delivery and allocation of budget for planned activities. The no-cost extension provided some relief, enabling service providers to complete some planned activities that were affected by the delays in implementation. Implementation delays were mainly attributable to contextual factors such as floods, a lack of technological support in some provinces, delays and unavailability of officials, and difficulties in securing approval for dates and venues. These limitations led to sessions being rescheduled and additional funding being required, with insufficient initial budgeting for streaming reading programmes in radio stations and limited reading materials contributing to further budget shortfalls. It also appears that there was inadequate resourcing of a central monitoring function. Despite these challenges, the programme was efficient in delivering some of its activities and relevant outputs, with the use of service providers allowing NECT to deliver on key activities without being overburdened.

Finally, for the likelihood of sustained benefits from capacity building and training, the evidence is uneven across workstreams. Materials that have been developed through the workstreams such as the quality assurance framework (QAF), the reading resource audit and the training modules for school principals, are likely to remain available for use and/or adaptation in the education system post-REALS SA implementation. It remains unclear, however, to what extent there is an intention on the part of national or provincial departments to do so.

In terms of incorporating gender and equity, the programme design was inherently responsive to inequities in that it targeted provinces with persistently poor educational outcomes, high poverty rates, and lower quintiles comprising of no-fee schools. However, it did not include any explicit measures to ensure that

equity and gender considerations were factored into each workstream and accommodated into implementation planning. In other words, despite a gender and equity responsive overall design, the programme did not fully incorporate gender and equity elements in implementation, which could have improved its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the targeted interventions did provide opportunities for vulnerable participants from historically disadvantaged backgrounds and caregivers who are often excluded from educational programmes to participate in their children's education. These efforts aimed to build capacity and empower these individuals, while also promoting inclusivity in the educational system.

Conclusions

The programme's alignment with both EU priorities and the DBE's objectives, coupled with the combined strengths of DBE, UNICEF, and NECT, underscores the importance of collaboration and strategic planning in designing impactful educational initiatives. The programme's positive assessment, particularly in terms of the relevance of materials and capacity-building sessions, indicates largely successful implementation. Early reports of training content influencing daily practices demonstrate early signs of impact, although the evaluation's inability to gauge long-term outcomes suggests the need for continued monitoring and evaluation.

While the programme set ambitious timelines, it encountered challenges related to procurement, delivery, and implementation. Delays in book distribution and the necessity for a no-cost extension highlight the complexities of large-scale projects, especially when confronted with external contextual factors beyond the programme's immediate control. The programme's adaptation to unforeseen circumstances, such as underestimations of expenses and connectivity challenges hampering the use of online modes of delivery, showcases the importance of flexible budget management and the ability to respond to evolving situations. The Lessons Learned section's recommendations for more realistic budgeting demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

Despite its successes, the programme missed opportunities, such as excluding deputy principals from certain training sessions and limited support for certain training initiatives. These gaps underscore the importance of comprehensive inclusivity and support strategies. The focus on creating reusable and adaptable materials offers potential for long-term sustainability within the education system.

Involving education officials in the programme's development and rollout showcases a commitment to engaging key stakeholders. However, the uncertainty surrounding the advancement of certain workstreams by the DBE and PDEs indicates a need for transparent communication and clear plans for the programme's future.

Overall, the REALS SA programme demonstrated the value of collaboration, targeted capacity building, and adaptive management in educational initiatives. While achieving positive outcomes and impactful materials, the programme also highlights the complexities of implementation, the importance of ongoing evaluation, and the potential for sustainable impact within the education system.

Lessons learned

Many of the evaluation insights are best applied as lessons for future programmes of a similar nature by the participating organisations. The following lessons have been identified, informed and supplemented by REALS SA stakeholders:

- **Collaboration across entities:** It appears that the overall arrangements for collaboration between UNICEF, DBE, NECT and the EU were effective, leveraging their strengths, and a similar arrangement may be considered in future.
- **Prioritisation of the programme:** The workstreams were in line with departmental priorities, but the DBE and provincial departments had competing priorities and stretched capacity, affecting their responsiveness and communication, and there are concerns about the commitment to taking the work further. The REALS SA experience nevertheless reinforces the importance of working with and through the system. Further stakeholder reflection should distil lessons on how to do so effectively.
- **Co-designing workstreams:** Collaborative co-design of interventions with provincial departments and even target populations may have resolved logistical challenges and increased ownership and prioritization of the program.
- **Integrated vs. standalone workstreams:** There are advantages and disadvantages to having multiple workstreams as a single programme, and stakeholders should reflect on this to determine what would work best under specific circumstances.
- **Train the trainer model:** Programme experience suggests that a train-the-trainer model is risky, as it involves a longer causal chain and assumes the commitment and capacity of the recipient institution or trainees for further implementation. Therefore assumptions and risks must be carefully articulated and tracked with sufficient space for adaptation.
- **Careful logistical planning:** Logistical realities must be factored into planning for a programme that involves physical travel to schools, in order to set realistic time frames and allocate sufficient resources.
- **Factors conducive to online engagement:** Lessons from the REALS SA programme show that good connectivity, age profiles, digital confidence, relationships between schools and implementers, support from district officials, and general health and performance of the institution are factors that affect online engagement, and if these factors are unconducive, online training should be avoided.
- **Adequate resourcing of monitoring:** The REALS SA programme's reliance on progress reporting for monitoring, with no centralised monitoring and data management and analysis function, was disadvantageous, obscuring the extent of workstreams' convergence on the ground, and undermining the quality of data available for the evaluation, demonstrating the need for investment in a sound monitoring system and human resources to implement it consistently.
- **Gender and equity considerations:** The REALS SA programme's gender and equity considerations highlighted the importance of translating an overall inclusive approach carefully into practicalities of implementation and the content of materials and training to remove barriers to education and promote a more supportive learning environment that ensures all students have access to quality education and promotes diversity and inclusion in the classroom.
- **Radio programmes:** Although the evaluation's evidence was very limited, it appears that radio programmes are not necessarily a high-impact intervention to reach parents in the South African context. Forthcoming listenership reports must help to confirm or disprove this.

Recommendations

Informed by a workshoping process with all REALS SA programme stakeholders, role players and recipients, the report makes recommendations on an exit and sustainability plan, as well as general recommendations for DBE, UNICEF and NECT.

Recommendations for the exit and sustainability strategy are for it to prioritise three objectives: (1) strengthening data on what was achieved and who was reached, (2) responding to gaps in implementation, and (3) working with DBE and PDEs to develop and endorse plans for taking forward each workstream. This is needed in order to manage reputation risk, substantiate claims, and ensure sustained benefit and use. Strengthening data is important to confirm which interventions were received, while responding to gaps in implementation may require distribution of materials. Finally, working with DBE and PDEs is crucial to develop a plan on how to use the materials and assets going forward, ideally integrated into their next draft Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, and budgets for the upcoming MTEF.

In addition to the above, the evaluation recommends five key actions for the EU, UNICEF, DBE and NECT to take forward. Firstly, to build on the collaboration achieved during the REALS SA programme by considering further collaboration to strengthen education outcomes. Secondly, UNICEF should allocate additional resources to mitigate the most salient identified threats to programme effectiveness, including the rollout of AfL training. Thirdly, assess the realisation of outcomes by incorporating data from forthcoming datasets and embarking on a qualitative and potentially case study-based approach. Fourthly, reflect further and articulate more actionable lessons on some of the key programme issues such as multi-workstream programmes, gender and equity, working with and through the education system, and online delivery. Lastly, ensure that the lessons learned are communicated and applied in future programmes through a communications and learning plan.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and purpose of the evaluation

This is the Final Report for the evaluation of the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS SA) programme. This programme was developed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in collaboration with UNICEF, the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the European Union (EU) as a response to the risk and crises incited by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools in South Africa. The programme commenced in 2021 and is scheduled to conclude by mid-2023.

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand whether the REALS SA project was designed and implemented in a way that contributes meaningfully to achieving the intended outcomes, and to inform future programming to make the impact of these outcomes more likely. The programme is evaluated against the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. It does not address the criterion of impact as this would not be feasible given the timing of the evaluation and the design of the programme, but comments on the likely achievement of outcomes based on the quality of implementation.

The evaluation is being conducted at this stage to help programme stakeholders and role players to better understand and the programme theory of change and logic, and to assess programme delivery, procedures, and processes to understand what is happening in practice, how it is happening, and why it is happening. The final evaluation products will be used by the NECT, DBE, UNICEF, and broader members of the education sector to identify lessons learned for similar future projects, including how to better design and implement programmes, and to inform future programme funding decisions.

1.2 Structure of the report

Beginning with an in-depth description of the REALS SA programme, section 2 looks at the context in which the programme was conceptualised, inquiring into the problem statement(s) that triggered the implementation of the programme. It then gives a description of the programme, the programme structure, how sub-programmes relate to the main programme as well as the programme's high-level theory of change.

Section 3 speaks to the evaluation framework and methodology, highlighting that this evaluation is a combination of a design and implementation evaluation. It then discusses the evaluation criteria applied along with the evaluation questions, the evaluation matrix, the evaluation methodology, programme documentation and data that has informed the evaluation to date as well as the primary data collected during the evaluation. Section 3 also focuses on the analytical approaches employed by the evaluation, the ethical considerations applied, as well as the various limitations encountered during the process.

Section 4 presents the findings of the evaluation. It does so by firstly presenting findings in relation to the relevance and sustainability of the programme design, then proceeds to discuss the effectiveness and efficiency of the overall programme implementation. Part of distilling the programme implementation findings is assessing the implementation of each of the four sub-programmes against the evaluation criteria, segueing into the next section.

Section 5 of the report presents the evaluation’s conclusions on the REALS SA programme design and implementation. Section 6 then presents the programme lessons learnt and section 7 presents the programme recommendations distilled through the evaluation.

It is important to note that this final report is preceded by three other reports, namely: the Evaluation Inception Report; Revised Full Inception Report (as approved by the Ethical Review Board), and the Evaluation Fieldwork Report. These offer further details on some aspects of the evaluation design, methodology and data collection.

2 CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE REALS SA PROGRAMME

This section provides a description of the REALS SA programme. It begins by providing contextual information, proceeding to link policy and strategic relevance of the programme, and then finally discusses the programme design inclusive of the ToC.

2.1 Context And Problem Statement

The ability to read is one of the many building blocks for learning, and ensures children get the most out of their schooling. Literacy at the primary school level is the most cost-effective investment in the fight against poverty as it directly tackles unemployment by upskilling people to a level where they can secure a job or start a business and make a meaningful contribution to society (Help2Read, 2022). Future learning depends on the ability to read for meaning and pleasure, and the fundamental understanding of the relation between print and spoken language that comes with this ability (Spaull & Draper, 2015). In order to be able to read to learn, children must be able to “decode text relatively fluently and accurately; this is a prerequisite for learning higher order literacy skills such as the comprehension of text and assimilation [absorption] of knowledge communicated in text” (Meiklejohn et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, the opportunity of learning to read for meaning as well as with fluency, accuracy and comprehension is scarce for the majority of South African children. Spaull & Draper (2015) find that “whether children are tested in their home language or in English, the conclusions are the same: the vast majority of South African children cannot read for meaning by the end of Grade 4 – even in their home language – and almost a third are still functionally illiterate in English by the end of Grade 6”.

In the South African context, the difficulties involved in making this transition from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’ are compounded by the change in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) that most South African learners experience when they progress into the intermediate phase, or Grade 4. Given this reality, ideally one of the most common types of literacy interventions employed in South Africa, similar to the global trend, should be early grade reading interventions (Meiklejohn et al., 2021). Graham & Kelly (2019) define these as “interventions that employ a combination of five components: at a minimum, they must train teachers to teach reading using simplified instructional techniques and evidence-based curricula. In addition, they typically include in-class coaching and the provision of instructional guidelines, instructional materials, or tools for student assessment” (Meiklejohn et al., 2021).

While the country spends 6.2% of its GDP on education³ - the largest allocation compared to other sectors - the learning outcomes have not been commensurate with this level of spending. High rates of grade repetition are observed in Grades 1, 8 and 11, signalling potential inadequacies in preparing children for curriculum-related challenges, most especially with respect to reading acquisition. Furthermore, a historic failure to problematise the material conditions of marginalised children's lives is a shortcoming of literacy policy, hence the continuation of largely unequal schooling (Meiklejohn et al., 2021). The majority of primary schools in South Africa are severely under resourced. Two or three books are shared between an entire classroom of learners, while writing utensils and literacy resources are scarce (Help2Read, 2022). Few children from poor township communities have books at home, and libraries are often too far away for these learners to access on a regular basis, if at all. Other serious challenges in the sector are a lack of accountability and technical capacity in the system, which continue to threaten the already poor quality of education outcomes.

In a strategic attempt to address the varying challenges within under-resourced communities, the schooling quintile system was introduced. Predicated on the unemployment rate and literacy rate of the community in which the school is located, the development of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) aimed to improve equity in the funding of education by ranking each school into one of five quintiles. A Quintile 1 ranking indicates a poor/impoorished school, and a Quintile 5 ranking indicates a wealthy/affluent school (Department of Education, 2006). The reasoning behind this notion is that schools serving poor communities (Quintiles 1, 2 and 3) should receive more state funding than schools serving wealthier communities (van Dyk & White, 2019).

Learners from Quintile 4 and 5 schools often perform better than learners from Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools (Ferguson, Bovaird & Mueller, 2007). Furthermore, rural children and poor children in South Africa perform worse than children from other African countries living under similar circumstances, despite better access to resources, better-qualified teachers and lower learner/educator ratios in South Africa. Similarly, based on data from the PIRLS on Grade 5 reading assessment and dividing schools based on their medium of instruction (English or Afrikaans vs. African language), learners from schools using African Languages as a medium of instruction perform lower than those from English/Afrikaans medium schools (Taylor & Yu, 2009).

Despite SA achieving near universal access to education, with gender parity, at primary and secondary levels, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened to make the already glaring inequalities in South Africa even worse. The COVID-19 pandemic represented the biggest shock to the global public health system in over a century with resounding impact on economies and societies. The pandemic created uncertainties that led countries to take bold actions to safeguard public health, such as "complete lockdowns of economies and social activities" (COGTA & UNDP South Africa, 2020). Poor households and communities have carried the greater burden of the pandemic's impact, particularly within the schooling environment.

As part of the nationwide lockdown on the economy and social activities, schools in South Africa were closed, with some later shifting to online learning in order to compensate for the time that had been lost in the school year. While this may not have been a difficult shift for Quintile 4 and 5 schools, Quintile 1-3 schools were disproportionately affected by the school closures as they generally have poor infrastructure and IT connectivity (UNICEF, 2021a). With approximately 74% of children in South Africa attending Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, school closures resulted in a devastating loss in teaching and learning time. All schools were closed from the third week of March through to 31 August 2020, with subsequent limited, phased return of learners to classes, meaning over 40% of school days were lost for most children in 2020 because

³ The World Bank (2018) (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=ZA>).

of the pandemic. The missed school days have threatened the many gains towards remedying the already sub-optimal outcomes for children in SA.

The Covid-19 crisis and school closure has brought havoc on the already underperforming and unequal South African education system. The loss of learning time⁴, coupled with the compounding factors of the sector (highlighted above) and the constraints of schools having to deal with an unprecedented situation, underscores the crucial need for support interventions for continuation of learning. More than 13 million children were affected by the closure of schools with a further 9 million children who normally benefit from the government school-feeding programme not having access to a nutritious meal during the periods of complete school closure, and on some days during the partial return to school. In addition, school health programmes have been disrupted and some children are more vulnerable to abuse and violence outside of the learning environment (UNICEF, 2021a). While distance-learning mechanisms are continuously being implemented, they are disadvantaging those without internet access or adult supervision.

In spite of schools reopening, the challenge with learning losses remains and will be difficult to recover. For example, learners who are currently in Grade 3 were in Grade 1 in 2020 and lost approximately 4-6 months of learning time. Those same learners were in Grade 2 in 2021 and again lost a significant amount of learning time. These losses are already anticipated to have displaced learners and their levels of literacy, especially in relation to previous generations. It is recognised that even as children return to school, the need for continued educational support remains a major imperative.

2.2 Policy and strategic relevance

The urgency of implementing the programme was underscored by a convergence of crucial factors, including recovering lost learning time. The proposed intervention aligned seamlessly with the revised "Education for Employability" (E4E) Financing Agreement between the EU and the Government of South Africa, a commitment that gained significance within the multifaceted context of the crisis (European Commission, 2018). Beyond its classification as a health crisis, the far-reaching ramifications of COVID-19 encompassed economic, security, educational, humanitarian, and human rights dimensions. Globally, substantial evidence indicated that the COVID-19-induced learning losses were anticipated to endure over an extended period. Under the umbrella of the UNICEF Emergency Appeal, a vital contribution agreement was envisaged between UNICEF and the EU Delegation in South Africa, aimed at supporting the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in its comprehensive response to COVID-19 through the E4E initiative.

This programme manifested with a sense of immediacy, as it sought to empower schools to address and mitigate the educational fallout of COVID-19. Support for the DBE encompassed a spectrum of interventions, ranging from reading recovery to curriculum catch-up and wider systems strengthening. The UNICEF Emergency Appeal (2020) operated with a twofold objective, centering on the immediate exigencies of school closures and extending its purview to the post-closure phase. Collaborating closely with governmental bodies, the private sector, and civil society, the programme sought to bridge educational gaps and facilitate curriculum catch-up. An illustrative instance of this collaboration was evident in the partnership with the Children's Radio Foundation (UNICEF, 2021a), facilitating the development and dissemination of educational messages through youth-friendly radio media, as exemplified by the production of radio episodes for the REALS SA programme.

⁴ Lack of play opportunities due to COVID confinement- resulted in further psychological trauma for children, with attendant need for psychosocial support for learners, which is one of the prioritised activities by UNICEF using a separate stream of financial support.

Further accentuating the urgency, the programme extended its impact through capacity support and system strengthening of the DBE. This included the provision of embedded technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures, offering comprehensive guidance to educational institutions on preparing for the eventual reopening of schools. The convergence of these diverse elements underscored the pressing need to execute the programme promptly, acknowledging the intricate and evolving challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis while pursuing avenues for educational continuity, recovery, and enhanced resilience.

In addition to the international relevance, the DBE has various institutional programmes that are being implemented, guided by the DBE Action Plan to 2024. The Action Plan is intended to “guide the system, in part explaining where the problems lie, and how the various solutions are interconnected” (Department of Basic Education, 2020). It supports Chapter 9 of the National Development Plan (NDP) and is moreover aligned with the 2019 to 2024 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) of the Presidency. The Action Plan guides a number of education-specific plans, in particular the five-year strategic plans of the ten departments dealing with basic education, as well as the annual performance plans of these departments.

Of the five institutional programmes being implemented by the department as part of achieving the Action Plan, the REALS SA programme is in direct alignment with two. The first of the two is Programme 3, which focuses on Teachers, Education Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements. This programme has the overarching aim of “promoting quality teaching and institutional performance through the effective supply, development and utilization of human resources in the basic education sector” (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Sub-programmes include Teacher and Professional Development and Curriculum and Professional Development, which are directly aligned to sub-programmes of the REALS SA programme.

The second relevant programme, Programme 4, focuses on Planning, Information and Assessment with the overarching responsibility of promoting quality and effective service delivery in the basic education system through planning, implementation and assessment. The indicators in this programme are fundamentally directed towards “quality improvements, assessments and physical and financial planning” (Department of Basic Education, 2021). Main outcomes of this programme are to maintain and develop information and other systems which enable transformation and an efficient and accountable sector, and conducting strategic interventions to assist and develop provincial education systems (Department of Basic Education, 2021).

Looking at international development frameworks and commitments, the REALS SA programme is well aligned to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). The programme is in direct alignment with goals 4 and 8. Respectively, these goals are to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” as well as to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

By aligning with the abovementioned SDGs, the programme continues the thread of alignment through to the abovementioned E4E Financing Agreement. In keeping with a joint approach to solving challenges in respective countries as exemplified by the above financing agreement, UNICEF is supporting the South African education sector through interventions that are in line with the Education Component of the UN Emergency Flash Appeal. Recognizing that the Covid-19 pandemic was a global challenge, UNICEF advocated for the challenge to be addressed through an inclusive approach based on international solidarity and cooperation among all stakeholders. Complementary to government’s three-pronged strategy, the Emergency Appeal for South Africa “prioritises the response necessary to address the immediate public health crisis and the secondary impacts of the pandemic” (United Nations South Africa, 2020). The appeal was developed to support the existing coordination efforts of government, stakeholders and other partners with the aim to ensure efficient and effective prevention and response to identified national priorities.

In summary, by achieving direct alignment to policy-related issues, the REALS SA programme is strategically relevant for organisations in the following ways:

EU: Through active participation, collaborative decision-making, and flexible procedures, the EU has established a robust partnership with the DBE, aligning with both national objectives, such as the E4E initiative, and global imperatives. This engagement not only enhances the programme's design and implementation but also showcases the EU's commitment to addressing dynamic challenges, exemplified by the redirection of funds during the COVID-19 crisis. The EU's strategic contributions resonate with the programme's adaptable nature, ensuring its efficacy in tackling multifaceted crises while fostering a cohesive approach towards achieving overarching goals (UNICEF, 2021).

UNICEF: By partaking in the REALS SA programme, UNICEF is providing support to the South African government on the continuation of learning, particularly in lower quintile schools. This is in alignment to UNICEF's cooperation with the DBE on achieving "quality basic education by improving the key determinants that impact the quality of education and educational outcomes...to confront South Africa's reading and numeracy challenges" (UNICEF, 2022). By doing so, the organisation ensures the stabilisation of the education sector for learners and teachers, and further addresses the newfound need to depend on other forms of media for educational purposes. Finally, there is a generation of lessons in relation to implementing interventions in the worst contexts by implementing the pilot programme in lower quintile schools.

DBE: The DBE's participation in the REALS SA programme addresses literacy issues, the issue of recovery of learning in schools, the strengthening of the capacity of the education system, the promotion of parental participation in education as well as the upscaling of programmes that are directly aligned to departmental strategic thrusts.

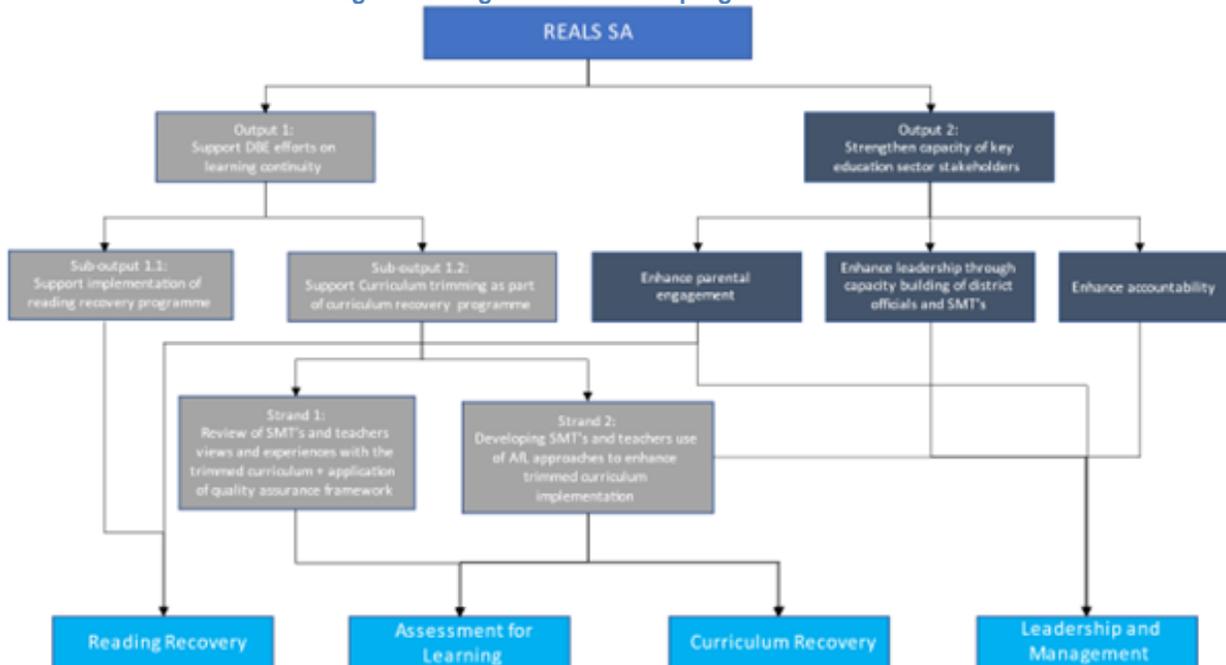
NECT: Finally, for the NECT, this programme will assist with achieving long-term improvements in the education sector generated by a short-term programme.

2.3 Programme description

Considering the South African education sector context, in line with their policies and strategies, and in response to the COVID-19 crisis, the DBE, in collaboration with UNICEF, the NECT and with funding from the EU, developed the REALS SA school support programme to be implemented in 2021 and 2022. The programme aimed to cover 650 primary schools in Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 (i.e. schools in low income communities) across the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Eastern Cape (EC) and Limpopo (LP) (of South Africa's nine provinces, these have relatively large rural populations).

The objective of the programme was to ensure that the Department of Basic Education, Provincial Departments and schools are supported to respond to and manage the impact of Covid-19 on education for improved learning outcomes, including a focus on parental involvement and support.

Figure 1: Programme and Sub-programme Structure



As depicted in Figure 1, the programme design was structured around two main programme “outputs”. While activities have been separated under two main strands, the anticipated outcomes will have varying levels of relevance across all strands and sub-strands. It is worth noting at this point that while the programme refers to these as outputs, the evaluation categorised them as outcomes. This is due to the evaluative definition of ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’; the former refers to products that result directly from activities, such as tangible materials, whereas the latter refers to changes in behaviour and practices as a result of the produced output. Given the nature of what the programme describes as outputs – which are overall systemic changes through capacitation and provision of support using the materials produced through the planned activities – the programme outputs are in fact programme outcomes.

The first strand of the programme was the provision of support to the Department of Basic Education’s efforts on continuity of learning through traditional and innovative approaches by supporting the implementation of the reading recovery programme for better learning outcomes (sub output 1.1) and curriculum trimming as part of the overall recovery curriculum programme (sub output 1.2). The second output was strengthened capacity of key stakeholders in the education sector and enhanced access to learning materials. The focus in this area was on enhancing parental engagement, accountability, and leadership for sustainability through capacity building of district officials and SMT’s on effective leadership during emergencies and after.

The REALS SA programme was further broken down into sub-programmes (also referred to as workstreams) focused on achieving the two main programme outputs. The sub-programmes were that of Reading Recovery, Assessment for Learning, Recovery curriculum as well as Leadership and Management. Each had a defined set of activities which were implemented by a service provider, working closely with the provincial education departments (PEDs) and other REALS SA stakeholders.

A wide range of activities including radio broadcasts with reading content, provision of storybooks, a parent intervention to support reading at home and training of subject advisors and SMTs to support and monitor curriculum delivery were planned as part of programme implementation. With these activities, the REALS SA programme supported the implementation of the reading recovery programme for better learning

outcomes, curriculum trimming⁵ as part of the overall recovery curriculum programme and strengthening the capacity of education sector stakeholders for improved learning outcomes in no fee schools in the selected provinces. The sub-programmes are summarised in Table 1 below and will be further expanded on in section 2.5. Information summarised below is sourced from the service level agreements between the service providers and REALS SA programme implementors, as well as REALS SA programme planning documentation.

⁵ Curriculum trimming simply refers to the process of reducing the content to be covered in the school curriculum given the remaining time in the school year.

Table 1: Summary of REALS SA workstreams

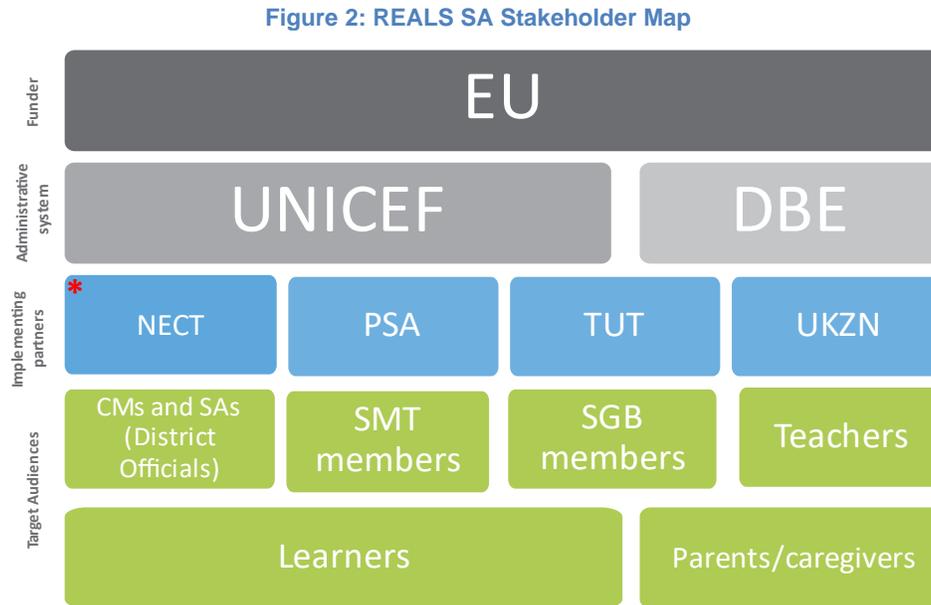
	Leadership and Management	Reading Recovery	Recovery Curriculum	Assessment for Learning
Strategic Rationale	Building institutional capacity and resilience of the education sector from departmental down to school level	A quick programme responding to the loss of reading opportunities by providing reading resources, radio broadcasts, and enhancing teacher and parent involvement	A programme to assess whether the current school curriculum is adequate and relevant for the next 10 – 50 years and how it has, and will, affect learner performance	A programme to capacitate districts to enhance support provided to all schools and teachers to improve learning for all learners through improved use of formative assessment.
Anticipated results/benefits	Enhanced school leadership, governance and district officials' capacity to lead during times of crises, through increased accountability measures and parental involvement; increased monitoring of the curriculum and reading recovery through the management of reading resources.	Addressing reading recovery through creating a storybook package for learners in lower quintile schools, as well as possible radio broadcast programmes related to reading	The reduction of teaching and learning losses by providing tools and support for teachers to implement the recovery curriculum/the Annual Teaching Plans (ATPs)	Provision of support to teachers to improve their lesson planning, preparation, and presentation, identify what learners know, understand and can do, and better support ALL learners to address their learning needs
Implementing Partner	Performance Solutions Africa	Independent Consultant	University of KwaZulu-Natal	Tshwane University of Technology
Target Groups	School Governing Bodies (SGBs), School Management Teams (SMTs), District Education Officials, parents	Teachers, learners, and parents	Subject Advisors, Provincial Coordinators, and teachers for GET languages, Mathematics and Science	Subject Advisors
Key Activities⁶	Develop training and coaching programmes for school leadership, governance and districts on Accountability, Emergency response, and Parental involvement	Audit the use of storybooks available in each language at each level as well as reading programmes broadcast on radio	Review the recovery curriculum for coherence, concept, and content gaps	Provide appropriate materials for Subject Advisors to develop their Assessment for Learning knowledge and skills
	Training and coaching of SMTs, SGBs, district officials and parents	Create primary book bags per language per geographical area aligned with broadcast materials	Develop a Quality Assurance Framework (tools) to monitor and improve recovery curriculum	Train Subject Advisors on the use of Assessment for Learning practices

⁶ Source: (UNICEF, 2021a)

	Leadership and Management	Reading Recovery	Recovery Curriculum	Assessment for Learning
		Provide materials to guide parents on learner reading support	Support monitoring and tracking the implementation of curriculum trimming (quality assuring the implementation)	Develop and Maintain the Learner Management System
		Procure bulk printing nationally	Enhance Capacity of subject advisors to support school leaders' and teachers' implement the recovery curriculum through the effective use of assessment for learning approaches that address learners' learning needs and improve learning outcome	
		Support existing / new broadcast programmes		

2.4 Programme stakeholders

Figure 2 below gives an overview of the stakeholders in the REALS SA programme. It is important to note that this diagram is not intended to show how programme stakeholders interact, which is captured in Figure 2 **Error! Reference source not found.** as well as in the programme theory.

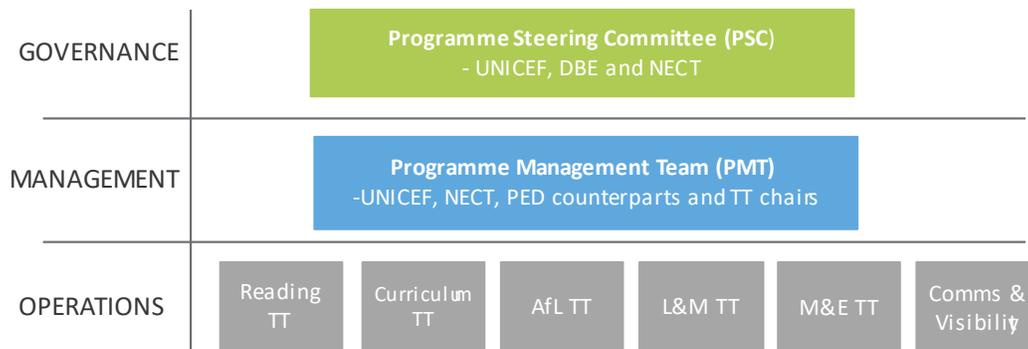


As depicted above:

- The EU is the (main) programme funder.
- UNICEF is the programme fiduciary, and is accountable for the overall project design, implementation, monitoring, budget as well as communication and visibility associated with the programme.
 - o The DBE is the South African government department that owns the intervention. Together, the DBE and UNICEF form the administrative layer of the programme .
- The NECT, PSA, TUT and UKZN are the programme’s implementing partners. The NECT has been noted with a red asterisk as it is the only implementing partner involved in programme governance, as will be discussed in the implementation arrangements.
- Finally, the programme is intended to reach Circuit Managers (CMs) and Subject Advisors (SAs) in their capacities as district officials, Senior Management Team (SMT) members from schools, School Governing Body (SGB) members, schoolteachers as well as learners and their parents / caregivers.
- These stakeholders, apart from the funder and target audience, then form various structures that handle different aspect of programme implementation. As shown in Figure 3 below:
 - o The Programme Steering Committee (PSC) comprises of DBE, the NECT and UNICEF and meets every quarter. This structure is responsible for overall REALS SA strategy and governance
- The Programme Management Team (PMT) comprises of UNICEF, the NECT, a PED counterpart from each of the targeted provinces, as well as DBE officials who serve as chairpersons of the Technical Teams (TTs). This structure is responsible for programme coordination.

- Finally, programme operations were overseen by six technical teams, also referred to as TTs. There are 4 respective technical teams for each of the sub-programmes, one for monitoring and evaluation, and one for programme Communications and Visibility.

Figure 3: Implementation Arrangements



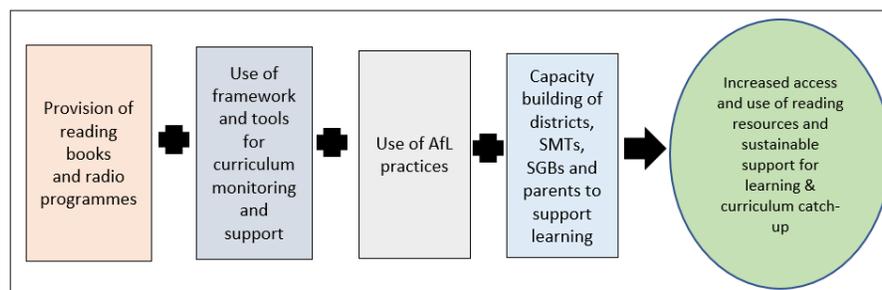
(Source: adapted from NECT documentation)

2.5 High-level Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC)⁷ is “a tool that describes the process of planned change, from the assumptions that guide its design, the planned outputs and outcomes to the long-term impacts it seeks to achieve” (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2011). A ToC expresses the underlying logic or reasoning of a programme, explaining what it seeks to achieve and why it is expected that the programmes activities will achieve it.

The REALS SA programme has a simplified ToC that demonstrates the combination of four workstreams to achieve outcomes.

Figure 1 Theory of change for the REALS SA programme



For the purpose of evaluation, a more detailed high level ToC was developed as well as workstream specific ones. To commence this process, a situational analysis was completed during the inception phase of the programme, including a desktop review of existing programme and relevant documentation, which further explained why the REALS SA programme was conceptualized. The evaluation also interacted with additional information such as relevant scholarship on education in South Africa, other evidence from

⁷ For the purpose of this report, “theory of change” and “programme theory” are used interchangeably.

policies, and results from similar interventions. The most crucial step was that of stakeholder engagement – individual interviews as well as a workshop with programme stakeholders – to ensure that the understanding of how the intervention was intended to work was indeed correct and depicted adequately on the summary diagram below.

To reiterate, the main goal of the programme was to support the DBE’s interventions geared towards reading recovery, curriculum catch-up and system strengthening for the immediate period of school closures and for the post-closure duration. The focus in these stages was in-line with learner support programmes for online and broadcast support resources, capacity support and system strengthening of the DBE through recovery curriculum as well as strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders (UNICEF, 2021a).

Figure 4: REALS SA High-level ToC

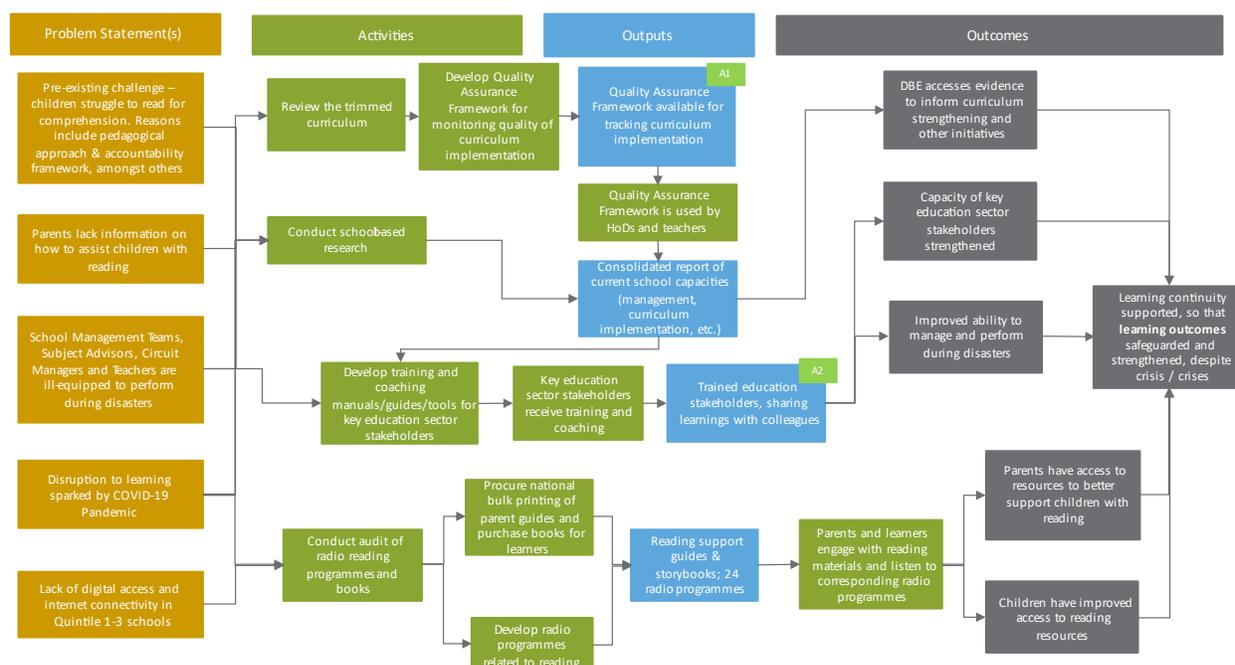


Figure 4 is the overview ToC for the REALS SA programme, depicting the overall causal logic for the various components addressed by the programme itself. While the components appear interrelated in the overall ToC, individual activities and outputs for each of the subsequent workstreams were designed to work independently of each other except for close integration of the Reading Recovery workstream’s provision of books, with the “Leading for Reading” capacity building delivered through the Leadership and Management workstream. This was discussed in Evaluation Inception Report Version B and will be made clearer in the discussion of the findings in section 4.3.

While the majority of the problem statements were highlighted by the circumstance of the COVID-19 pandemic, they had been historic issues plaguing the South African education sector. These problem statements are expanded on in further detail in the subsequent workstream-specific ToCs; however, they are in relation to issues such as the extent of the lack of digital access and internet connectivity in quintile 1-3 schools, an overall disruption to learning due to the school closures in line with national lockdown regulations during the pandemic, as well as the incapacitation of school leadership structures and members thereof to lead adequately during times of crises. Other setbacks include the pre-existing challenge of

children struggling to read for comprehension due to incorrect pedagogical approaches and dysfunctional accountability frameworks within schools, which is linked to the final problem statement represented on the diagram of parents not having enough information on how to assist children with reading at home.

The specification of the problem statements set into motion a series of activities directed towards addressing these issues. The first activity was to conduct a review of the trimmed curriculum that had been implemented since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The review of the curriculum shed light on how it was being received by teachers, school leaders and learners, while also highlighting any content and concept gaps that may have formed as part of the curriculum trimming process. Information received from the review assisted with the development of a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for continuing to monitor the quality of the trimmed curriculum and its implementation. This resulted in a QAF being available for use by school officials, and it was assumed that it would be (A1) comprehensive enough for beneficiaries to begin using it.

After sufficient time had passed, a report on current school capacities in relation to curriculum implementation was to be compiled informed by the results from the QAF. This, together with school-based research conducted for the purpose of developing a baseline for the programme was to produce a consolidated report of current school capacities looking at all aspects from school management abilities to curriculum implementation. This consolidated report was then intended to inform the development of training and coaching materials and workshops to ensure that school leadership and teachers are trained in the areas that have been identified as shortcomings by the consolidated report as well as the original problem statements of the programme.

Once the training and coaching programmes and materials had been developed, key education stakeholders were the recipients of the specified training and coaching programmes, resulting in trained stakeholders. The attached assumption (A2) to the training was that it would be delivered in such a way that would make it easier for trainees to later become trainers to colleagues, efficiently sharing learnings and approaches with colleagues. The short-term outcome from training the key education sector officials is that their capacity is strengthened, as well as an increased ability to manage and perform during times of crises or disaster. The consolidated report of school capacities also then becomes evidence that the DBE has access to for the purpose of informing curriculum strengthening and other initiatives.

The final set of activities is related to the issues of access to technological and reading resources. The programme conducted a survey of radio reading programmes and books. This audit was then followed by another activity of developing radio programmes that are related to reading, as well as procuring national bulk printing arrangements for the production of parent guides as well as purchasing books for learners. The output from these three activities combined is the availability of reading support guides for parents, storybooks and books for learners as well as 24 radio programmes related to reading materials.

A major activity following the production of the reading support resources is the learners and parents engaging with said materials. This activity is important as there are various factors that could potentially break the causal link between the two ToC components, such as whether or not households have access to the radio, if they listen to the radio at all, if parents have the time and required levels of literacy to effectively engage with the guides, and whether or not parents or learners are interested in improving their reading capabilities.

The short-term outcome from the parents and learners engaging with their respective materials adequately is that parents will then have access to resources that help them better support their children with reading, as well as children having improved access to reading resources.

The DBE having access to evidence to inform policy decisions, increased capacity of key education sector stakeholders to lead and manage, and increased access of parents and learners to reading resources ultimately culminate in learning continuity being supported so that learning outcomes are safeguarded and strengthened despite times of crises.

3 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation Design

The evaluation type was a combination of **design and implementation**, while the evaluation methodology was **mixed-methods**.

Design evaluations are defined by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) as exercises that are conducted after an intervention has been designed, focusing on “analysing the theory of change as well as the inner logic and consistency of a programme” (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014). Implementation evaluations, also referred to as process evaluations, are assessments of “programme delivery, strategies, procedures and processes, with the aim of answering questions about what is happening in practice, how it is happening and why it is happening” (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014).

A mixed-method approach including quantitative and qualitative research methods was used to adequately answer both design and implementation questions. A mixed methods design is appropriate for answering research questions that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods could answer alone and can be used to gain a better understanding of connections or contradictions between qualitative and quantitative data. The possibility of statistically calculating and attributing impact was eliminated both due to the non-randomised nature of intervention rollout, and the timing of the evaluation during the period when results were expected to be realized up to the level of early outcomes, at best.

A case study approach was also utilized. The case studies produced qualitative perspectives on how and why the REALS programme worked or hasn't worked under certain conditions. In addition, the case studies were intended to understand the context in which the programme has been working in such a way to elicit lessons for future programmes of this nature. Furthermore, the case studies provided a closer perspective on overall programme wide data.

The evaluation design and main parameters remained largely consistent with the original evaluation Terms of Reference, with some adjustments to the evaluation questions. Furthermore, it was agreed that a single report judging both the programme's design and implementation would be more appropriate than two separate reports on design and implementation respectively. Evaluation time frames were adjusted to accommodate an extension in the project's implementation time frames from December 2022 to June 2023.

3.2 Evaluation Scope

The scope of the REALS SA evaluation included a comprehensive assessment of the programme's management arrangements, financial agreement, organizational alignments, strategic coherence, and workstream-related strategies. The evaluation assessed the operational aspects overseen by the EU and UNICEF, and further explored the dynamic organizational relationships such as the indirect link with the NECT and higher education institutions. It scrutinized the strategic coherence of the programme, and analysed the implementation strategies across various workstreams. The assessment also highlighted

challenges in reporting, deviations from core objectives, and the programme’s impact in addressing urgent educational needs. The full period of implementation was in scope (2021 to July 2023), and all three provinces. As a design and implementation evaluation, a rigorous evaluation of the outcomes and impact were not in scope, and some recommendations are made in this regard.

3.3 Evaluation Criteria and questions

The original Terms of Reference (TOR) included 26 questions. These were slightly amended during the inception phase of the evaluation process, with the approval of the evaluation steering committee, to allow for more comprehensive assessment of implementation and the equity considerations. The high level evaluation questions are listed below. The full set are included in the appendix.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and Questions

DESIGN	
1.	Relevance: To what extent is the programme’s objectives and design responsive to beneficiaries’ needs. Is the REALS SA theory of change designed in a manner that is likely to lead to the anticipated results?
2.	Sustainability: to what extent are the net benefits from the programme likely to continue
IMPLEMENTATION	
3.	Effectiveness: To what extent has the programme achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results? To what extent we the REALS SA interventions implemented with fidelity
4.	Relevance: To what extent were the REALS SA programme’s interventions relevant?
5.	Efficiency: To what extent were the programme’s interventions undertaken in an economic manner? This being the efficient conversion of inputs into outputs and outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 Evaluation planning

It was agreed during inception that it would be suitable for the evaluation to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including focus groups, interviews, surveys, and analysis of programme documents and data. With this broad approach confirmed, the evaluation team (in consultation with the steering committee) developed two tools - an evaluation matrix and logical framework - to aid in the planning of the evaluation methods, data collection and analysis. The evaluation matrix, which is attached as an annexure, showed the methods by which each of the evaluation questions would be addressed and criteria to be applied.

The logical framework set out indicators in relation to each workstream. It drew, where possible, on an original draft logical framework which had not been updated since the programme commenced. The team designed at least one quantitative indicator for each activity, output, and early outcome, as well as for selected critical assumptions, which were mapped onto the Theory of Change diagrams. Because the evaluation focused on the programme’s design and early implementation, priority was given to data collection at the activity, output, and early outcome levels. Although the logical framework was circulated to several stakeholders reviewed and approved by the steering committee, in practice a number of the anticipated datasets proved not to exist, as discussed in the next sections.

3.4.2 Data collection

The main data collection phase began on February 6th, 2023, after introductory interviews were conducted in the first part of 2022.

The primary data collection phase comprised of four components:

1. School case studies (6 schools) involving interviews and focus groups with school management, staff and parents (February 2023)
2. Semi-structured interviews with programme stakeholders (February to April 2023);
3. Focus groups with programme stakeholders (February to April 2023); and
4. An electronic survey of Senior Management Team (SMT) members (distributed using WhatsApp) (February to March 2023).

Each of these is discussed very briefly here. More details on respondents and response rates are provided in the Annexure. See the Fieldwork Report for full details on all aspects of data collection, including sampling and logistics, a summary of documents and data collected, and the names of organisations, schools and respondents.

For the **school case studies**, the evaluation team visited six schools across the three targeted provinces, with two schools in each province. The final sample of six schools includes a spread of quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools, including one special school (these are classified as quintile 0). A seventh school had been targeted in KwaZulu-Natal, but for logistical and resource reasons, this school was dropped.

The **interviews and focus groups with programme stakeholders** were all conducted virtually. Most of these sessions were implemented successfully, with 11 respondents participating in 7 sessions overall. However, the failure to interview DBE Provincial officials from KZN and Limpopo is an important gap. Only half of the planned focus groups were executed successfully with the intended stakeholders – limiting the insight from circuit managers and Task Team members in particular – and some online interviews and focus groups with key stakeholder groups remained outstanding even after extending the data collection phase by two weeks.

The **electronic survey** was aimed at all SMT members of all the REALS-SA schools. In practice, because NECT did not have a full consolidated database of programme participants, the contact numbers were sourced from Performance Solutions Africa (PSA) based on those who had (up until March 2023) participated in PSA's workshops. As a result, the survey results over-represent principals and under-represent some districts in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. Nevertheless, 230 respondents participated, and the respondents are distributed quite evenly across provinces.

Documents and data were also sourced, in addition to the primary data collected as part of the fieldwork. The objective was to assess the relevant documentation pertaining to the implementation of REALS SA and the corresponding institutional arrangements. However, the reader should note some gaps in the documentation that was available for the evaluation. After several rounds of correspondence and efforts on PDG's as well as NECT's part, it has been confirmed that the data available to the evaluation team is complete in terms of what exists and that remaining gaps are a result of limitations in record keeping, not withholding of data.

There are three types of data limitations that the reader should note. Firstly, a detailed level of interrogation of monitoring data was not possible as originally anticipated in the logical framework⁸. There is no consolidated description of the monitoring system nor a consolidated record of performance against the indicators laid out in the original draft logical framework. The monitoring data shared among the participating organisations consists mainly of progress reports by implementing partners, which summarises their progress in relation to key activities (rather than, for instance, sharing individual attendance registers). Secondly, no entity was responsible for consolidation and record keeping of monitoring data across all programme components⁹. As a result, there was no systematic record keeping at the centre of the programme; for instance, many documents were forwarded to the evaluation team from emails rather than through sharing of a consolidated, structured and clearly named folder or repository. There were no meeting minutes for task team meetings and inconsistent record keeping on REALS SA update meetings.

Thirdly, there is no documentation specifying gender disaggregation, except for two presentations from one implementing partner.

Overall, the data collection phase was adequately executed in terms of ethics, and a good response rate was achieved in the school case studies and survey. The available data is largely adequate to fulfill the evaluation questions. However, the data gaps mentioned above limit the evaluation team's ability to triangulate data on some of the more detailed aspects of the programme. Where remaining gaps are pertinent to the strength of evaluative judgements, it is noted in the sections that follow.

3.4.3 Ethical considerations

The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines. A detailed discussion of how each ethical principle would be applied was included in the Inception Report; and this report and full data collection instruments and procedures were approved by an Ethics Review Board before being implemented. The main ethical considerations in this evaluation were to remove personal identifiers in data collection instruments, avoid power imbalances within data collection sessions, ensure sensitivity to socioeconomic background of participants, and ensure gender and equity considerations, as well as to ensure informed voluntary consent from interviewees, focus group participants, and survey participants. Below follows a brief discussion of the most salient steps taken to uphold the ethical principles.

Approval of data collection plan and instruments. The data collection plan was shared with the evaluation steering committee, REALS-SA implementing partners, and UNICEF's ethical review service provider. Ethical approval was received after incorporating verbal and written comments from stakeholders and detailed feedback from the ethical review board.

Inclusion of special schools. The evaluation guidelines and ethical guidelines emphasized the inclusion of special schools. Two special schools were sampled, and only one was successfully visited as a case

⁸ Initially, the plan was to use data required to be generated and submitted to NECT by implementation partners per Service Level Agreements, such as attendance registers, participant evaluation forms, and lists of completed activities. However, it became apparent that implementation partners do not submit these types of documents to NECT. Instead, they provide summary figures on their progress in the implementation of key project tasks, as part of "update" meetings and in periodic reports.

⁹ As far as the evaluation team can ascertain, the reason for having no single consolidated set of programme monitoring data is that the M&E budget was reallocated to each of the service providers across the workstreams to monitor their own activities (refer to section 4.2.2 for further budgetary discussion). This led to a lack of awareness of what monitoring data was available from implementing partners. Hence NECT did not monitor overall activities across all service providers and there was no systematic way to track outstanding documentation and monitoring data from partners.

study. Although not representative, this case provided unique insight into how the REALS SA programme played out in a special school while the other five schools brought out nuances of non-special schools.

Ethics and Gender Sensitivity Workshop. The fieldwork team conducted a workshop with the designated ethics officer (a senior member of the evaluation team) to discuss potential ethical issues and gender considerations before school visits and how to mitigate and manage them.

Anonymity of participants: In terms of the treatment of personal identifying information, the qualitative data obtained during the inception phase and collected during the fieldwork phase (interviews, attendance registers, meeting minutes, etc.) included personal information such as names of participants, but the names of participants were not quoted by name in the report. No names were captured for the school-based respondents as it was not necessary. Secondary data such as attendance registers from programme activities, progress reports, and lists of participating schools and individuals were also treated confidentially, and analysis was presented in aggregate form so as not to render any individuals identifiable in the report.

Obtaining consent in engagements. The fieldwork team obtained verbal consent from participants at the beginning of each session for virtual interviews and focus groups, while case study engagements were conducted in person with signed consent from participants. The sampling strategy included the selection of backup schools in case a school opted not to participate.

Overall, the evaluation team considered ethical guidelines in all phases of the evaluation to ensure ethical and unbiased data collection and reporting. No ethical issues were reported in the field.

3.4.4 Analytical approaches

The evaluation matrix set out the planned data analysis for each evaluation question, which has largely been followed. For judging implementation (resourcing, activities, outputs), the overall method has been process-tracing against the theory of change (including the detailed workstream theories of change). The planned activities were compared against those that occurred. In relation to outcomes, process-tracing was also employed, along with the noting of unintended or unanticipated outcomes.

The data obtained during the inception phase (interviews, programme documents, meeting minutes, meeting agendas, etc.) and collected during the fieldwork phase were triangulated using NVivo. Using NVivo, factual data was triangulated across sources as necessary, while the main analytical approach was thematic analysis.

Two main types of quantitative data were used for analysis: survey results and financial data. Although the evaluation team had initially planned to explore three types of data, including programme monitoring data, they were unable to obtain the detailed information needed to perform quantitative analysis in this area. Nonetheless, the use of quantitative data was important for complementing and triangulating the data gathered from the case studies. To conduct the analysis, the quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using Microsoft Excel, in accordance with the evaluation questions outlined in the logical framework.

Finally, the evaluation used an equity-focused analytical approach that considered criteria such as gender, human rights, social inclusion, and the environment. The evaluation findings were assessed using a four-level rating scale, ranging from equity-blind to equity-positive. Details are provided in the Annexures.

Using the preliminary findings generated by the respective analyses, a process of triangulating these findings was followed in broad sequence to the overarching evaluation questions.

3.5 Limitations

In light of the methodology and data collection processes, as described above, the following limitations should be noted. Where challenges were identified in advance, active steps were taken to mitigate these, including appeals for updated information, documentation, and revised monitoring data.

Delays in implementation. The programme implementation experienced delays, and the evaluation data collection period was adjusted to allow enough time for implementation to progress. Nonetheless, at the time of data collection, some components had still not reached schools. Notably, some Subject Advisors had only recently begun receiving training, despite their role as important stakeholders in training teachers.

Engagement of education officials. The main limitation of the evaluation was the unavailability of education officials, particularly in KZN and LP provinces. The evaluation team had difficulty contacting DBE officials, who are crucial stakeholders for the REALS SA programme. This limited the information available to the evaluation team and reduced the number of scheduled engagements for data collection. As a result, the perspectives of these officials are not captured in the final report, potentially impacting the upscaling and sustainability of the programme and other decision-making influenced by the evaluation. However, the evaluation team was able to engage with the EC department and obtain some departmental insights.

Incomplete datasets with participant contact details and poor availability of participants. Incomplete and occasionally inaccurate contact information was received for school-based stakeholders and district officials. Despite multiple follow-up efforts, there were still a significant number of participants who did not respond to invitations to virtual interviews and focus groups, and in two cases, a failure to attend scheduled sessions. These factors adversely impacted the comprehensiveness of the primary data for evaluating the programme, with less insight into the views and experiences of subject advisors, circuit managers and SMT members (except for principals) than was planned.

Gaps in documentation. As mentioned, the documents provided are not as comprehensive as intended, and key monitoring data and reports do not exist because of poor record keeping. The received financial data only represents a portion of the budget, leaving some uncertainties including the scale of human resources involved in the programme, resourcing of budget extensions, and the extent to which losses have been absorbed by the entities involved. Moreover, recent progress reports lack the expected level of detail.

Lack of gender disaggregated data. As mentioned earlier, the monitoring data received was not disaggregated by gender as the gender-based breakdown of participants was seldom reported by the implementing partners. However, since this is marginally reported on by implementing partners, it makes it difficult to review and triangulate with the primary data collected. There was an imbalance in the gender distribution amongst both parents and teachers with female participants, notably, more prominent. Reasonable efforts have been made by some implementing partners to apply a gender lens in their reporting; the report will discuss the implications of this.

The evaluation thus has a strong evidence base in relation to the programme design, the views and perspectives of the main implementing organisations, and overall implementation progress. But the implications of the issues described above is that the evaluation draws from a more limited evidence base in relation to the views of education officials at provincial and district level, and is unable to discuss matters of resources, gender and equity as extensively as may have benefited the users of the evaluation. There are also implementation areas where detail is somewhat lacking. These limitations should be borne in mind in reading the report. Many of these limitations offer lessons for future practice and are thus addressed again in the section on lessons learned.

4 FINDINGS

This chapter will present the findings of the evaluation related to the programme's design and implementation to date. It will do so by answering the evaluation questions through the presentation of the various findings related to the REALS Design and subsequent implementation.

The first two main sections in this chapter focus on the *overall* programme's design and implementation respectively. The subsequent sections discuss the design and implementation of each of the four sub-programmes in turn.

After this chapter, the report will proceed to discuss what conclusions can be made based on the observed findings, as well as the emerging lessons and recommendations.

4.1 Programme Design

As noted in section 2.3 above, the REALS SA programme design is structured around two main programme "outputs": (1) the provision of support to the Department of Basic Education's efforts on continuity of learning through traditional and innovative approaches and (2) strengthening the capacity of key stakeholders in the education sector and enhancing access to learning materials. With two main outputs, each with sub-outputs that are to be delivered through a series of sub-programmes, REALS SA is an emergency response programme with a complex design.

4.1.1 Relevance

The programme had a high-level theory of change that noted the chain of events leading to the transformation anticipated by the programme. Through the programme evaluation, a more detailed high-level theory of change was compiled together with the programme stakeholders and role-players, graphically laying out the related activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of the programme. In the compilation of the ToC, programme stakeholders were able to co-create and agree on the overall understanding of the programme as well as what it was aiming to achieve. According to one of the managers involved in the original design (I406), the programme was designed to have the sub-programmes work independently of each other, but there was an anticipation of synergy in their overall outcomes which justified packaging them into a single programme. This is demonstrated in the interrelationships at outcome level on the high-level theory of change. The value of purposefully integrating the workstreams into a single programme is clearest in the case of the L&M and Reading Recovery workstreams, as the L&M implementing partner (PSA) was well positioned to offer training for the effective use of reading materials distributed through the Reading recovery workstream. The co-creation process of the programme theory highlighted areas of overlap and coherence within the programme that could potentially be better leveraged going forward or in future similar programmes.

The programme design implicitly took into consideration gender and equity considerations. As a national DBE policy, all programmes implemented as part of the department are to be underpinned by the inclusive education policy, which necessitates that all programmes reach learners marginalized by gender and equity barriers the same way in which they would reach learners without barriers. It can be assumed that the programme took this into consideration by focusing specifically on learners in Quintile 0 – 3 schools and their surrounding communities. Furthermore, I401 noted that the selection of the three pilot provinces was based on "their demography and that all of them are large, rural provinces with large school enrolments".

The selection of the 650 schools was “done to enhance and build on the work undertaken thus far under the National Reading Coalition (NRC), the Primary School Reading Improvement programme (PSRIP) and the National/ Provincial Reading Plan” (NECT, 2021b). Given the number of circuits, districts and schools selected as part of the sample, the programme was anticipated to impact 73.5% of districts in the three largest provinces in the system (NECT, 2021a). Through this, the REALS SA programme envisioned that the “implementation of the reading, curriculum and assessment recovery sub-programmes AND appropriately supported by districts, school leaders and parents is likely to increase access to reading resources and sustainable support for learning and curriculum catch-up” (NECT, 2021b). And therefore, this consideration highlighted the programme’s focus on building on previous efforts, reaching a large percentage of districts, and increasing access to reading resources to support learning and curriculum catch-up.

In terms of sharing the programme understanding by way of communications and visibility, the responsibility for the programme was shifted from NECT to UNICEF, altering the original design of the programme management arrangements. It is unclear what motivated this shift. After the shift took place, UNICEF nevertheless sought NECT’s inputs on the strategy: “the NECT Marketing and Communications team, together with the UNICEF Communication Specialist met on two occasions to discuss and finalize the communications and visibility strategy in an effort to make the REALS SA more visible to the public and the media” (NECT, 2021b). Visibility materials developed as part of this included printed banners, t-shirts and other REALS SA branded materials (I556; REALS SA Reports).

In addition to the above, the Comms and Visibility technical team developed an introductory phase REALS SA communications and visibility plan inclusive of a press release and social media campaign. The approach in implementing the communications and visibility plan was said to be centred around human interest stories which are linked to the overall impact of the REALS SA programme in the three provinces (I558). The purpose of the campaign was ultimately to expose the media and the public to the REALS SA programme in an accessible manner. As part of the campaign, a press release on the REALS SA programme was disseminated to media houses across the country, as well as published on IOL.com on International Literacy Day which took place on 08 September 2021. The press release reached a total of 8 600 846 unique readers (NECT, 2021c).

In sharing this understanding through the widespread communications and advocacy strategy, it was understood that the main implementation methods of the programme anticipated to result in a change and improvement in classroom practices were the provision of capacity building through training and coaching, as well as the provision of guidelines and modules. The variety of resources was anticipated to inculcate a culture of reading within the learners and teachers, resulting in improved literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, the capacity building for teachers, SMTs, circuit managers and subject advisors would help strengthen the overall school ecosystem against dealing with other forms of disaster should they arise. Overall, the success of the programme was anticipated to be highlighted by an observable improvement in the quality of education and a narrowing of the gaps exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Programme risks and their respective mitigation measures were noted in programme documentation. Two high-impact risks were identified, namely the intermittent opening and closing of schools due to the spread of the coronavirus, as well as teacher unions not fully understanding or supporting the intervention (UNICEF, 2021a). Mitigation measures for the intermittent opening and closing of schools was the use of online platforms for meetings and coaching sessions should schools close. The mitigation measure for the risk related to teacher unions was to ensure that teacher unions are engaged in conjunction with district and provincial leadership (UNICEF, 2021a). Both these measures were successfully implemented, as teacher unions have been engaged (as will be unpacked in the Assessment for Learning programme

findings), and online platforms were indeed used for coaching sessions as well as meetings throughout the programme. The use of online platforms did not however fully ensure the presence of participants in the sessions due to connectivity issues, discussed throughout the report.

Various programme design assumptions further became apparent during the course of the evaluation process. Two of the sub-programmes relied on a “train the trainer” model, in which the REALS SA programme worked directly with a certain group and then expected this group to train others. Because the programme was implemented in and through the education system, the REALS SA programme targeted groups whose responsibilities formally include the training (in the case of Subject Advisors) or mobilising of fellow parents/caregivers in support of the school (in the case of caregivers elected to School Governing Bodies). For this reason, it was expected that if they were thoroughly trained on a topic that aligned with the Department's policy, provided with effective support and held accountable for implementing the training with teachers, it could be expected that they would do so.

The obvious potential benefit of a “train the trainer” approach is that project resources were concentrated on a small group while ultimately reaching a much larger group with the same training content and resources. The trade-off was that only a small subset of the target group received the intervention “first-hand”, with the programme having less control over the quality, pace, and reach of the intervention as implemented by the those who were directly trained. As will be unpacked in the sections focusing on the relevant workstreams, this may have undermined the achievement of the intended outcomes. The risk that the programme fails to achieve its intended outcomes (to the desired extent) in the broader target population, was heightened by the short life span of the project and implementation delays (especially in the training of Subject Advisors). There will be little to no scope to monitor their rollout of the training to teachers, and therefore limited scope for the programme to support or intervene if concerns are picked up. As pointed out by a stakeholder during the review of the evaluation's inception report, the train the trainer model should arguably be seen more as a necessary trade-off; outcomes may be attenuated but still represent the best outcome for the available resources. In mid-2022 there was also discussion underway to provide more support for those trained to implement the model, but it does not appear that this had been done as of May 2023.

Two of the sub-programmes – Assessment for Learning and Leadership and Management - involved communities of practice (COPs) as part of the intervention strategy. COPs are professional learning communities of practitioners who are expected to enhance learning outcomes beyond the life span of the programme by offering space for peer interaction, supportive relationships, mutual accountability, access to and sharing of resources, learning from shared experiences, and recognition of achievements and good practices. Some of the groups who were intended to participate in COPs were already familiar with the notion of COPs. Again, the limited time span of the programme and pressure on resources in both these workstreams posed a risk to the extent to which COPs could be supported and thus expected to become independent and effective by the time of the programme's end.

A final design consideration is the deliberate mainstreaming of certain priorities into the intervention, such as gender and the environment. It was assumed that explicit consideration of these issues would result in more inclusive, equitable outcomes for vulnerable groups; and that the environmental cost could be minimised or that there could be environmental benefits derived. There was also a potential “demonstration effect” here in that education sector stakeholders in the REALS SA programme would be exposed to these in the kinds of teaching and learning approaches and practices and may choose to replicate them elsewhere. In practice, some workstreams factored gender and equity considerations in more effectively than others, as will be discussed in section 4.3.

In order for the programme ToC to hold true, all the abovementioned design elements needed to hold true as they were envisioned. Sustainability measures by way of national rollout have been worked into the programme design, and from early 2023 onwards stakeholders began to plan a colloquium at the end of the programme to bring together the different components of REALS SA and extending them to the academic environment” (I404)¹⁰. The colloquium was successfully hosted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards the end of June 2023.

Taking into consideration the above design factors, the evaluation has found that the REALS SA design is one of relevance as its objectives are responsive to the needs of the identified beneficiaries as well as the overall education system. The ToC was designed in such a manner that it was reasonable to expect that if the programme was implemented as planned, the anticipated results would be achieved. Although not fundamental flaws to the programme logic, some implementation realities were underestimated in the articulation and management of risks and assumptions. This will be unpacked in the upcoming programme implementation section.

4.2 Programme Implementation

In terms of implementation, the REALS SA arrangements were as follows. The programme was managed by the EU, UNICEF, DBE and the NECT.

NECT mostly handled operational management such as ensuring programme endorsement, the compilation of service level agreements with implementing partners and monitoring their performance against this, sourcing contacts for the training of CMs and SAs, organizing the advocacy sessions in the various provinces, setting up and ensuring the success of the technical teams, and various other programme management elements. NECT also enabled the monitoring of implementation progress through the production of REALS SA progress reports at least every quarter. However, a member of the programme management team (I559) noted that resourcing did not allow for NECT to implement any standardised and regular monitoring. As discussed earlier, there was also no systematic record keeping or management of a database on the achievement of targets across the full programme. NECT also originally held the Communications and Visibility portfolio for the programme, which was later shifted over to UNICEF for reasons that will be discussed further in this section. The implementation of the programme was therefore mainly the responsibility of the NECT in conjunction with the implementing partners, working closely with UNICEF and the DBE.

4.2.1 Effectiveness

The findings presented in this section examined the effectiveness of the REALS-SA programme by first assessing the programme's "implementation fidelity" as a prerequisite for effectiveness. It was emphasized that the programme needed to be implemented as designed before it could be expected to generate the intended outcomes. If the implementation deviated from the design, it would need to be justified in light of changing conditions or lessons learned on how to best achieve the intended results.

Beginning with overall programme management, it was noted on multiple occasions that the NECT put the DBE in the “front seat” of the programme, ensuring that they do not approach any of the provincial departments or other stakeholders without the approval of the DBE. This strategic arrangement allowed for effective programme embedding within the education system which will remain in place beyond the life of

¹⁰ This was indeed hosted at UKZN on 27 June 2023.

the REALS-SA programme. However, the disadvantage of this approach was that the programme was dependent on DBE capacity, and where this was stretched it resulted in time constraints and implementation delays. Although the programme had annual management plans, frequent meetings, and involved various education system officials, practical factors such as logistical delays and the availability of officials affected the implementation process. Despite the effective project management on paper, these practical factors impeded the programme's successful implementation.

The provincial advocacy initiatives were reportedly well attended by the invited officials, with Table 3 below depicting the provincial attendance rates:

Table 3: Provincial Attendance Rate of Advocacy Sessions

Province	Attendance	Attendance as % of invites
KZN	123/113	109%
LP	178/317	56%
EC	142/150	95%
Total	443/580	76%

(NECT, 2022a)

The advocacy initiative aimed to spread awareness about the programme and its benefits to the public and stakeholders. However, the marketing approach applied to promote the programme was programme wide with no sub-programme specific components, which may have contributed to the limited understanding of the programme's components by those not directly involved in it. According to the advocacy reports, provincial officials were aware of the programme, but this did not necessarily translate through to district level as some subject advisors had no knowledge of it at all (FG498).

From the feedback received during the evaluation it emerged that the complexity of the programme may have contributed to the limited understanding of the programme's multiple levers by its intended beneficiaries. Many programme participants were only aware of the programme as a reading initiative or only the training component they had attended, rather than as a programme with four different components. This lack of clarity about the different components of the programme led to conflation, with some not knowing that there were different components. Despite this, the sub-programmes managed to implement most of their planned activities, and where each sub-programme reached, there was a perceived understanding of its purpose and how it could help the beneficiaries. Overall, the lack of clarity about the different components of the programme and the one-size-fits-all marketing approach applied may have limited the understanding of the programme among the intended beneficiaries, which may, in turn, have affected their ability to integrate the sub-programmes and derive the intended synergies between them to strengthen outcomes.

In terms of assumptions in relation to implementation planning, one of the biggest assumptions regarding a hybrid approach to delivering the training, was the assumption that quintile 1-3 schools in areas of low socioeconomic status will have access to the internet, good enough to hold a stable connection for more than an hour in order for principals, SMTs and district officials to be trained. This proved to be one of the programme's biggest shortcomings, as the access to data was an issue, as was connectivity due to frequent power cuts (Kanjee, 2022; Performance Solutions Africa, 2022). Related to the assumed availability of internet connectivity was the access to multimedia devices such as radio or television in households. This did not have too large an effect on the delivery of paper-based materials and in-person trainings where possible.

The provision of resources through the programme was anticipated to influence change in the education system. The review of the post-COVID trimmed curriculum which led to the development of a quality assurance framework was anticipated to heighten the education system's awareness to content and coherence issues in relation to the curriculum. Similarly, the development and delivering of training and related materials was anticipated to capacitate all those who had been privy to the training with new skills to adequately deal either with school or curriculum management, as well as the management of resources related to reading. Finally, the list of available books generated through the audit has now shed light on where the literature-related gaps are in the system and what can be done to ensure that these gaps are filled going forward. Therefore, there was coherence and it appeared reasonable that if the REALS-SA

programme was implemented as planned, it would achieve its outcomes including mutual reinforcement between the different sub-programmes.

While the abovementioned assumptions may not have held, the justification related to the selection of quintile 1-3 schools across KZN, LP and EC was validated. The fieldwork visits to the evaluation sample schools corroborated the similarity in context between the schools as well as the communities they are in their respective provinces. While the case studies were not representative of the full population of REALS-SA schools (as discussed in the methodology section), it is worth noting that the evaluation sample schools had similar characteristics overall. Across the three provinces, schools were located in communities of low socio-economic status, and adequately classified between quintiles 1 – 3. Learners often lived with older caregivers, but there were also instances of child-headed households in other communities. Whether the learners came from near or far distances, weather conditions play a large role in the ability of learners and teachers to access the school, with the infrastructure often being difficult to navigate on rainy days. Gender-related considerations also varied across provinces, with a mix in responses from teachers and parents on who they perceive to perform and achieve and to struggle more with learning, i.e., academic performance and achievement, between young girls and young boys.

Table 4 below provides a snapshot of the contextual factors related to the sample schools visited during the evaluation fieldwork.

Table 4: Evaluation Sample School Contextual Observations

	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS101	CS102	CS137	CS104	CS139
Caregiver context (aftercare, grandparents, child-headed households, older sibling involvement)	Aftercare plays a role	No aftercare	No aftercare	No aftercare	No aftercare	No aftercare
	No data	No data	Poverty stricken households and child-headed households	Poverty stricken households	Poverty stricken households and child-headed households	Poverty stricken households
	Older siblings often primary caregivers	N/A	Primary caregivers are often illiterate grandparents	Primary caregivers often illiterate	Primary caregivers often illiterate	Primary caregivers often illiterate
Learner needs/context (placeholder phrasing – to be updated)	Mainstream school	Special school: Majority of special schools are care centres and do not provide educational teaching & learning. Only school special school in the province that provides teaching.	Mainstream school	Mainstream school	Mainstream school	Mainstream school

	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS101	CS102	CS137	CS104	CS139
	Long distance travel for learners to school.	No travel	Learners from nearby village	Mega school: Long distance travel.	Long distance travel	No data
Gender-specific reflections	Boys often outside and not attentive to school work	No data	Boys struggle more and commonly involved in gangsterism	No data	Girls struggle more as they face more challenges including sexual abuse and challenges at home	No data
School context	Staffing capacity constraints	Staffing capacity constraints	Principal teaches critical subjects	Principal teaches critical subjects	Principal teaches.	No data
	No data	No data	Multi-grading in schools (teaching multiple grades in one classroom)	Multi-grading in schools	No data	No data
	Paved road	Paved road	Gravel road to school.	Gravel road to school.	Gravel road to school	Gravel road to school
	Good transport infrastructure	Good transport infrastructure	Poor transport infrastructure: heavy rain and floods constrict learner attendance.	Poor transport infrastructure: heavy rain and floods constrict learner attendance.	Poor transport infrastructure: heavy rain and floods constrict learner attendance.	Poor transport infrastructure: heavy rain and floods constrict learner attendance.
	School infrastructure in good condition	School infrastructure in good condition: Previously a hospital	Poor school infrastructure	School infrastructure in good condition: School recently rebuilt	Poor school infrastructure and dispute in building additional classrooms	Poor school infrastructure
	Day scholars	Boarding school, no day scholars	Day scholars	Day scholars; plans to build boarding school	Day scholars	Day scholars

The design of the programme, the programme management as well as communications and visibility revealed many strengths but also some weaknesses. The main strength of the programme is the involvement of the DBE and the integration of the programme outputs into the larger education system. The increasing of access to books for learners, development of a curriculum quality assurance framework, and overall capacitation of practitioners were relevant interventions within the South Africa context; the approach to selection of schools and districts was appropriate; and thus there was the potential to make a lasting impact on the quality of education if implemented adequately.

While the inclusion of the DBE was the main strength, it did however contribute to some shortcomings in the design, one them being the amount of time it took to process activities. Reflections from an implementing partner noted that past experiences have shown that direct engagement with district officials is always more beneficial than when it happens through layers of coordination by others. In this programme, “everything had to go through NECT, who went through DBE who went through provinces who went through districts, and as a consequence, there was a whole host of issues that have negatively impacted on the actual professional development activities we are able to offer” (FG530).

Table 5 below provides a summary of programme activities and their originally scheduled dates of completion, next to their dates of actual completion as of June 2023. As highlighted below, majority of the programme’s activities were completed in the year 2022, notwithstanding various implementation issues which will be unpacked in section 4.3. It is important to also note that for the reading recovery workstream specifically, tasks reported on as completed are in fact completed to varying degrees; these will also be unpacked further in section 4.3. Finally, the table below also provides an overview of the activities that were completed after their originally proposed timeframe

Table 5: Summary of overall REALS SA implementation progress

Programme Component	Activities	Targets	Timeframe	Level of Completion
Assessment for Learning	Develop AfL resource/guide for SA’s and teacher training	Develop (Afl) resource pack	Q4 of 2021	Completed: 31 December 2021
	Train SA’s on the use of AfL module	Train Subject Advisors and Teachers	Q1-4 of 2022	Completed: 25 May 2023
	Maintain Learner Management System	Develop Learner Management System	Q4 of 2022	Completed: 31 December 2021
		Maintain Learner Management System	Q4 of 2022	Completed: ongoing until end of June 2023
Recovery Curriculum	Review the recovery curriculum for coherence, concept and content gaps	Conduct Research	Q1 of 2022	Completed: 31 March 2022
		Write a report on the review of the recovery curriculum	Q1 of 2022	Completed: 31 May 2022
	Develop quality assurance framework and tools to monitor and support the implementation of the recovery curriculum	Develop QA framework and tools	Q1 of 2022	Completed: 31 May 2022

Programme Component	Activities	Targets	Timeframe	Level of Completion
	Train and support Subject Advisors on monitoring and tracking implementation of the recovery curriculum	Train 104 Subject Advisors	Q1 of 2023	140 Sas trained
	Collect data and write a report on implementation of recovery curriculum	Write a report	Q1 of 2023	Completed: 15 June 2023
Leadership and Management	Induction and Baseline assessments	Visit 650 schools for induction and baseline assessments	Q 1-2: 2022	Completed: 15 April 2022
	Workshop: Leading for Reading and participation in Communities of Practice (CoP's)	Train 650 principals on resilient school leadership in times of crisis and participation in communities of practice	Q1 : Jan-Feb 2023	Completed: 31 January 2023
	Workshop: Remote Planning, Performance and Governance as well as Resilient School Leadership in Times of Crises	Train 104 Circuit Managers and governance officials	Q1-3: 2022	Completed: 24 May 2023
	Coaching support on resilient school leadership in times of crisis and participation in communities of practice	Coaching support of 650 principals on resilient school leadership in times of crisis and participation in communities of practice	Q1: Jan-Feb 2023	Completed: 30 April 2023
Reading Recovery¹¹	Audit of storybooks available in each language at each level as well as reading programmes broadcast on radio through the NRC	Audit of literature available from NGOs and publishers, as well as radio programmes	Q2 of 2021 – Q1 of 2022	Completed: 31 January 2022
	Create primary school bookbags per language per geographical area aligned with the broadcast materials	Procure book bags, anthologies, and deliver books bags	Q2 of 2021 – Q4 of 2022	Completed: 25 March 2023
	Develop, print and deliver two documents to guide parents on learner reading and homework support in 650 schools	Develop, print and deliver parent guides on learner reading and homework support	Q2 of 2022	Completed: 26 May 2022
	Procure bulk printing and delivery of 230 000 storybooks to 650 schools in 3 provinces	Select, procure and deliver selected books	Q4 of 2021 – Q4 of 2022	Completed: 24 November 2022

¹¹ Please note that the activities are summarized into the categories on the table. The full, extensive list of activities related to the categories can be found in the programme logical framework.

Programme Component	Activities	Targets	Timeframe	Level of Completion
	Develop 24 radio episodes to support existing/new broadcast programmes	Develop radio episodes, acquire broadcast slots as well as skilled presenters	Q2 of 2022	Completed: 15 August 2022
	Training of parents and SGB members on Parental Support	Conduct training of 6 500 parents and SGB members on Parental Support for reading at home	Q3-4: 2022	Completed: 11 November 2022
Communications and Visibility	Record of Human Stories Video on Impact of the Project	1 province	Q1 of 2023	Completed: 31 January 2023
Monitoring and Evaluation	Evaluation of programme implementation in schools	Field work in 6 sampled schools	Q1 of 2023	Completed: March 2023
		Analysis and draft report submission	Q1-2 of 2023	Completed: May 2023

A small portion of the evaluation participants were of the view that the time constraints that faced the programme and its various workstreams would have potentially been mitigated had the programme been adequately advocated for. Stakeholders and role-players involved in the programme noted that more time and resources for advocacy would have been beneficial as it would have assisted with fostering necessary relationships between programme partners and the provincial departments.

4.2.2 Efficiency

In applying the criterion of efficiency, the evaluation's focus is on the extent to which the distribution of financial resources across programme components was appropriate, and the extent to which costs were accurately anticipated. Budget data, expenditure data, and qualitative data are incorporated in this section as appropriate to render judgments on these issues. The emphasis is on deriving lessons from this for the future.

The entire project budget was USD 2.5 million. The EU funded this, except for a small contribution by UNICEF. UNICEF disbursed ZAR 23.25 million to NECT. Approximately 30% was re-allocated from the NECT budget back to UNICEF in September 2021 after a programme document amendment addendum was signed (UNICEF & NECT, 2021). The adjustment resulted from a reallocation of direct management of funds back to UNICEF.

After the budget adjustment, NECT's budget covered Project Management and the four sub-programmes: Leadership & Management, Assessment Recovery, Reading Recovery and Recovery curriculum. UNICEF's budget covered Staff & Personnel, Communications and Visibility supplies as well as a consultant, Travel, General Costs and Administration. Reading materials and supplies were to be directly procured by UNICEF as well.

Of the four workstreams, Reading Recovery had the largest budget allocation, with a substantial portion spent directly by UNICEF to procure books and other items; and another portion allocated to NECT for implementing the other components of the workstream. Leadership & Management received the second highest budget allocation. It is appropriate that the Reading Recovery and L&M workstreams would have the largest budget allocations, because both included large disbursement components. The Reading Recovery workstream, cited by some members of the programme management and governance team as the most important component of the programme, included the procurement of thousands of books, while the L&M workstream was designed to engage directly with all 650 schools, not just to deliver leadership and management training and coaching, but also to conduct the baseline and endline assessments. In doing so, the L&M workstream was also the most important workstream for reinforcing the intended outcomes of the other workstreams, because it included training principals and SGB members on how to support learners' engagement with the books. It is reasonable for this to require the largest budget for travel and staff time over the life span of the project. In comparison, the other two workstreams relied more on desktop research and material development, and incorporated a smaller number of contact sessions with a smaller population (mainly district officials and not all 650 schools).

While the original budget made provision for an M&E component, in a 2022 version of the budget the M&E budget appears to have been withdrawn – it was originally in the NECT budget, but by 2022 appears neither in the UNICEF nor the NECT budgets. In response to a query the evaluation team was informed that these resources were reallocated to implementing partners responsible for conducting their own M&E on programme activities (1407) but there is no record of this in terms of changed budgets. The evaluation identified important shortcomings in programme monitoring (as described in section 3), suggesting that this component was not well resourced. This is arguably a weakness of the resource allocation approach in the REALS SA programme.

Given that the expenditure data alone offers limited insight into the appropriateness of budgeting and expenditure, the evaluation also analysed progress reports and interviewed stakeholders to understand whether resources were sufficient and to what extent they were used efficiently. Table 6 provides a

summary, based on this qualitative data, of the reported sufficiency of budgets for each workstream and some of their main sub-components¹².

Table 6: Summary of programme budget status and issues

Activity	Status	Issues described
AfL	Training	Adequately budgeted for what was planned
L&M	Training	Underbudgeted
		Deputies dropped Virtual to in-person training delivery in EC
RR	Procurement of books	Procurement resolution
	Audit of storybooks	Underbudgeted
	Parent & learner reading guides	Underbudgeted
	Radio programmes	Underbudgeted
	M& E	Underbudgeted
CR	Training	Underbudget
PM	Comms & visibility	Underbudgeted
M&E	Internal M&E	Reallocated

(Interviews, NECT & UNICEF, 2022; UNICEF, 2021b)

As the table shows, programme reporting and stakeholder interviews suggested that the programme has faced unanticipated costs across most of the main components.

The **AfL** component appears to have budgeted adequately for the agreed scope of work to be implemented, but it has been repeatedly noted that the likelihood of achieving outcomes would have been enhanced by building in a stronger subject advisor support component. The reason for not including this in the agreed scope appears to be budget related.

The **Reading Recovery** workstream reportedly underbudgeted for critical activities including the audit of story books, reading guides and radio programmes which placed programme outcomes at risk. The additional cost of auditing was reportedly borne by NECT. The monitoring budget for RR also did not allow for as many schools to be monitored as planned. The sample had to be reduced to save costs, as explained in the report: “the biggest limitation to the study was the budget allocated towards M&E. With the risk of overspending, the sample size of schools was reduced from 66 schools to 54 schools to fit the budget” (NECT, n.d.). It is implied that the findings of this monitoring exercise may not be reflective of the full school population, leaving uncertainty about exact number of schools that received books and whether these books were of the intended number and variety. Further, the budget for broadcasting radio episodes was revised upwards when it was discovered that it had been underestimated. UNICEF sourced additional funds to achieve this, as a UNICEF staff member explained: “When we finally had the 24 episodes, what had not been built into the budget was a financial incentive for a radio station to broadcast episodes. Thus, an additional budget was made. However, all of that took time, we didn’t have enough money in budget, it wasn’t anticipated that all these other things would arise”. This impacted on the budget significantly as one financial document shows that an invoice for radio programmes was underbudgeted by more than double the budgeted amount. One interviewee also suggested that the cost of reader books was underestimated, although there is no quantitative data on this.

¹² It should be noted that the qualitative data used in this analysis varied in terms of its strength and the extent to which it was corroborated across multiple sources.

¹³ See extensive discussion in the Findings section.

For the **Recovery Curriculum** workstream, the main pressure on budgets was the unanticipated need for extensive face to face training and coaching. But they had budgeted to mainly deliver training online, and the decision to revert to face to face delivery in some areas significant budgetary implications as it required catering for participants and covering travel expenses for facilitators. According to PSA, L&M had originally planned for all training other than for CMs to be face-to-face - but coaching was intended to be online. This was reversed soon after the project started in the Eastern Cape and then significant amounts of coaching had to be done face-to-face largely because of loadshedding. The workstream also narrowed their training population to exclude deputy principals. It is also reported that NECT assumed responsibility for these costs, thereby providing relief and enabling the implementing partners to complete their activities as planned.

Inadequate resources were also reported to support programme management in completing planned activities (I556).

In summary, a number of expenses were underestimated, and it also proved unfeasible to rely on online programme delivery to the extent that partners had agreed when the programme had been designed and budgeted for. The Lessons Learned section at the end of the report discusses how future programmes may draw on this experience to budget more realistically in future. The responsiveness of UNICEF and NECT to secure additional funding where the need arose, was an important enabler in this regard. There were nevertheless some missed opportunities to support the achievement of outcomes, such as the exclusion of deputy principals from L&M training and the limited support offered to SAs to roll out AfL training. In addition, the monitoring function was arguably poorly resourced, with negative impacts that are discussed elsewhere in the report. Despite these challenges, the programme has managed to achieve most of the critical components of programme design within the available resources. There is no doubt, based on progress reports and interviews, that considerable effort went into effective budget management, finding ways to optimize spending or reduce costs, in order to ensure this.

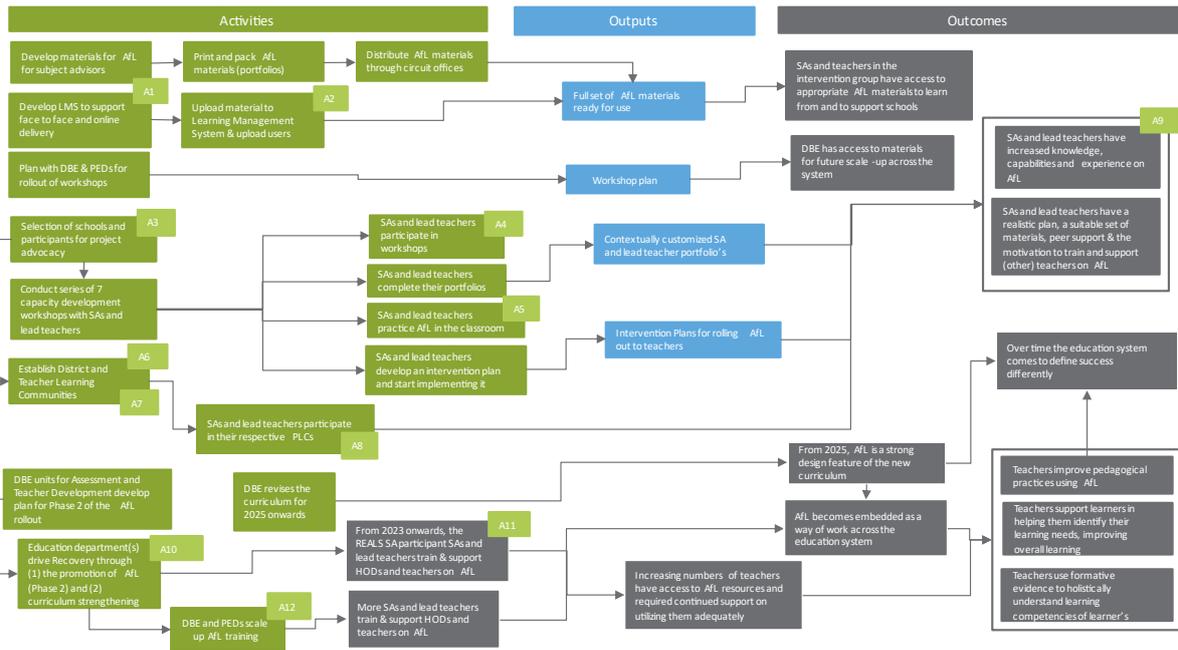
4.3 Workstream Implementation

The rest of the evaluation findings will focus on the implementation of the four programme workstreams. Within this section, the report will delve into findings related to the design of these workstreams, how those engaged in the workstreams understood the design and intent and assess how this understanding translated into effective implementation, if indeed it did, recipients' perceptions of the workstream activities and both the strengths and weaknesses that characterize the overall performance of the workstreams. The findings are inclusive of each of the workstreams' ToCs in order to help remind the reader of the workstream's logic, with the accompanying narrative for each to be found in the evaluation's Inception Report Version B.

4.3.1 Assessment for Learning (AfL)

Figure 5 below is the ToC for the Assessment for Learning (AfL) workstream. This workstream was in line with strand two of sub-output 1.2, which "focuses on developing teachers' and SMTs' use of AfL approaches to enhance the implementation of the trimmed curriculum in order to improve teaching and learning" (UNICEF, 2021b). The objective of the workstream was to equip subject advisors and teachers with the necessary skills to have an impact on the education system by effectively utilizing pedagogies to improve learning outcomes and promote learning recovery (FG410). This was to be done through helping educators understand the gap between where a child is and where a child is meant to be so that the educator may teach accordingly.

Figure 5: Theory of Change for Assessment for Learning workstream



The workstream was intended to help the education system catch-up on the implementation of AfL (FG410). The applied model for the implementation of the workstream was described as a 3-phase model where the key intervention was “at a district level focusing on subject advisors as the nexus for change and improvement. The second phase was supporting subject advisors to provide capacity development for teachers, and the third phase, was to support subject advisors to support teachers to implement” (FG415). It was thus one of the workstreams that utilized the train the trainer model, with the subject advisors expected to train teachers.

During the evaluation it emerged that AfL has been in the policy environment for a long period of time, however it was the implementation of the policy that had been lacking. Given the importance of learning recovery post-COVID, and the realization of the imbalance in how formative and summative assessment were understood, it was deemed important that teachers understand and are able to use the AfL pedagogy.

Similar to the overall REALS SA programme, the workstream did not have a consolidated theory of change, but did however have a logic that was used to co-create a theory of change. The evaluation process provided the stakeholders involved in AfL specifically the opportunity to share their understandings of the workstream and how it was intended to achieve its overall goal. In addition to what has been noted above about the relation of the workstream to the strategic thrust of the DBE, there was a shared understanding of the intent of the workstream to emphasize the importance of formative assessment in conjunction with summative assessment. Members of the task team specifically noted that “we need to de-emphasize summative assessment and realize formative assessment is helpful to help close the gaps for learners in their minds and learning”.

When considering whether or not programme stakeholders had a shared understanding of the intent of the workstream, findings suggested that the overall intent of the programme was collectively understood. However, the evaluation found that in the implementation of the workstream activities, there was a slight divergence in the understanding of who was to be trained. In the developed ToC, circuit managers, subject advisors and lead teachers were identified as direct beneficiaries for the workstream. As per figure 1, the workstream was intended to affect a total of 104 circuit managers and subject advisors, as well as 304 teachers. The circuit managers and subjects advisors were to be directly influenced by the AfL resource guide and teacher training, as well as the actual training on the use of the AfL practices (UNICEF & NECT, 2022). The divergence arose in the inclusion of teachers in the training, with the technical team noting that the training was in fact only intended for district level officials

and not teachers. FG410 noted that the “AFL programme is all about training subject advisors; if you look at the concept documents it is clear that AfL goes up to subject advisor level – they are given orientation and guidance on how to cascade the information down to teachers”. FG415 was of the opinion that the inclusion of teachers in the training was in fact a capacitation strategy developed by the different provincial departments where subject advisors and circuit managers have too many schools under their jurisdiction. To their understanding, lead teachers were brought on board to partially address the high subject-advisor to school ratio, as well as increase existing capacity in the system in relation to AfL.

The workstream was focused on producing a full set of AfL materials, a workshop plan for the rollout of the training sessions, contextually customized subject advisor and teacher portfolios, as well as to support those trained directly to develop intervention plans for rolling AfL out to teachers. The LMS as well as the formative assessment booklet were successfully developed. The LMS was designed to engage subject advisors and teachers in AfL workshops, its successful development owed to a decade of pre-pandemic research resulting in a well-defined operational model. Currently maintained by TUT, the system’s responsibilities include participant enrolment and access management. These materials have been lauded for their user-friendliness and relevance, facilitating creative assessment approaches, as affirmed by training attendees who found the experience informative and revitalizing, particularly for educators without formal teaching methods education, underlining the need for support and effective pedagogical application (FG459). Efforts were reportedly made to ensure that these materials are gender and equity sensitive, free of any biases.

In addition to the LMS, subject advisors noted that they received “an AfL module which was on the Moodle platform; we were given a link to use in order to access the module” (FG498). Once this system and the training materials were developed, training on their use commenced, with the technical team conducting “six face-to-face workshops on AfL for subject advisors and teachers of language, EFAL, Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology” (NECT, 2022b).

Despite significant implementation delays in the province of KZN specifically due to extreme weather conditions, significant progress was made with the training being successfully completed on May 25, 2023. The subject advisor training witnessed impressive coverage across provinces, with 93% (310 out of 333) of subject advisors trained in Limpopo, 85% (109 out of 128) in the Eastern Cape, and 89.2% (250 out of 280) in KwaZulu-Natal, culminating in a total of 90.2% (669 out of 741) subject advisors trained across these three regions (UNICEF & NECT, 2023). The gender distribution within the trained cohort is well-balanced, with 60% being female and 40% male, reflecting an inclusive participation. These figures were subject to one final round of updates; a final report by TUT was expected in July but had not been shared at the time of finalising the evaluation report.

While no risks to implementation were identified during the design phase of the workstream, multiple assumptions were noted which were required to hold true in order for the intervention logic to be feasible. A key assumption that did not hold true, as part of the overall programme and not just this workstream, was the availability of online access for those involved in the training. It was found that, since the criteria of the workstream was paper-based, there was a built-in mitigation strategy for this in the form of physically printing out the materials that were online. These printed back-ups were to be used when load shedding was experienced, with the technical team then transferring the information onto the online system when there was connectivity again (FG417). Although this worked, it was noted as a challenge mainly because it was time consuming manually capturing what could have originally been entered directly onto the system.

Related to this was the assumption of the ability of trainees to navigate online systems. With the LMS being on an online platform, mobile data and access were required for teachers and subject advisors to be able to access the system during the training. This was challenged by the power outages as well as the price of mobile data, with I399 notably stating that “the assumption that blended learning works in South Africa is a massive issue which the higher-ups don’t quite understand”. Pertaining to this is the

ability and comfort of teachers to frequently use the online system. Subject advisors reflected that they did not feel there was enough time to learn how to use the system, noting that “most of the teachers who were participating in the training were not well versed about the Moodle system, and there was not enough time to orient teachers first on how to use the system before starting with the training” (FG501). Despite initial challenges in implementing the system, the other materials developed within the workstream were well-received by intended beneficiaries.

As part of gathering inputs on how the training was received, the evaluation sought to speak to subject advisors and teachers who had attended the training. These focus groups did indeed take place, with a much lesser number of subject advisors than had been hoped for. Apart from the reflections noted above on the useful nature of the materials produced by the workstream, the engagements did not yield further insights as the small number of subject advisors who participated in the focus groups said that they “have not yet started cascading the information down to teachers” (FG501). It is notable that for most of those in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, training commenced nearly a year ago, but the “cascading” phase has not yet begun. As the implementing partner has raised as a concern from early on, it was not in the scope of the sub-programme to facilitate or manage this “cascading”.

While it is encouraging that the training has been received well by those that have been exposed to it, there is no information, at the time of finalising the evaluation report, as to how many of those trained have commenced training teachers, and how effective it is proving to be¹⁴. It is also therefore unclear whether or not the materials and the LMS have been helpful in capacitating them in training teachers

This is further supported by observations that occurred during the fieldwork phase of the evaluation in the visited sample schools. While these observations are not representative of the pilot programme beneficiary schools, they align with other sources suggesting limited “cascading” by those trained. Table 7 below shows that only one of the six visited schools reported involvement in the AfL workstream, but this may not be accurate as AfL training of subject advisors themselves had only recently commenced in that province.

Table 7: AfL specific case-study observations

Description	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS135	CS136	CS137	CS138	CS139
Assessment for Learning						
AfL Teacher training	No	No data	No	No	Yes	No
Relationship with Sas/ CM's	No	No data	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comments	CM is far removed from the school	No data	No data	Teachers have a poor relationship with CM	No data	No data
	The programme should provide assessment sheet to record success	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data

As noted earlier, the implementation partners have no resources for supporting the next step in the “train the trainer” model. This seems to have put the theory of change at risk: the realisation of outcomes depends entirely on the follow-through of subject advisors. Subject advisors may have a better grasp of AfL but if they fail to train teachers, there will be little to no change in classroom outcomes. This is a risk to effectiveness and will have implications on the intended longer-term benefits of the workstream. In mid-2022 there was a discussion underway to provide more support for those trained to implement the model, but it does not appear that this had been done as of August 2023.

¹⁴ Once this begins, the subject advisors and teachers would be able to record their progress on the LMS, allowing the department the ability to gauge if there is progress in the implementation of AfL practices in the classroom. The implementation partner has not indicated whether or not such progress has yet been captured on the LMS.

Despite the evaluation’s inability to conclude reliably on whether this cohort of trained participants will train teachers, there is clear interest and confidence in the materials and curriculum to be rolled out further beyond the REALS SA districts and schools. The embedding of the workstream on an existing educational policy has been beneficial for the uptake of the programme at the provincial level, and the enthusiasm of those involved appears to have bolstered the momentum to capacitate others in the system. According to the technical team, provincial education departments have shown interest in the uptake of the work being done, noting that “several districts demonstrated excellent take up and initiative for wanting to continue the programme – by completion of activities, participation, etc” (FG459).

Table 8: AfL Benefits beyond REALS SA

Product / Output	Benefit beyond REALS-SA
AfL resource pack	This has been updated and shared with the national teacher union SADTU, who will use it for upscaling purposes. In addition, the provinces of NW and MP have agreed to upscale AfL on a provincial level through teacher union collaboration.
Learner Management System	

As noted in Table 8 above, it was communicated in the last few months of the programme that the AfL practices and resources have gained the attention of the largest teacher’s union in the country, SADTU. The AfL resource pack has been updated and shared with SADTU, who will rollout training on a national scale. In addition, the provinces of NW and MP have also agreed to collaborate in the rollout on a provincial level.

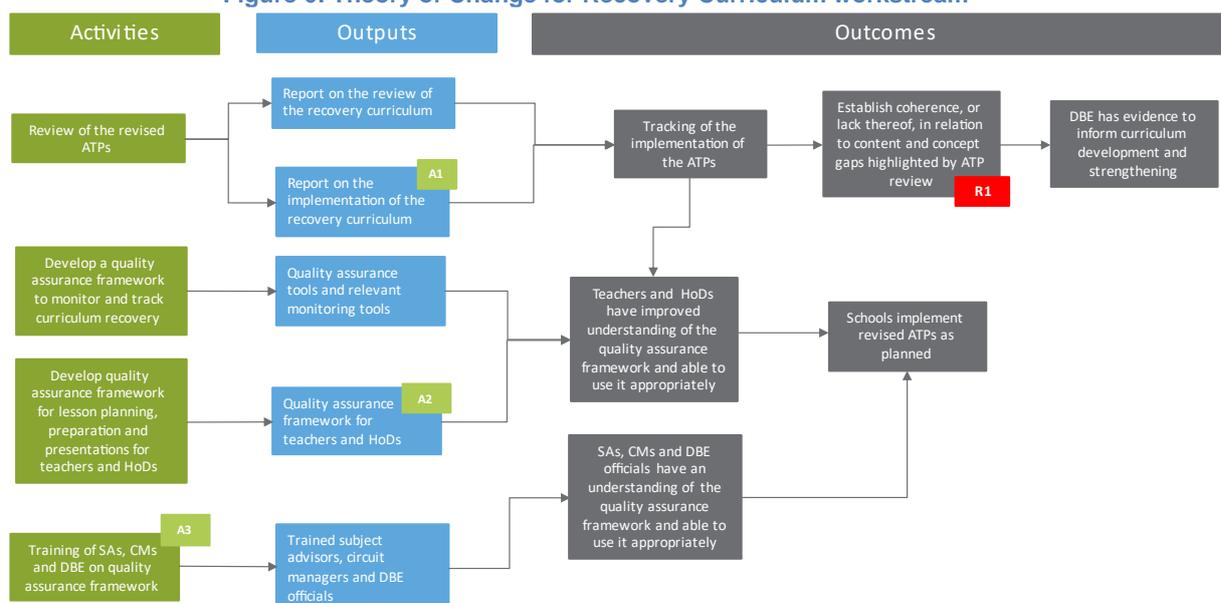
Summary

In summary, the evaluation has found that the conceptualization and implementation of the AfL workstream has been relevant to improving pedagogical practices related to assessment and closing the implementation gap on a longstanding DBE policy. The workstream was underpinned by a logic that appeared sound when compiled into a ToC, with a shared understanding on what the intent of the workstream was. While this understanding existed, there was slight divergence in the understanding of training participants. This however did not take away from the materials and the delivering of training on the materials being well received by those who were privy to them, noting that this was efficiently and effectively done. The overall programme extension allowed the workstream the opportunity to complete the implementation of its activities, albeit with the anticipated outcomes in classrooms only expected to be realised outside of the REALS SA implementation and timeframes. There are various opportunities for the continued implementation of AfL outside of the REALS SA programme, even while risks remain to achieving the intended improvements in teacher capacity and learning via those trained as part of REALS SA.

4.3.2 Recovery Curriculum

Figure 6 below is the ToC for the Recovery Curriculum workstream, which was created with the aim of swiftly evaluating the suitability and pertinence of the existing school curriculum for the forthcoming 10 to 50 years, as well as examining its historical and anticipated impact on learner achievement. This was in line with the first strand of sub-output 1.2, which is to conduct “a review of SMTs’ and teachers’ views and experiences with the trimmed curriculum and the application of a quality assurance framework for monitoring curriculum implementation” (UNICEF, 2021b).

Figure 6: Theory of Change for Recovery Curriculum workstream



It is important to highlight at this point the difference between the terms “trimmed curriculum” and “recovery curriculum”, as these will be used frequently throughout the discussion. The former refers to the curriculum that had been implemented during the COVID-19 period, which had been drastically cut down and was a deviation from the original curriculum in order to accommodate the negative impact of the pandemic (Department of Basic Education, 2021). This curriculum is now referred to as the recovery curriculum, as it continues to aim to recover the learning losses incurred during the period of the pandemic.

Similar to the AfL workstream, the Recovery Curriculum workstream drew heavily on the work of the DBE in relation to the curriculum being implemented. The workstream technical team consisted of the abovementioned two organisations, as well as the DBE. With its work reportedly beginning on the 1st of October 2021, the recovery curriculum technical team experienced delays in finalising the agreement with UKZN, but this was finalised and workstream implementation was able to proceed. The technical team was headed by UKZN and worked with researchers from the Nelson Mandela University and the University of Limpopo. Interestingly, the selection of researchers from these provincially located universities was considered as the developmental aspect of the workstream, through the upskilling of researchers. Activities were planned to review the trimmed curriculum against the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) curriculum for grades 1 to 7¹⁵, establish and evaluate differences in terms of conceptual coherence, content and concept gaps, and report on the conceptual coherence, content and concept gaps of the trimmed curriculum

The primary activities of this workstream were the review of the revised annual teaching plans (ATPs) and of the trimmed curriculum, in order to report on the implementation of the recovery curriculum as well as the quality of its review. This review commenced in 2021 and was completed in 2022, resulting in the anticipated review report of the recovery curriculum undertaken in order to explore content gaps and curriculum coherence for selected subject in grades 1 to 7 (Ramrathan, 2022). The review of the trimmed curriculum found that while the main parts of the curriculum were still there, some parts were removed which could affect learners' ability to read, write, listen and communicate effectively. The removal of some parts of the curriculum could have both positive and negative effects - more time for developing these core skills, but less exposure to indigenous knowledge (Ramrathan, 2022). The technical team noted that the changes mostly involved reorganizing content and reducing practice opportunities, rather than actually cutting out content. This could impact learners' ability to learn in later

¹⁵ The curriculum for Home Languages, First Additional Languages, Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

grades. One of the gaps identified was that learners had less time to learn important skills in the foundation phase. Overall, while some parts of the curriculum were trimmed, it may have unintended consequences for student learning. While the DBE has had sight of these results for more than a year now, it is unclear how they have been utilised. The assumption is that the results have fed, or will feed, into informing what content is removed and kept in the curriculum going forward.

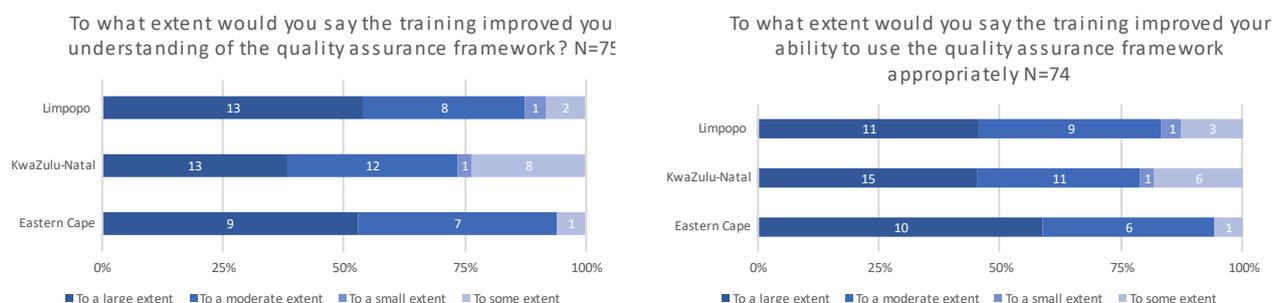
The second main activity was to develop a quality assurance framework to monitor and track the recovery curriculum, as well as for lesson planning and preparation for use by teachers and HoDs. This framework was successfully developed, informed by the findings presented in the review report based on the review of the trimmed curriculum. The development of the framework was also where the workstream integrated equity considerations (although none explicitly for gender), by ensuring that the framework is applicable in both mainstream and special schools (I401).

Once the quality assurance framework had been developed, the next and final step was to train subject advisors, circuit managers and the provincial DBE on the use of the framework, in order for them to develop an understanding of the framework and how to optimally use it. Subject advisors and circuit managers were specifically identified as participants as they play a critical role in the implementation and management of the school curriculum. A training plan was developed for the district level officials on the monitoring of the implementation of recovery ATPs in schools, and a training manual on the use of the quality assurance framework was developed and edited. This training manual was used by PSA as part of Resilient School Management training.

In agreeing on and proceeding to implement these activities, the NECT, UKZN, DBE and UNICEF collectively identified one potential risk related to the successful implementation and success of the workstream. The workstream ran the risk of there not being clarity on the purpose of the review of the curriculum in the wider education system. The contextual factors of the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect it had on the schooling system aided in making clearer why a review of the curriculum was necessary, especially because of the classroom learning time that had been lost. The overall understanding from reviewed documentation and collected data from participant subject advisors is that the programme was related to reviewing the effectiveness of the annual teaching plans, and through this, monitoring the implementation of the trimmed curriculum which informs the review of the curriculum as and when necessary (FG535, I404).

To corroborate the information presented in the implementation reports, the SMT survey conducted as part of this evaluation gathered inputs from school principals as training recipients on their experience with the materials and the workstream in general. The findings were analysed and are presented visually in Figure 7 below:

Figure 7: SMT Survey Results for Recovery Curriculum



As depicted above, the majority of respondents across all three provinces noted that the training improved their understanding of the quality assurance framework as well as their ability to use it appropriately. It is possible that the shared understanding between the stakeholders and the

beneficiaries contributed towards the understanding and uptake of the materials. Those who have been exposed to the materials – i.e. the quality assurance framework, the revised ATPs and training content – have reflected on them as being relevant and therefore required (FG450). They have also proceeded to note that because of the rather academic nature of the content, those who do not have access to the materials would find it difficult to understand the overall intent and process followed for the quality assurance of the curriculum. Subject advisors, who the workstream aimed to capacitate in terms of understanding the purpose of the framework and revised ATPs, specially noted their overall impression as being “that it was explained at an academic level - there was a slight concern that it needed to be engaged with more deeply” (FG535).

It is however not yet clear to what extent the use of the framework has been useful in improving the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Data collected from the few trained subject advisors during the evaluation process presented the same trend. The discrepancy between planned and actual involvement of SA’s suggests reconsidering the role that they were envisioned to play with the framework, but the evaluation team remains uncertain due to poor representation across provinces of SA’s during virtual engagements and their lack of awareness of the programme. Subject advisor training has been completed, and the fully comprehensive feedback on how the training was received is anticipated to be reflected on in the final recovery curriculum report due to be completed and published by UKZN in 2025 (NECT & DBE, 2022b).

Related to the relevance of the workstream to the DBE curriculum, the workstream’s most notable success has been reflected on as the production of a quality assurance framework. This tool is the first of its kind according to literature that informed the workstream and can be used in future if the department wants to further review their curriculum (I404). Because of this, the workstream has been a large contributor towards rebooting recovery curriculum, with effects that are anticipated to be long-lasting. Like the rest of the programme, the biggest weakness to the workstream has been the time taken to implement the activities. The technical team noted that the delays in training were a setback, but implementation was completed by the end of April 2023.

The key findings of the curriculum review exercise continue to hold potential to inform curriculum decisions, although it is concerning that there is little evidence of DBE’s engagement with the review report for this purpose. There is also potential for the QAF to be taken further by the DBE, but the evaluation has found no evidence of plans for the tool to continue being used in its current form, or continuing to being developed.

The intention was to promote this with DBE; for instance, during a recovery curriculum technical team meeting the NECT had committed to presenting the REALS-SA programme as part of the agenda for the DBE Chief Directors Forum (NECT & DBE, 2021) to secure buy-in and ensure its sustainability. The colloquium also included presentations on the QAF and the feedback that had been received from those who had implemented it on the ground. Based on this, there is potential value in the QAF, as well as insights as to how it may be strengthened to make it more useful. However, neither the colloquium nor documentary evidence available as of June have any evidence of plans by DBE or others to take it forward as of June 2023.

Table 9: Recovery Curriculum Benefits Beyond REALS SA

Product / Output	Benefit beyond REALS-SA
Develop quality assurance framework and tools to monitor and support the implementation of the recovery curriculum	No evidence of DBE planning to use the QAF in its current form in other districts, or continue developing the tool

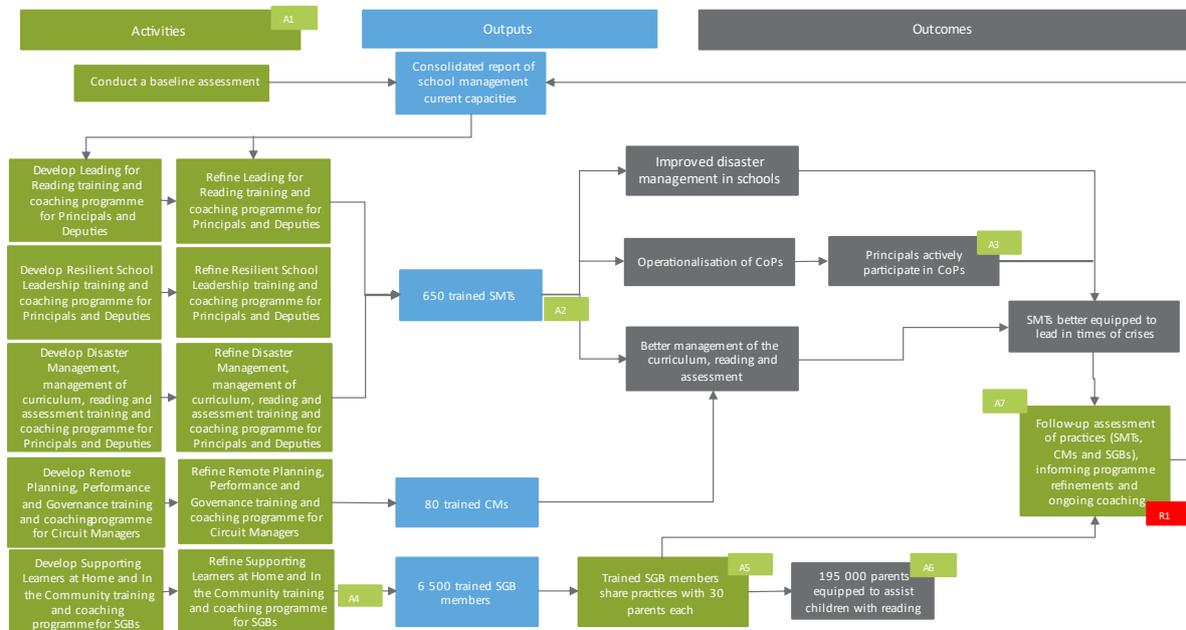
Summary

The conceptualization of the recovery curriculum workstream was directly influenced by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, making it one of extreme relevance in relation to the context at the time. The logic underpinning the workstream was sound, and coherent enough to develop into a shared ToC. Programme activities were implemented as planned albeit not without delays, with the quality assurance framework being the biggest takeaway from the workstream. Despite its potential to be refined and used, there is no evidence of further momentum within DBE to continue to use or roll out the QAF.

4.3.3 Leadership and Management (L&M)

Figure 8 is the ToC for the Leadership and Management (L&M) workstream. It depicts how the workstream aimed to ensure that school management and leadership become better equipped to lead in times of crises, but also in general. This was in line with output 2 of the REALS SA programme, which was to “strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders in the education sector and enhance access to learning materials” (UNICEF, 2021a). As further expanded on in programme documentation, the focus of this workstream was specifically on enhancing parental engagement, and the accountability and leadership of school management during an emergency and after.

Figure 8: Theory of Change for Leadership and Management



As mentioned above, the L&M workstream sought to empower schools and their respective management teams to be able to deal with future crises and disasters (I395). When the COVID-19 crisis hit the globe, operations of all systems including schools were severely disrupted. Ensuring the continuity of education was difficult amidst national lockdowns and overall situational uncertainty, and this exposed the need for a disaster-ready education system with equally ready officials. In recognizing this, the L&M workstream was conceptualized in an attempt to build “institutional capacity and resilience at school and departmental level, to ensure the functioning of schools even during times of crises” (FG410).

As part of the evaluation process, the abovementioned intentions as well as the overall understanding of the workstream theory were agreed on by relevant DBE officials, PSA, NECT and UNICEF. Programme documentation brought to light that this shared understanding did however begin on uneven grounds, as there was hesitance to participate in the workstream from the DBE head of technical team. The REALS SA Advocacy Meeting minutes noted various concerns from a DBE official regarding the uptake of the programme without having consulted various institutions and other stakeholders in

agreeing on the objective of the workstream. This concern was shared with various other members present at the meeting. This was however settled by NECT and PSA reassuring the provincial education departments of the management measures put into place to aid the running of the programme in the pilot provinces (DBE & NECT, 2021). This appears to have addressed all concerns, as the technical team was formed and implementation continued in all three provinces.

As the first key activity, a baseline assessment was conducted by the workstream implementing partner, PSA. The purpose of the baseline was to gauge the capacities of schools and their respective management teams, which would then inform the development of training and coaching programmes that will sufficiently fill the identified gaps. It was anticipated that the capacitation of the school principals, deputies and SMTs would culminate into a strong school management environment and system in all types of crises and overall school operation. This was meant to be reinforced through trainees getting together to form communities of practice (CoPs) to continue sharing experiences and learnings with the application of the training content. Community members and the SGB were capacitated with the anticipation that they would foster a healthy environment for learning outside of school. Principals and their deputies were to be trained and coached on three aspects, namely: Leading for Reading¹⁶, School Leadership in Times of Crises and Parental Support for Reading. Circuit managers were to receive training on Remote Planning, Performance and Governance. Finally, SGBs were trained and coached on Parental Support for Reading. Once all the training sessions were completed and various coaching sessions conducted, PSA was planned to then conduct an endline assessment to gauge the effectiveness of their training sessions, materials and follow-up sessions.

The core method of delivery for the workstream was training and coaching sessions on the topics related to school leadership and management as well as community capacitation, highlighted at the beginning of this section. Through the training and coaching, the L&M workstream anticipated to reach 104 CMs and subject advisors, 650 school principals and SMT members and 3 250 SGB members as well as parents/caregivers (UNICEF & NECT, 2022). It is worth noting that while the workstream training and coaching directly aimed to reach 3 250, this was anticipated to reach further into the community through the train the trainer model; the trained SGB members were anticipated to train an additional 300 parents/caregivers each, reaching a grand total of 195 000 parents.

The expectation was that training would result in several improvements, including enhanced disaster management through trained SMTs, and improved management of curriculum and reading materials, and assessment processes through the collaboration of CMs and the community. This was to be supplemented in parallel by the continued implementation of CoPs via trained principals, who would share learnings and experiences as and when they occur within their respective contexts. The initial goal was to encompass 60% of schools within online CoPs. As of May 2023 approximately 58% of CoPs or WhatsApp groups are operational, marked by at least one weekly interaction per member (PSA, 2023). During the programme's duration, a total of 138 WhatsApp groups were established, with 58% (86 groups) currently meeting the criterion of weekly activity by members (PSA, 2023).

The initiation of WhatsApp groups was primarily for communication and logistical purposes between coaches and principals, with a noteworthy outcome being the introduction of social media to some principals. Subsequently, CoPs underwent training through the SLITD workshop, focusing on disaster management plans, resulting in the groups' refinement to serve these particular objectives (PSA, 2023). While it is advantageous that all principals have now gained exposure to online groups and their potential functionality, one can anticipate that without external guidance and continuous curation of CoPs, many groups might not remain active in the long term. It is foreseeable that they could be revived only when the need arises.

In relation to CoPs and their anticipated reach, the L&M workstream theory was underpinned by various assumptions that have held true for the most part, except that of the programme implementation being adequately resourced. While this may only have been implied, the assumption of adequate resourcing

¹⁶ This overlapped with the Reading Recovery workstream.

of the programme was not only related to financial and human capacity, but the availability of the time required to adequately conduct the planned activities. The L&M workstream made explicit identified risks and mitigation strategies into the implementation of the programme, one of which was related to the resourcing of the programme, as depicted in Table 10 below.

Table 10: L&M Perceived Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Risks	Mitigation
1. Connectivity is poor in certain areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A combination of online and F2F coaching is being used in KZN and Limpopo – the F2F to cover areas with no connectivity In the Eastern Cape training and coaching is F2F
2. Not getting dates and venues approved in time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This remains one of the biggest risk to the program A detail plan has been drawn up to the end of the program and this has been submitted to the NECT who has sent it to the regions The CM coaching session has been raised with Mr James Ndlebe at the DbE
3. Budget shortfall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This appears to have been resolved with the budget recon which has just been undertaken but still needs to be confirmed with the NECT
4. Inadequate time/ resourcing available for final assessments and missed sessions e.g. weather, distances, disputes etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programme has been revised to integrate certain activities

(Performance Solutions Africa, 2022)

The identified risk factors mainly pertained to connectivity and availability of resources to adequately implement the workstream activities. This suggests that the assumption of the programme being adequately resourced did not hold true. This resulted in the workstream altering its design, where it had originally planned to train principals and deputies but later only trained principals due to cost-related factors (PSA, 2022). Despite this, the workstream was able to develop an adequate mitigation strategy, an important component of which was the overall extension¹⁷ of the programme.

Despite the abovementioned risks that were identified during implementation, the programme was able to produce the training materials that it had originally sought to, as well as deliver the training and commence coaching in some instances. The materials that were developed included two training and coaching guides for school leadership and district officials on (1) accountability, curriculum tracking and reading resource management (2) emergency response and (3) parental involvement (NECT, 2021c). In addition to these guidelines, the workstream also produced a ‘Resilient School Leadership in Times of Crises’ Module, which dealt with understanding the various components related to leadership in difficult times (Performance Solutions Africa, n.d.). Officials have reportedly noted that the materials have begun to influence the manner in which they approach their overall management activities, however this will be adequately captured in PSA’s endline report which is yet to be produced and finalized.

As noted above, the main activities of the workstream were the conducting of the baseline assessment, which led to the development of training and coaching materials, as well as the delivery of said training and coaching. All these elements have been completed. Overall, the access and reach statistics for the L&M workstream are good. The baseline of management practices were assessed in more than 90% of the targeted schools, amounting to 591 out of 657, having participated by the cutoff date of April 15, 2022 (UNICEF & NECT, 2023). Subsequently, the training of 104 Circuit Managers and governance officials, a crucial component, reached a completion rate of 83.3%, with 231 out of 277 successfully trained by May 24, 2023. In parallel, the training of 650 principals in resilient school leadership during crises and engagement in communities of practice has demonstrated substantial progress, encompassing 79.5% of principals, equating to 517 out of 650, successfully trained as of January 31, 2023. The gender distribution of these trained principals reflects a balanced participation, with 52%

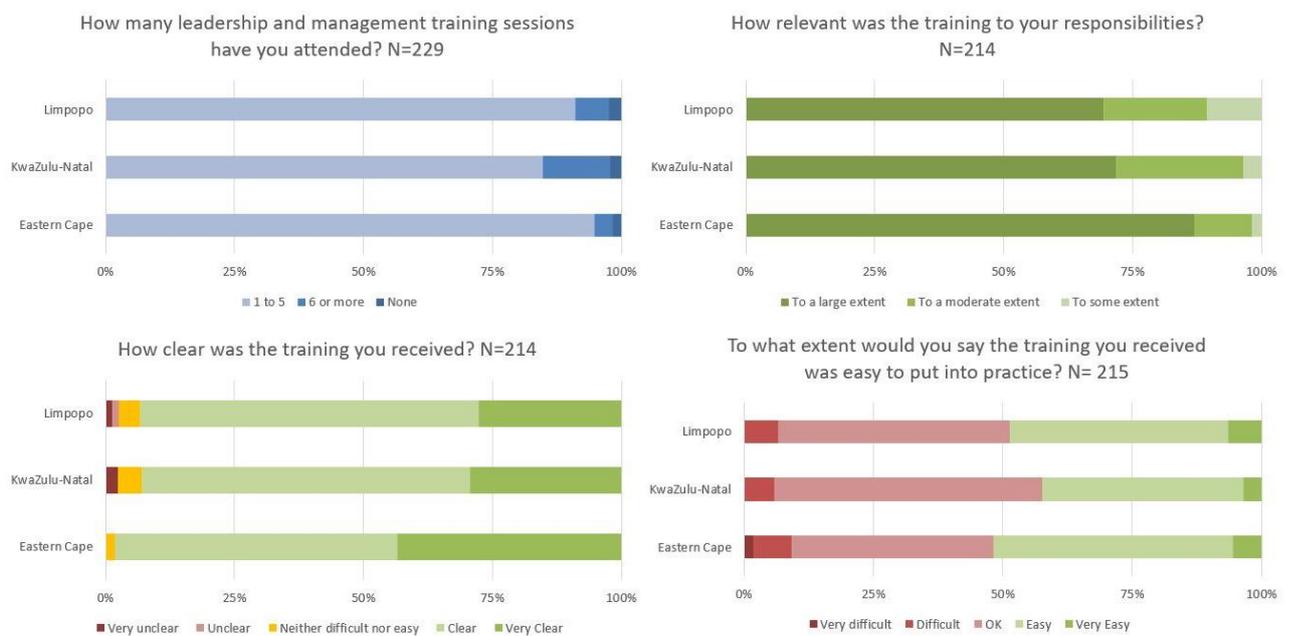
¹⁷ Note that the extension addressed the time issue but not the budget issue, as it was a no-cost extension.

being male and 48% female. Moreover, the coaching support provided to 650 principals for resilient school leadership and community engagement has been implemented, with 70.7% of principals, totalling 460 out of 650, having received coaching support by the conclusion of April 30, 2023 (UNICEF & NECT, 2023).

Furthermore, implementation updates in the workstream’s October 2022 reported on practices of school principals, and noted that there were plans to develop department head improvement plans. As part of utilising the teacher guides on Supporting Reading in the Classroom under the reading workstream, school principals were required to disseminate the teacher guides to department heads. Principals were to give an overview of the content of the guide, then proceed to ensure that the respective department heads develop training plans to capacitate their respective teachers, and these plans are referred to as Department Head (DH) improvement plans. As per the October report, these improvement plans are in place for the remaining schools (Performance Solutions Africa, 2022).

To assess the benefit derived from this high level of reach and access, the evaluation conducted a survey for SMT members that were recipients of REALS-SA training and/or coaching¹⁸. In this survey, respondents noted how many sessions they attended in total, if these were relevant to their daily activities, clear and easy to put into practice. The results have been summarized in Figure 9.

Figure 9: SMT Survey Results: L&M Specific



Of 229 total respondents, a large portion of the survey respondents (mainly principals) noted that they had attended at least 1 to 5 of the L&M training sessions. Overwhelming majorities of those that had been exposed to the training note that it was relevant to their responsibilities and clear. Despite this, a relatively large percentage rated it not as “easy” but only “OK” (neither easy nor difficult) put into practice. There could be several reasons for this apparent contradiction. One possibility is that the training was theoretical in nature and did not provide practical examples or guidance on how to apply the concepts learners to the specific challenges faced by the targeted schools. Additionally, contextual challenges such as poor school infrastructure, and capacity constraints could make it difficult for participants to prioritize implementing the training recommendations. It could also be due to the inherent challenge of implementing new practices and changes in any institutional environment. Overall, **Error! Reference source not found.** suggests that while the training may have been relevant and clear, there

¹⁸ Please refer to the methodology section to recapitulate on the representation of the survey respondents in relation to total programme participants.

may be additional support and resources needed to help SMT members implement the concepts and recommendations of the training in practice.

Interviews and fieldwork observations gathered additional data on the attendance of the training and overall reception of the material. The table below presents the evaluation team’s collected data in conjunction with empirical observations at the evaluation sample schools. The data reflects whether or not the evaluation team met with the school principal, how many L&M training sessions the principal reported to have attended, awareness of and involvement in CoPs as well as the usefulness of the training and whether or not the SGB received training as well.

Table 11: L&M Specific case study observations and data

Description	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS101	CS102	CS137	CS139	CS104
Leadership & Management						
Sessions with principals	Yes	Yes, but principal couldn't attend	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes but principal couldn't attend
Number of L&M training and/or coaching sessions attended	3	No data	2	5	2	No data
Aware of Communities of Practice (CoP)	No	No data	Yes	Yes	Yes	No data
Involved in CoP	No	No data	No	Yes	Yes	No data
Usefulness of training	Yes	No data	Yes	Yes	Yes	No data
SGB training	No data	No data	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Two of the visited six schools did not provide any insights related to attendance of L&M training and/or coaching sessions, and another two in relation to SGB training. Those that have attended the training and coaching reported to have found it useful, with all of them having attended more than one session. Focus group sessions with the subject advisors revealed a similar attendance trend, with the majority of the engaged subject advisors noting that they had attended either one or more L&M session, alongside those of curriculum management. Participants in FG533 and FG498 reflected that they had attended at least 1 training session specific to leadership and management. Substantiating this, the PSA also reports that there have been glowing reviews on the quality of the workshops that have been delivered (I391). The reaction to the training and coaching sessions is a notable success for the L&M workstream, with a FG450 participant noting that they “learnt a lot about dealing with crisis when in leadership and how to manage when in crisis – I also learnt a lot about methods on dealing and managing with crisis as a leader and a manager”. A potential contributor to this is the insurance that the technical team took in venues with generators, so that power outages do not disrupt the planned workstream implementation. This allowed sessions to continue, even though overall the rollout has been affected by time constraints and other logistical challenges that are not unique to this workstream. It is unclear to what extent the REALS SA programme was able to facilitate the creation of COPs, as the available data suggests that there are very few CoPs in practice, and it appears that these few had been in place before the start of the programme (CS103, CS105).

Commendable planning and delivery of training unfortunately does not guarantee perfect attendance from beneficiaries, and this was one of the shortcomings L&M faced. Multiple attempts were reportedly made through the DBE technical chair to schedule virtual sessions for CMs late last year, with the help of the DBE Director of Governance, to no avail (Performance Solutions Africa, 2022). This may have been due to officials not receiving communication on the training on time, as this was the case in KZN during the month of May last year (I395). Alternatively, it may be due to the constrained availability of CMs, which remains an overall challenge in the larger education system. Furthermore, there were delays in the workstream, which may be partially attributed to the limited support from provincial DOEs as well as severe natural disasters during the rollout, but also possibly due to the underestimation by PSA, the NECT and UNICEF of the time required to conduct a baseline study in schools and districts served by REALS-SA.

Initially, the intention was to incorporate Deputy Principals into the program, a decision that would have been highly beneficial. Deputy Principals typically oversee crucial curriculum aspects and would have resulted in a more profound integration of the programme within each school. As discussed earlier, a decision was made after the signing of the SLA to reduce the target population for the leadership training in order to remain within the allocated budget (PSA, 2022). As a result of not including Deputy Principals, there is a potential jeopardy to the programme’s effectiveness, as the principals might not adequately transmit essential information and innovative practices to other members of the SMT (PSA, 2023).

It is however encouraging that the implementing partner has a tracking mechanism in place in the form of coaching, which has been a useful mechanism for gauging uptake thus far (I391) and could be analysed eventually to yield representative data on this outcome.

The workshops have received consistently favourable participant feedback across various indicators, including the relevance of the material, session engagement, implementation confidence, facilitation quality, and coaching quality. Notably, the parent working sessions achieved the highest rating of 4.8 out of 5 (PSA, 2023). PSA does however note that this impressive score should be considered within the context that many attendees, including SGB members and parents, might not have had prior training experiences for comparison. Circuit Managers also provided positive feedback, giving the training a score of 4.5 out of 5. The Confidence to Implement indicator scored relatively lower at 4.2 out of 5 (PSA, 2023). This is in line with typical outcomes for new material and practices, indicating significant progress in building confidence levels.

Aside from the direct benefit to the schools and districts that REALS SA reached through this workstream, the continued benefit of the workstream for the larger education system is reliant on the willingness of the DBE together with provincial departments to continue actively using the materials and/or rolling out the materials from this pilot programme which are listed in the table below. As far as this evaluation can ascertain, there are no concrete plans on the part of DBE and/or provincial DOEs to upscale training or further roll out any other outputs from the L&M workstream.

Table 12: Leadership and Management Benefits Beyond REALS SA

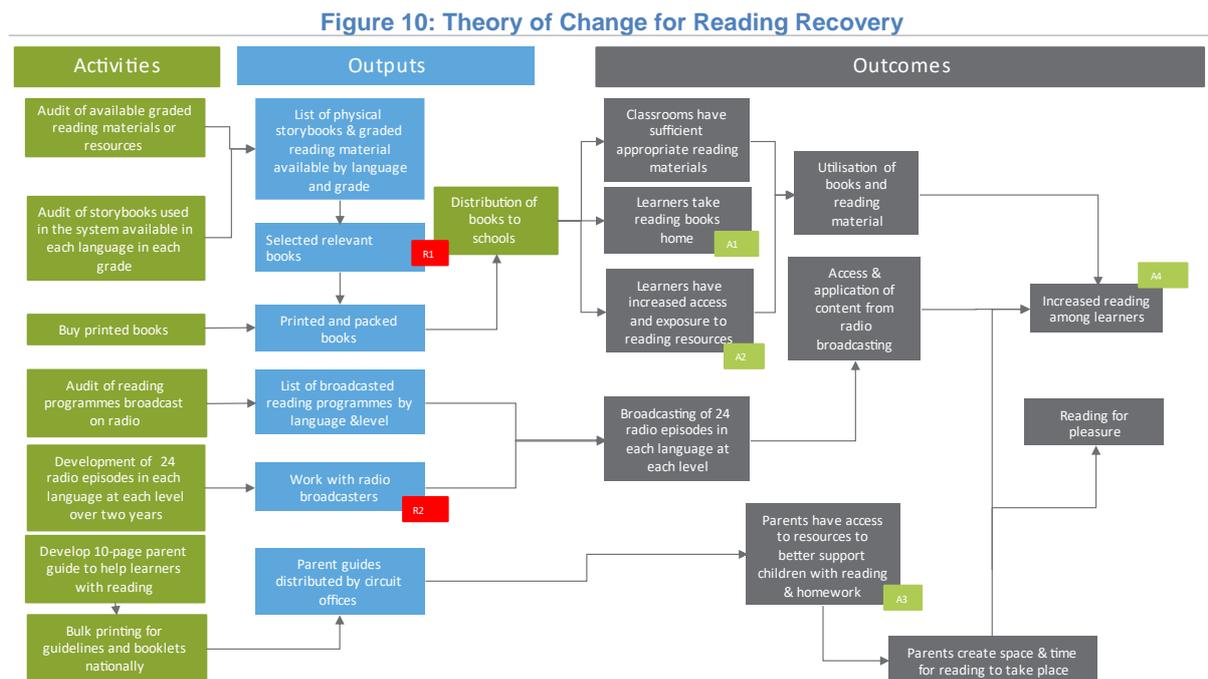
Product / Output	Benefit beyond REALS-SA
Workshop materials: Leading for Reading and participation in Communities of Practice (CoP’s)	No evidence of DBE planning to use the materials in other schools
Workshop materials: Remote Planning, Performance and Governance as well as Resilient School Leadership in Times of Crisis	While there is no evidence of DBE planning to use the materials any further, there is a possibility of further engagement on this as it is the only known training related to operating in times of crises

Summary

In summary, the evaluation has found that the conceptualization and implementation of the L&M workstream has been relevant to capacitating an education system to be less at risk from future disasters. The workstream was underpinned by a ToC with a shared understanding on what the intent of the workstream was, which fed into the development and delivery of the training materials, modules and coaching. This was done in an efficient manner that met the needs of the beneficiaries. There are various opportunities for the continued use of training programme produced through the workstream, which could greatly increase the value of this intervention beyond the REALS-SA schools, but it is unclear whether there is any intention to do so.

4.3.4 Reading Recovery

Figure 10 is the ToC for the reading recovery programme, which is in direct relation to sub-output 1.1 of supporting the implementation of the reading recovery programme for better learning outcomes. The justification for the specific focus on reading recovery was based on research that shows that the world is facing a global reading crisis as many countries have challenges with children, youth and adults who are unable to read with comprehension. This workstream specifically acknowledged the longstanding literacy challenge that had been exacerbated by the learning losses during the school closures caused by COVID-19. Through the provision of reading resources as well as guidance on how to use the materials adequately, the workstream sought to help schools and learners recover their reading learning losses and also improve their access to reading books for pleasure (I316).



The logic underpinning the reading recovery workstream was heavily informed by the recovery efforts of the REALS SA Programme. Programme partners had an empirical understanding that multiple reading programmes that support teachers and children in the technical space of reading can exist, which is why this workstream aimed to focus on increasing access to actual materials, which can additionally be used for pleasure to foster a reading culture. The rationale for the programme is understood as being to support the DBE's efforts regarding the continuity of learning through traditional and innovative approaches, the implementation of the DBE's reading strategy for improved learning and reading outcomes, as well as to provide learners with increased access to reading resources through print and broadcast media resulting in improved learning and reading outcomes (Marneweck,

2022). Through this, it was anticipated that learners would have increased access and exposure to reading resources through print, and broadcast, resulting in improved learning outcomes.

Like the other three workstreams, the evaluation process afforded the reading recovery stakeholders and role-players the chance to co-create a programme ToC, depicting the overall process and anticipated outcomes. Through this process, it was evident that programme stakeholders had an overwhelming understanding of the reading recovery workstream and its intent. Because of its centrality, stakeholders and role-players were also aware of the various opportunities of integration with other workstreams in the programme and larger education system, particularly AfL and curriculum management.

Given the envisioned reach and impact of the workstream, various activities formed part of the success of the intervention. The first activity was conducting an audit of available reading books in the DBE system, as well as reading programmes being broadcast on the radio. This audit was to then lead to the procurement, printing and delivery of 230 000 books storybooks to 650 schools. Additionally, book bags were to be created and delivered to 4 600 teachers. Guides were then to be developed and distributed to 65 000 parents and caregivers on how to assist children with reading and homework at home through the training and coaching sessions provided by the L&M workstream. This was to be supplemented by the development and promotion of 24 reading episode aligned to the storybooks for radio broadcast. These were intended to reach 292 500 learners, 4 600 teachers, 650 principals and SMT members and 3 250 parents and caregivers (UNICEF & NECT, 2022).

It is important to understand that these activities were specifically designed to incorporate gender and equity considerations within their respective workstreams. The procurement and delivery of books to schools was intended to be equity sensitive through the procurement of braille books for special schools, which did not materialize due to resource-related shortcoming (I316). Additionally, the programme had sought to ensure that, within the package of materials to be produced, there would be books that dealt with gender equity, human rights etc. This was however also not successful due to the dire lack of variety of books leading to the limitation of what can be selected as part of the materials (I318).

The inability to follow through on these gender and equity related intentions highlights the overall programme risks and assumptions that have come into effect. One of the assumptions that appears not to have held true is that of the target audience's ability to engage with the produced resources, particularly the reading radio programmes and the parent/caregiver guidelines. Although the evaluation had very limited data on how the radio programmes were received, the school staff and caregivers in the case study schools tended to argue that modern day context favours television more than radio, with a small percentage of people actively listening to radio episodes. In relation to the parent/caregiver guides, there was an assumption that parents have the ability and are willing to assist their children with homework and reading at home, when in fact, many of the learners in the targeted schools either live with illiterate elderly caregivers or have parents that work extremely long hours and therefore have no time to help with homework, while some have no caregivers at home altogether. The final set of assumptions that were challenged in implementation was related to the availability of reading books in the DBE system, the time taken to procure books as well as whether or not people want to read for pleasure.

In addition to the abovementioned assumptions, two risks were identified, namely the risk of limited reading materials being available for certain African languages, as well as limited feedback from radio stations (see Inception Report B). Both these risks manifested in the programme and caused delays in implementation. The first risk held true with the audit showing that there is a lack of published books in the African literature. This led to more books needing to be procured, taking longer than what the programme had planned for in relation to the sourcing of books. In relation to the radio programmes, all

24 radio episodes were developed, with multiple being broadcasted already. While this had been done, what had not been built into the budget was a financial incentive for a radio station to broadcast episodes - thus additional budget was made available (I317). This process ended up consuming a lot of time and financial resources. The assumption of the radio episodes further raising the awareness of parents and children to the available reading resources is also likely¹⁹ to have not held as the evaluation findings revealed that a small number of households actively listen to the radio, if they own one at all.

Because the implementation process was interrupted by these encountered risks, the probability of the workstream achieving its intended outcomes has been negatively impacted. Due to the pressing nature of the programme outlined in section 2.2, the disruptions in programme execution had negative consequences, as they prevented the timely addressing of the immediate impact of COVID-19 on students. This also applies to the distribution of books, which programme coordinators indicated in interviews they had envisioned as accessible to children *while* they were at home during the pandemic, and for continued use immediately after its conclusion (UNICEF, 2021). The delay in book distribution resulted in the unfulfillment of this vision, as the reading books were only delivered in November of 2022. By this time schools had re-opened, meaning that the most pressing need to support children's continued reading stimulation at home had passed. Nevertheless, some schools were still rotating school attendance, and the possibility of needing to lock down again persisted into the second half of 2022.

The biggest factor contributing to this delay is that in most instances the training delivered through PSA and reading materials were not received in close succession to each other. The training materials and sessions were either received well before the books arrived, or vice versa. This was reflected on during the evaluation fieldwork visits, where teachers in some schools noted that they did not make use of the materials received because they were still waiting for training and proper information on them in order to use them adequately (CS100). Reports from PSA also noted instances of schools not making adequate use of received resources – for example, by not allowing learners to take the books home or by keeping the books in inaccessible locations – which has potential to be due to the schools not receiving adequate training, if they had received it at all. These findings suggest that the training was a relevant enabler to the adequate use of the received reading resources.

While the abovementioned successes and challenges give a sense of the likely benefits derived from the workstream, it is still difficult to adequately determine the overall use of the books, with (I317) noting that “we can never make a link between what this workstream has done and achievements that children might realise in a classroom”.

This does not negate the fact that where books have been received, they have been reflected on as being relevant and appropriate in terms of reading level, grade and language. The shortages in certain African languages again negatively impacted the appropriate apportionment of books to schools, as the number of copies provided varied from school to school, with (NECT, n.d.) stating that “the number of copies received in the schools surveyed ranged from 5 copies in one school to 222 copies in another school.” This has not affected the use of the received books in schools as at least 50% of the schools that has received the books per province reported to be using the books (Mbhalati, 2023). During feedback and monitoring, teachers have emphasized the use of the books at school and to a much lesser extent at home, which goes against the design of the project. In some schools they are still being kept in places where they are only accessible by teachers and not easily by pupils (Mbhalati, 2023). At least 38% of the schools visited by NECT during a storybook reach survey stored/kept the books where the books were not easily accessible by learners – i.e. storeroom/containers/offices (NECT, n.d.). Where books are kept affects present and future use of the books. Very few teachers are encouraging the movement of the books between school and home. Teachers that encourage learners to take the

¹⁹ This can be confirmed by the listenership report from SABC once it is available.

books home are doing so at least once or more in a week (Mbhalati, 2023). However, this monitoring data was based on a small sample of schools.

24 radio episodes related to the delivered books have been developed and are still in the process of being broadcasted. It is unclear the extent to which the radio episodes are being listened to as a listenership report has not yet been received from the SABC.

The planned activities were implemented, albeit not all to completion. Storybook and radio audit templates were designed and distributed to “27 community radio stations, 25 NGOs and 20 publishers” (NECT, 2021b). The audit of storybooks and radio programmes was then conducted, producing lists by language and level for each. This informed the selection of 900 storybook titles to be procured and delivered to schools by January 2022 (NECT, 2021b). Although UNICEF was in charge of procurement, NGOs and NECT also contributed towards the REALS SA reading materials, with each organization contributing various portions in the different provinces as depicted in the table below:

Table 13: Reading Recovery Storybook Sources

Province	Language	# from publishers	# from NGOs	# from NECT	Total
Eastern Cape	isiXhosa	185	1	4	190
	Sesotho	89	34	0	123
Limpopo	Sepedi	95	31	4	132
	Xitsonga	95	10	4	109
	IsiNdebele	101	30	0	131
	Tshivenda	93	32	3	128
KwaZulu-Natal	isiZulu	164	26	0	190
Totals		822	166	15	1 003

(NECT & DBE, 2022a)

The majority of the books were received from publishers, across all the provinces and languages²⁰. Given the analysed budget information, it is assumed that books were largely bought from publishers due to the high allocation for procuring resources. As part of monitoring the reach and utilization rate of the distributed materials, NECT conducted a snapshot survey across 53 schools in total to collect data on the received materials (NECT, n.d.). At least 89% of the 53 surveyed schools had received books from the workstream. It is further noted that 64% of school principals have completed the Learning for Results outcomes, with 60-80% of schools reporting that resources are being used in class, taken home and tracked through the use of loan sheets. It is reported that each school got 50 books in 6 different levels (50 books in level 1²¹, 50 books in level 2 etc), however data collected through the evaluation did not manage to corroborate this. As mentioned in the relevance section above, there were large levels of variance in the number of books delivered to schools, ranging between 5 to 222 copies; furthermore, information collected from evaluation case study schools shows further variance in number of books received.

Due to the low number of books in grades 5 and 6, a decision was taken to procure and deliver books for grades 1 to 4 to all 650 schools in January 2022 (NECT, 2021b). A total of 170 000 out of 230 000 (74%) story books for grades 1 to 4 have been distributed to 650 schools in the three provinces. In addition to this, draft teacher and SMT guidelines for managing and utilizing storybooks were developed and distributed during the training sessions through the Leadership and Management workstream, which, as discussed earlier, sometimes occurred considerably later after the materials have been received. In total, two parent guidelines were produced and translated into seven different African languages, as well as a set of teacher guidelines. At the time of writing, the latest data available to the

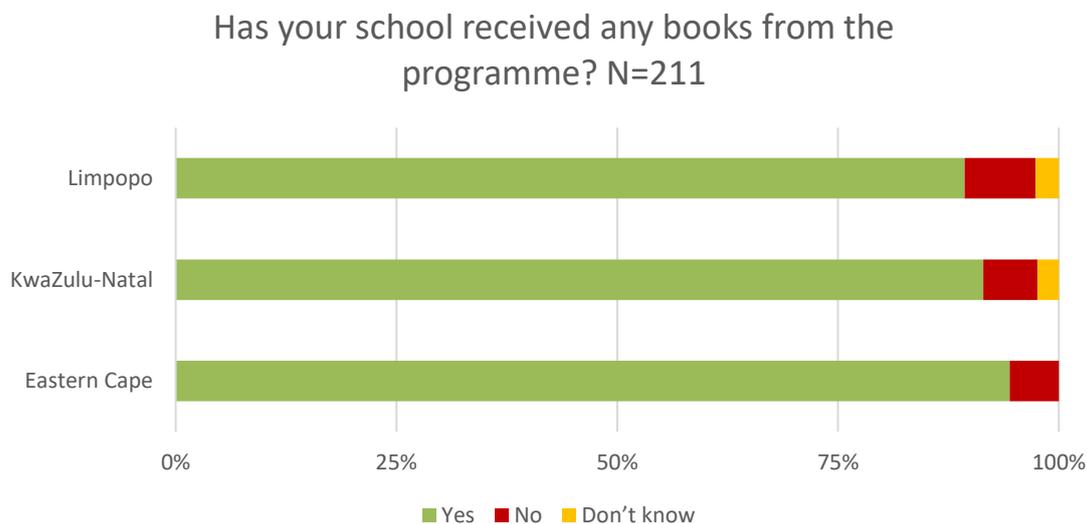
²⁰ The evaluation team has not come across any data that shows how the books were allocated and any financial considerations as to how the books were purchased.

²¹ Please note that 'levels' are not school grades; they are instead the levels of reading for learners within a grade. Each grade therefore has books for reading levels 1 - 6, with 1 being for the weaker readers and 6 being for those that are reading ahead of their grade. I will put this clarification in a footnote

evaluation indicates that all 36 000 foundation phase anthologies are still in the process of being procured and yet to be distributed.

The SMT survey conducted as part of the evaluation gathered inputs from respondents on whether or not they have received reading books as part of the REALS SA programme. Figure 11 below depicts the received responses disaggregated by the various school quintiles:

Figure 11: SMT Survey Responses: Reading Recovery Specific



Apart from the quintile 4 respondents, all respondent schools have largely received storybooks as part of the programme. In addition to these responses, the evaluation team sought to observe the presence of the books in the sample schools visited as part of the evaluation process. Table 14 below presents the data, which is related to reading recovery specific training sessions, the reception of reading materials and their respective languages, as well as levels of awareness to the radio programmes that have been developed:

Table 14: Reading Recovery specific case study observations and data

Description	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS101	CS102	CS137	CS139	CS104
Reading Recovery						
Parents were trained by SGB	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Received parent/teacher/ SGB guide	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Books received	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Books received were both Home Language and English?	English	English & Home language	Home language	Home language	English & Home language	None
Nr of books received	No data	No data	10	13	55	Books not yet received

Description	Limpopo		Eastern Cape		KwaZulu Natal	
	CS134	CS101	CS102	CS137	CS139	CS104
How were books received?	No data	No data	Not delivered directly to school	Delivered to school	From district office	N/A
Sent books home with kids?	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	N/A
Aware of radio programmes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Comment / school reaction	Requested more English books	Not happy with books not useful for learners	Requested English books	Requested English books and charts	Requested more English books and charts	Requested books and charts

As the table shows, all six schools were aware of the reading recovery workstream, and had either received training, books or both training and books as part of the reading recovery workstream. Quantities of books received did indeed vary across the schools, however, it was not clear as to how the quantities had been determined for each grade and/or level. Teachers particularly noted requests for additional copies of books as they struggle with sharing what they currently have with their learners accordingly.

As mentioned in the L&M workstream findings, principals were to be trained and coached on Leading for Reading, which was directly related to the management of the reading resources received through the reading recovery workstream. The training and coaching aimed to reach 650 school principals, and Subject Advisors were to be given guidance on how teachers may support reading in the classroom, but there was no intention to train teachers on this directly. Teachers were instead to receive guidelines on how to use the materials received. In light of this, all interviewed teachers expressed a need for direct training to supplement the received guidelines, with other evaluation participants sharing the same sentiments.

Overall, the reading recovery workstream has made notable progress in identifying the literature-related gaps in primary schools through the storybook audit and using these results to procure outstanding materials. This procurement process was however a lengthy one given the limited implementation period of the programme, which may have been a potential contributor towards the delivery of uneven numbers of books as opposed to what had been originally planned for. The workstream has also managed to produce the complete set of planned radio episodes, although the broadcasting of these became an expense that was unexpectedly borne by the programme as well. Financial and time-related constraints therefore had an observable impact on the effective implementation of the reading recovery workstream.

Table 15: Reading Recovery Benefits Beyond REALS SA

Product / Output	Benefit beyond REALS-SA
Audit of literature available from NGOs and publishers, as well as radio programmes	Audit is now available, has been used to inform a subsequent initiative, and has potential to continue informing various reading or literacy improvement programmes/initiatives
Distributed storybooks	These will continue to be available resources for children in their respective schools

Product / Output	Benefit beyond REALS-SA
Recorded radio programmes	No evidence of DBE planning to make these available online or re-broadcast them. These can however be shared with schools so they may have local copies to play during reading periods or free time
Training materials for parents and SGB members on Parental Support	No evidence of DBE planning to use the materials in other schools
Training materials for school principals: Leading for Reading	No evidence of DBE planning to use the materials in other schools

Based on the evaluation results regarding perceived sustainability, schools that have received books and training are likely to experience long-term effects. The received materials will remain in the schools and serve as educational resources for learners, while teachers will continue to use these resources effectively, and their potential could be further enhanced by receiving training on the guides and reading materials provided. Additionally, merging a programme such as Reading Recovery with other related initiatives that share the same objective would be beneficial in combining available resources to achieve the goal.

Summary

In summary, the evaluation has found that the conceptualization and implementation of the reading recovery workstream was relevant to the recovering reading and losses and increasing access to reading resources. The workstream was underpinned by a logic and ToC that had a shared understanding of intent amongst stakeholders and role-players, however this did not always filter through to teachers (i.e. teachers understanding how to use the resources and what the overall goal is). The shared understating of the programme stakeholders and role-players fed into the conducting of the storybook and radio audits respectively, procurement of outstanding storybooks as well as creation of guidelines for school and community members on how to make optimal use of received resources

5 CONCLUSIONS

This section of the report presents the evaluation's conclusions on the REALS SA programme design and implementation, based on the findings presented in the preceding section 4. It offers a concluding judgement on each of the evaluation criteria – relevance, sustainability, effectiveness and efficiency – and in so doing, responds to the evaluation questions.

In terms of **relevance**, the REALS SA programme benefited from being collectively managed by the DBE, UNICEF and the NECT. Leveraging each institution's strengths and positioning, the programme was able to work directly within and through the education system, drawing on the experience of similar work in the South African context, with international funding and expertise. The programme had a logic strong enough to translate into a coherent ToC through a co-creation process with programme stakeholders and role-players.

There was room for this design to be strengthened as there were various assumptions that did not hold true, the most glaring one being the time that it would take to implement the programme. All those involved in the programme largely held a shared understanding of the intention of the programme, with the exception of provincial leaders in one province requiring more clarity on the purpose of the

programme before uptake of the Leadership and Management workstream. Programme implementation mainly took place through various training and coaching sessions, as well as through the development of materials. Although some workstreams had intended to differentiate their materials to be sensitive to gender and equity considerations, the recovery curriculum workstream is the only one that explicitly managed to do so by developing a framework applicable to both mainstream and special schools. This may be partly attributed to the limited emphasis and implicit way in which gender and equity considerations were articulated in the programme design. Given these factors, the evaluation concludes that the design of the REALS SA programme was relevant and appropriate given the role players and context, except in that it underestimated some risks which placed implementation under pressure.

In terms of **effectiveness**, the majority of planned activities were successfully implemented, although time constraints impacted completion rates. Most targeted participants were reached, with a few remaining activities that could potentially reach more participants. Where data was available, the training and coaching sessions, as well as the produced materials, have been described as relevant and useful by the recipients. However, the programme did not explicitly consider gender and equity elements, which could have improved its effectiveness. The evaluation was unable to determine the extent of medium- and longer-term changes in outcomes. There have been early reports of the training content filtering into daily practices, such as the use of reading resources or school management, although the SMT survey also suggested that it is not always easy to apply leadership training (albeit relevant and easy-to-understand) in a school environment. The effectiveness of the “train the trainer” design is uncertain, with an enthusiastic response by those trained, but limited evidence of the education system’s ability to facilitate the necessary next layer of implementation, notably for the AfL workstream. Further and consistent monitoring of the training recipients is necessary to observe the extent of changes.

In evaluating the **efficiency** of the programme, it is notable that while there were some successes, there were several challenges that impacted on the quality of programme delivery and allocation of budget for planned activities. The no-cost extension provided some relief, enabling service providers to complete some planned activities that were affected by the delays in implementation. Implementation delays were mainly attributable to contextual factors such as floods, a lack of technological support in some provinces, delays and unavailability of officials, and difficulties in securing approval for dates and venues. These limitations led to sessions being rescheduled and additional funding being required, with insufficient initial budgeting for streaming reading programmes in radio stations and limited reading materials contributing to further budget shortfalls. It also appears that there was inadequate resourcing of a central monitoring function. Despite these challenges, the programme was efficient in delivering some of its activities and relevant outputs, with the use of service providers allowing NECT to deliver on key activities without being overburdened.

Finally, this evaluation sought to judge **sustainability** by determining the extent to which the net benefits from the programme are likely to continue. Materials that have been developed through the workstreams such as the QAF, the reading resource audit and the training modules for school principals, are likely to remain available for use and/or adaptation in the education system post-REALS SA implementation. The REALS SA programme therefore has strong potential for sustainability, in that most of the expenditure has gone into materials that can be expected to remain within the system for re-use and/or adaptation. It remains unclear, however, to what extent there is an intention on the part of national or provincial departments to do so. As for the likelihood of sustained benefits from capacity building and training, the evidence is more uneven across workstreams. A later section makes recommendations for an exit and sustainability plan to strengthen this.

6 LESSONS LEARNED

The REALS SA programme is in its concluding stages. The scope for the evaluation to inform course correction or changes to implementation is therefore limited, with the recommendations (the following section) focusing on ensuring full programme reach and arrangements for effective exit and handover.

Rather than giving rise to recommendations for action in relation to the REALS SA, at this stage many of the evaluation insights are best applied as lessons for future programmes of a similar nature by the participating organisations.

Collaboration across entities: It appears that the overall arrangements for collaboration between UNICEF, DBE, NECT and the EU were effective and a similar arrangement may be considered in future.

Prioritisation of the programme: It is clear that although the REALS SA interventions are clearly in line with departmental priorities, the DBE and provincial departments had competing priorities and/or stretched capacity. This impacted their responsiveness, availability for monitoring/oversight as well as (as far as the evaluation can ascertain) intergovernmental and intra-departmental communication about the programme. This is despite advocacy sessions and inclusion of provincial representatives on technical teams. Coming towards the end of the programme, the evaluation also flagged concerns about the extent of commitment to taking the work further (in some workstreams more than in others.) Despite this, it is clear that a programme of this nature must work with and through the department and not external to it – the question is how to do so well. Given how fundamental this challenge was and the limited insight that the evaluation yielded into it, it is included in the recommendations below as a topic for further stakeholder reflection.

Co-designing workstreams: It appears that some of the logistical challenges and apparent competing priorities of provincial and district officials, which undermined implementation, could have been resolved through greater co-designing of the interventions with provincial departments. Provincial departments may have given inputs to make the planned interventions more realistic for the context (e.g. the number of sessions, mode of delivery) and this may also have increased their ownership and prioritisation of the programme. An even stronger approach – but perhaps less feasible – would be to include representatives of the target populations (subject advisors, teachers etc.).

Integrated vs. standalone workstreams: The REALS SA programme demonstrates that there are benefits as well as disadvantages to conceiving of multiple workstreams as a single programme. There may be institutional or resourcing factors that make this unavoidable, there are some economies of scale for programme management and administration, and it may be easier to leverage natural synergies between interventions. However, this is traded off against greater complexity in communicating about the programme; and diluted governance, management and monitoring attention across a wide set of activities and results (and concomitant risks and intricacies). Since this design choice is likely to arise in many future programmes of this nature, the evaluation team recommends that stakeholders jointly reflect further on this lesson to deepen their insight of what would work best under what circumstances.

Train the trainer model: While a train-the-trainer model is attractive from a resource efficiency perspective, the REALS SA experience suggests that there is significant risk in this approach. A longer causal chain must be realised in order for programme implementation (training of the trainers) to change outcomes. Wherever a train-the-trainer approach is taken, any doubt about the commitment/capacity of the recipient institution or trainees to roll the training out further, introduces the risk of spent resources having been wasted. Whereas there was scope within the Reading workstream to at least monitor (if not directly support) SGB members' sharing of their lessons with parents, the delays in implementation of AfL subject advisor training means that very little time and resources remain to influence the extent to which they convey their lessons to teachers. This does not mean that a train the trainer approach is

always ill advised, but that assumptions and risks must be particularly carefully articulated and tracked, with sufficient space for adaptation.

Careful logistical planning: The evaluation clearly demonstrates that logistical realities – such as poor road infrastructure, poorly mapped areas, and imperfect contact databases – must be factored into planning for a programme that involves physical travel to schools, in order to set realistic time frames and allocate sufficient resources.

Factors conducive to online engagement: From implementing both face to face and online training sessions, the REALS SA programme can derive lessons about the conditions under which online delivery can work or should rather be avoided. Of course, good connectivity is essential, and loadshedding impacts on this. Where online training is undertaken, creative approaches will need to be conceptualized to deal with power cuts and other factors related to online connectivity. These can include hosting sessions after hours where trainees are in areas with better connectivity, or all trainees clustering in one venue to avoid multiple connection issues (Performance Solutions Africa, 2022). Even where connectivity is conducive, participants' age profiles and digital confidence are also factors, but PSA (in a 2023 progress report) suggested that the relationship between the school and the broader programme / implementers (such as REALS SA), and support from district officials matter too. The general health and performance of the institution (in this case, schools) may influence the quality of engagement with online training too – in this case, the observation was in relation to schools, but it may also help to explain variations in engagement among subject advisors and circuit managers from different areas. It appears reasonable, when several of these factors are unconducive, not to opt for online training.

Adequate investment in monitoring. The REALS SA programme's decision to rely mainly on progress reporting to oversight structures as a form of monitoring, was disadvantageous in a number of ways. Implementation partners reported on progress in distinct workstreams, but the lack of a central monitoring and data management function obscured the extent to which workstreams were "coming together" on the ground as intended. It also undermined the quality and clarity of data available for the evaluation and will hamper attempts to follow up with district and school based stakeholders, or refer back to programme information in future. Programmes of this nature warrant investment in a sound monitoring system and allocation of human resources to implement it consistently. The question of relying on DBE's and PDEs' own databases vs. developing programme-specific databases, is part of the recommendations for further reflection in the next section.

Gender and equity considerations: Two lessons emerge from the evaluation findings in this regard. The first is implementation related: The REALS SA programme aimed to include special schools in its pilot programme along with mainstream schools but did not have an explicitly differentiated approach in implementation. This proved to be a disadvantage in special schools where the mainstream materials were not as useful without other additional considerations such as books in braille for visually impaired learners, for example. Arguably, some resources could have been better spent had this been factored in during planning. It is therefore imperative to note that where a programme aims to serve participants in different contexts, deliberate attention should be given to what an inclusive approach will require, for each of the main interventions (e.g. workstreams).

The second lesson pertains to the content of materials and training. In addition to considering the practicalities of implementation in diverse environments, gender and equity considerations need to be made more explicit and purpose-oriented within the programme design so that it builds participants' capacity to promote a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Such a focus could enhance programme effectiveness through gender-sensitive teaching practices and learning materials that increase awareness about gender biases and stereotypes. A focus on gender and equity considerations can help to identify, and remove, barriers to education, such as poverty, racial and/or cultural norms, or gender-based violence. It can help ensure that all students have access to quality education and the

support they need to perform and succeed academically; promote diversity and inclusion in the classroom where students learn from and appreciate different perspectives and experiences; and support a positive impact on society.

Radio programmes: Although the evaluation's evidence was very limited, it appears that radio programmes are not necessarily a high-impact intervention to reach parents in the South African context. Forthcoming listenership reports must help to confirm or disprove this. It is possible that distribution of audio content via multiple means (radio *plus* a mobile platform for instance) can strengthen audio recordings. Lessons can also be learned from similar programmes.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Recommendations for an exit and sustainability plan

It is recommended that the REALS SA exit and sustainability plan address three major objectives:

1. Strengthen data about what was achieved and who was reached.

The sample-based approach to both the Reading Recovery monitoring exercise and the evaluation school case studies, suggested that a comprehensive follow-up with all 650 schools is needed and/or consolidation of workstreams' monitoring data by school. This is needed to confirm which interventions were received and to what extent (e.g. number of books - "dosage" in monitoring and evaluation terminology). Similar enumeration is needed in relation to subject advisor and circuit manager training, distinguishing between individuals who benefited from the full set of sessions and those who benefited from most, or few, sessions.

In the process, contact databases should be strengthened. A consolidated repository of programme documentation should also be developed and stored, in line with knowledge management policies of the governing entities.

2. Informed by the above, and prioritising as needed, "mop up" and/or respond to gaps in implementation. The evaluation findings suggest that this will require distribution of materials in several instances.

The above two objectives must be addressed in order for UNICEF and partners to manage reputation risk (where expectations were not met) and to substantiate the claim as to the number of schools and others reached with the full programme. It would also be a prerequisite to any future attempts to track outcomes (see later recommendation).

3. For each workstream, work with DBE and PDEs to develop and secure endorsement of the way forward.

At national level, partners should work with DBE to develop a plan indicating how it intends to use the materials and other assets going forward. Building on lessons, it may be best to write separate plans for each of the four workstreams to facilitate close engagement and endorsement by different units and senior managers within DBE.

PDEs should be part of this planning. At PDE level, this may take the form of the technical team members (including UNICEF, DBE and NECT, the implementation partners and the PDE officials) returning to those who participated in advocacy sessions, to discuss achievements and agree on how best to ensure sustained benefit, use, and where appropriate, further rollout.

Ideally both DBE and PDEs can demonstrate integration of this into their next draft Strategic Plans (2024-2029), Annual Performance Plans and budgets for the upcoming MTEF. However, the emphasis should be on the strategic discussion and ownership of the way forward, regardless of mechanisms for operationalising this intent.

7.2 General recommendations for the REALS SA programme and partners

In addition to the above exit planning recommendations, the following recommendations are made.

- A. The EU, UNICEF, DBE and NECT should explore opportunities to build on the foundation of good collaboration that has been laid through the REALS SA programme.**
- B. UNICEF should allocate (or ensure the allocation of) additional resources to mitigating the clearest threats to programme effectiveness.** In addition to ensuring full rollout of interventions, the evaluation has highlighted risk in relation to the rollout of Assessment for Learning training from subject advisors to teachers. However it was also reported that AfL training is proceeding in other provinces, which may present opportunities in this regard.
- C. UNICEF, DBE and NECT should assess the realisation of outcomes**, whether in the form of a fully-fledged outcome evaluation or not. This would be based on an assumption of implementation fidelity (hence the dependence on addressing implementation gaps as part of exit). This can incorporate the forthcoming datasets from implementation partners (respondent feedback from the AfL workstream; and the endline study on school governance and management from PSA). Even with limited resources, if it is not feasible to use a methodology that would allow for estimation of impact across the entire programme population(s), considerable insight can be gained into what has worked under different conditions by taking a qualitative and potentially case study-based approach, focusing on the workstreams or population(s) of greatest interest.
- D. The EU, UNICEF, DBE and NECT should embark on a process of deeper learning / investigation** on some of the key programme issues. Based on the evaluation, the following are recommended.
 - **How to approach multi-workstream programmes** – whether and to what extent to integrate them into a single programme, and how to mitigate disadvantages of the approach chosen.
 - **Gender & equity.** Clearly more deliberate consideration of this would have assisted. But more reflection is required to come up with actionable means of doing this in future.
 - **Working with and through the education system** – How to leverage DBE’s and PDEs’ strengths but mitigate the risks that come with their internal weaknesses and challenges. Practically speaking, how can one manage shortcomings in communication, coordination and stakeholder management?
 - **Online delivery** – what may be incorporated into a “readiness assessment” to inform the choice of online delivery of interventions such as these? And during

implementation, how might risks and assumptions be effectively monitored to ensure a prompt response to problems?

- E. These partners should also ensure that these lessons are communicated and applied in future programmes.** The proposed Colloquium is a good start, and should be accompanied by a communications and learning plan that would reach wider audiences in the partner institutions and beyond.

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9 ANNEXES

9.1 Evaluation Terms of Reference

See attached document titled “*REALS SA Evaluation Final Report Annexure-9.1-ToR*”

9.2 Ethical Clearance Approval Letter

See attached document titled “*REALS SA Evaluation Final Report Annexure-9.2-Ethical Clearance Approval Letter*”

9.3 Brief Fieldwork Report

See attached document titled “*REALS SA Evaluation Final Report Annexure-9.3-Brief Fieldwork Report*”

9.4 Evaluation Matrix and Questions

Evaluation Questions

9.4.1 Design: Relevance

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
Design					
Relevance					
To what extent is the programme's objectives and design responsive to beneficiaries' needs. Is the REALS SA theory of change designed in a manner that is likely to lead to the anticipated results?	a. Is there a coherent theory of change underpinning the REALS SA project as a whole? To what extent does the Programme's intervention logic, including its goals and objectives include gender and equity considerations?	Document review of programme documents Interviews with NECT & NECT stakeholders Theory of Change workshop and consultation with programme stakeholders	Thematically analyse interview transcripts using NVIVO, identifying themes and comparing convergence / divergence of views and understanding Develop a theory of change as articulated by stakeholders in the theory of change workshop as well as supporting programme documents. Assess the causal relationships, risks, and assumptions in final Theory of Change drawing on views of stakeholders and reviewed documentation. Explore and appraise the extent to which equity considerations have been explicitly incorporated. Our team's expertise on South African education interventions will be applied to render a judgment of certain design components. This includes judgement from an equity lens.	Plausibility of assumptions in theory of change Extent to which programme design characteristics and components are in line with "what works" according to literature, evaluation team & stakeholders' experience in the SA context, including changes in context due to COVID Coherence of programme understanding across interviewed stakeholders Extent to which the Programme's objectives and design has been formulated to achieve equity. The extent to which the Programme's objectives and design are inclusive of equity considerations (mainstreaming equity considerations)	A Theory of Change has been developed and validated by relevant stakeholders. While no programmes have been identified as formal benchmarks, the evaluation will invite interviewees to compare the programme's design elements with similar elements that they have encountered elsewhere.
	b. To what extent did key stakeholders in the project have a shared understanding of the programme design, purpose, and theory of change?				
	c. What are the different elements (to be identified and defined) in the interventions which are intended to be influencing change?				
	d. Which of these elements can be expected to change and improve classroom practice?				
	e. Are the assumptions underpinning the theory of change plausible, and cognisant of difference?				
	f. What are the implementation modalities being used in the	Document review of programme documents	Thematic analysis of transcripts Document review	Criteria in the equity guideline	

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
	interventions? How equity sensitive are these?	Interviews with NECT & NECT stakeholders Theory of Change Workshop and consultation with programme stakeholders Interviews with implementing partners	Thematic analysis of reports Assess the causal relationships, risks, and assumptions in final Theory of Change drawing on views of stakeholders and reviewed documentation	Extent to which implementation modalities are clear in documents and coherent among interviewed stakeholders Extent to which implementation modalities are aligned to “what works” according to literature, evaluation team & stakeholders’ experience in the SA context, including changes in context due to COVID	
	g. Are there any envisaged obstacles or risks to smooth implementation, and have these been sufficiently planned for?	Interviews with Implementing partners Document review of programme management and implementation reports	Thematic analysis of transcripts Document review Thematic analysis of reports	Assumption- and risk-related indicators in the log frame Of major risks identified as per judgment of design (above), portion that are acknowledged and addressed in documentation or in stakeholder interviews (qualitative portion e.g. none, few, most)	It is assumed this question focuses on risks inherent in the programme design – as initially designed, as well as fundamental design shifts that occurred along the way (e.g. major changes in timeframes, official targets, governance or resourcing) Ongoing project implementation risks and their management will be covered under later questions
	h. Is the design uniform or customised for different schools and equity factors, bearing in mind that schools will receive language specific resources (functionality, level of engagement)?	Interviews with UNICEF and NECT stakeholders Document review of programme documents Interviews with Implementing partners	Thematic analysis of transcripts Document review Application of equity guideline as appropriate	Indicators in the log frame Degree of customisation planned for in terms of language, school type, and equity considerations (see equity guideline standards on sensitivity and resourcing). (Qualitative degree e.g. minimal, somewhat, to a large extent, given salient variation/differences in context)	
	i. To what extent might we expect the REALS SA project, if implemented as planned, to achieve its intended outcomes?	Drawing on the above methods and sources	Drawing on the above analyses	Summary of judgments from the above-mentioned questions	
	j. To what extent was gender equality, child rights and equity considerations	Desk review of meetings minutes.	Trace the integration of equity considerations in the Theory of	Indicators in the log frame	

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
	mainstreamed within the design and implementation of the programme? Such as gender, race, ethnicity, disability, geographic location etc.	Document review of programme documents. Interviews with UNICEF and NECT. Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with task team group (DBE, NECT+ Implementing partner)	Change and programme design, as expressed by sources listed on the left Analyse equity considerations in programme design in relation to the REALS SA goal(s) and objectives, representation, awareness and sensitivity (level of responsiveness), resources	All judgment criteria under Design in the Equity Analysis Guideline	

9.4.2 Design: Sustainability

Sustainability					
To what extent are the net benefits from the programme likely to continue?	k. What are the main cost drivers in the REALS SA design?	Desk review of recent quarterly expenditure report available in August 2022. Document review of monitoring data from implementing partners (progress reports, workshop evaluation forms, outcome data, and self-reported assessments). Interviews with UNICEF, NECT, and implementing partners	Identify "main cost drivers" as per programme budget and expenditure to date, and determine their relationship to elements in the Theory of Change Identify major budget adjustments that took place in the life of the programme to date and analyse which components of the Theory of Change they related to	Indicators in the log frame Necessity and sufficiency budgets allocated to main cost driver items for achieving main programme objectives Appropriateness of budget allocation across programme components in light of risks identified (question g) Criteria on Resourcing in the equity guideline	
	l. Make recommendations for an exit and sustainability plan that is inclusive and equity sensitive	Synthesis of findings Synthesis of Recommendations workshop	Identify strengths for sustained outcomes and risks to sustained outcomes from the overall findings, looking at areas such as stakeholder ownership and independent implementation; resourcing requirements; policy alignment and accountability arrangements; equity dimensions. Make recommendations in relation to these. Validate and refine with stakeholders	Extent to which programme, as currently implemented, appears likely to generate sustainable outcomes (differentiating the judgment across workstreams) Recommendations themselves will be developed with criteria of	It is assumed that no exit or sustainability plan will have been articulated at the time of analysis; if this changes the method will change to one of constructive criticism and proposals for strengthening the plan drawing on what has come to light in the evaluation.

				relevance, feasibility, acceptability and affordability in mind	
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9.4.3 Implementation: Effectiveness

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
IMPLEMENTATION					
Effectiveness					
To what extent has the programme achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives and results? To what extent were the REALS SA interventions implemented with fidelity?	m. Did all the planned elements of the REALS SA programme get implemented as planned? In other words, to what extent did each of the four workstreams mobilise the resources, conduct the activities, and produce the outputs as planned? (With a focus on training, gender and equity considerations as intended, “reach” (e.g. nr of parents listening to broadcasts; nr of SMT members who attended sessions) and the distribution of materials.)	Theory of Change Desk review of monitoring data from implementing partners Focus group with Circuit managers Interviews with UNICEF and NECT Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB	Overall method: Process tracing against the TOC (including detailed workstream results chains), using all available data sources such as implementation reports. Quantify and compare planned activities such as delivery and distribution of materials, trainings, coaching, broadcasted episodes, and frequency in use of materials, against those that occurred. Disaggregate output data based on gender and equity factors as well as appraise who were the key actors/ decision-makers, how were resources allocated, were activities informed by equity considerations?	Indicators in the log frame Percentage of targets achieved in relation to reach of schools and target groups, outputs generated, representation of women and girls, geographic coverage, etc. Regularity of repeat sessions (e.g. coaching sessions) (percentage that took place as planned vs. being postponed, cancelled or rescheduled) Frequency of meetings in relation to the TORs of key governance structures (e.g. more often than planned; as often as planned; not nearly as often as planned) and attendance trends (frequency of attendance from each major entity represented) Criteria on Implementation in the equity guideline	We assume that each workstream will have reached the stage of implementing with school-based stakeholders by the time we conduct data collection.
	n. How were the initiatives received by the intended target groups (teachers, SMTs, SGBs, principals, parents, circuit managers and subject advisors, learners) and why?	Review of monitoring data from implementing partners Focus group with Task Team Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT Case study methodology:	Thematically analyse interviews transcripts using NVIVO Descriptive analysis of survey results	Indicators in the log frame	

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
		Document review In-depth in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB			
	o. So far, to what extent has each workstream contributed to changes in the attitudes, knowledge, and capabilities of the target groups? How does this align with what was intended for each workstream?	Review of monitoring data from implementing partners Focus group with Task Team Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB	Thematically analyse interviews transcripts and open-ended survey answers using NVIVO Process tracing against the TOC	Indicators in the log frame % change in self-assessment ratings (Assessment for Learning pre- and post-tests) Distribution of survey responses on questions related to changes in attitudes, knowledge and capabilities Strength of themes in relation to the main intended changes in attitudes, knowledge, capabilities. (Strong themes = prevalence of clusters of similar views/ideas; theme expressed by comparatively many respondents; multiple examples shared; sometimes volunteered without prompting). In applying this judgement criterion, distinguish between transcripts of participants themselves vs. others.	At the level of behaviour change, data may be limited to (1) the impressions of stakeholders about the behaviour of others; and (2) self-reported behaviour changes.
	p. So far, what evidence is there that the initiatives have contributed to changes in the behaviour of the target groups? How does this align with what was intended for each workstream?	Desk review of monitoring data from implementing partners Focus group with Task Team Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT survey Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents	Thematic analysis of the transcripts Process tracing against the TOC (including detailed workstream results chains), using all available data sources such as implementation reports transcripts.	Indicators in the log frame Strength of evidence on claims of changed behaviour, and contribution of REALS SA to observed changes (e.g. number of data types and data points per claim; balance of confirmatory vs.	

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
		Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB		contradictory data points; extent to which evidence refutes the most salient alternative explanations for observed change) – ultimately, the apparent reliability of the current evidence base to support REALS SA claims of contributing to changed behaviour	
	q. In the short to medium term, what further evidence would help to strengthen REALS-SA decision-makers' understanding of the above changes?	Desk review of monitoring data from implementing partners	Analyse the strengths and weakness of data availability and utilisation, distinguishing between evidence strengths/gaps on implementation and evidence strengths/gaps on outcomes	Recommendations will be made so that the programme has evidence better meeting the criteria listed above for strong evidence in relation to question p.	

9.4.4 Implementation: Relevance

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
Relevance					
To what extent were the REALS SA programme's interventions relevant?	r. How appropriate and relevant were materials provided through REALS SA in terms of gender & equity considerations, language and level?	Desk review of monitoring data from implementing partners Interviews with implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB	Compare delivered material against language preferred, differentiation between boy and girl learners, where applicable. Thematically analyse interviews transcripts using NVIVO Descriptive analysis of survey results	Indicators in the log frame Criteria in the equity guideline under Implementation Weight of quantitative (survey; feedback forms) & qualitative evidence that school-based respondents view materials as appropriate and relevant, noting differences in school contexts	
	s. To what extent are the REALS SA materials being used?	Interviews with Implementing partner Desk review monitoring data from implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors	Descriptive analysis Thematic analysis of transcripts from interviews and focus groups	Indicators in the log frame By type of material, % of targeted participants / schools using the material	Baselines on the use of pre-existing resources are important to put these results in context, but may not be available

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
		SMT survey Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB		(as reported in structured monitoring data) By type of material, strength of qualitative evidence that respondents are familiar with the materials' contents and/or the practicalities of their use	systematically (e.g. teachers' implementation of the curriculum pre-COVID; pre-existing use of available books at the schools). The evaluation may need to rely on self-reporting here.
	t. How well are teachers implementing the trimmed curriculum and how effectively have the REALS SA interventions managed to support this? Teachers are being trained to design and develop the tools for monitoring. Were the tools designed and implementors trained?	Desk review of monitoring data from implementing partners Interviews with Implementing partners Focus group with Subject Advisors Survey with SMT Case study methodology: Document review of in-class documents Structured interviews with teachers Focus group with parents Focus group with the SGB	Thematically analyse interviews and focus groups transcripts using NVIVO Descriptive analysis of survey results	Indicators in the log frame Degree of alignment of curriculum practices (according to monitoring reports) with intended practices Percentage of teachers who have been trained; percentage of teachers reported to have developed tools (as reported in structured monitoring data) Strength of qualitative evidence that teachers (in case study schools) are familiar with and personal experience of implementing the training in this regard	
	u. What were the actual costs of the REALS SA project, disaggregated into the main elements? How did this compare to what was planned?	Review of Quarterly expenditure report available in August 2021 Programme Budget Desk review of Service level agreements with implementing partners Review of monitoring data from implementing partners	Comparison of the costs of the programme as designed against costs of the programme as implemented. For example, the expenditure and revised budgets. Disaggregate by workstreams	Indicators in the log frame Percentage difference between budget and expenditure on major cost drivers Percentage of expenditure so far against allocated budgets; Apparent sufficiency of remaining budgets to meet output targets and activate outcomes in the Theory of Change, differentiated by workstream	

9.4.5 Implementation: Efficiency

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
Efficiency					
To what extent were the programme's interventions undertaken in an economic manner? This being the efficient conversion of inputs into outputs	v. What are the lessons for improving programme implementation in the future if similar	Synthesis of lessons for project design and implementation will be identified throughout the	Expert knowledge will be weaved into the report and lessons. Thematically analyse interviews and focus groups transcripts using NVIVO. Descriptive analysis of survey results	No judgment criteria – not an evaluative question	

Questions	Sub-Questions	Data collection method and source	Analysis	Judgement Criteria	Assumptions
and outcomes in a cost-effective manner.	support programmes are conducted?	answering of all other questions. Application of education expertise Review of literature on implementation of Reading programmes			

9.5 Equity Analysis Framework

REALS SA EVALUATION: EQUITY ANALYSIS GUIDELINE

18 May 2022

Purpose

The Equity Analysis Guideline is intended to provide an equity-focused lens to the evaluation questions, but in the main, to analyse the evaluation findings of the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS SA) Programme. The Guideline begins with a definition of What is Equity and thereafter proposes criteria for equity considerations in the planning and implementation of the evaluation and arriving at findings. The criteria will be used by the evaluation team to guide and inform their data collection from an equity perspective. Through this, the team will be able to evaluate the extent to which equity considerations have been mainstreamed in the planning and implementation of REALS SA (reference: key evaluation question j).

What is Equity?

“Equity means that all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favouritism.”²²

Equity is understood as the goal towards eliminating the unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive and prevent access to the realisation of rights regardless of **gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location, environment, and/or other related and relevant status**. Programmes and projects with an equity focus aim to prioritise less fortunate, underprivileged, and systematically disadvantaged groups.

This document will guide the evaluation to appraise and judge the extent to which the Programme has factored in achieving equitable results.

Equity-focused criteria

The proposed equity-focused criteria consider gender, human rights (access, race, religious beliefs), and social inclusion (income, physical attributes, geographical location) and the environment. For the purposes of the evaluation, the equity criteria are categorised in these four broad categories.

The table below proposes a rating scale with **4 levels** for assessing the equity criteria, these are:

1. **Equity-blind:** Ignoring the relevance of equity dimensions; failure to recognise the existing differences in gender, human rights-related attributes or that related to aspects of social inclusion and the environment.
2. **Equity-neutral:** There is no apparent association to the inclusion or exclusion of gender, human rights, social inclusion, or environmental dimensions.
3. **Equity-sensitive:** There is evidence of equity dimensions having been considered in the Programme planning and design to implementation.
4. **Equity-positive:** The focus is on Programme outcomes with a clear focus on the inclusion of equity dimensions that seed (and may realise) transformative change.

For each criterion a rating ranging from “Equity-blind” (colour coded RED) to “Equity-positive” (colour coded GREEN) will be applied.

The equity-focused criteria provide clear points of reference in relation to the extent to which equity considerations have been included in the design and implementation of the REALS SA Programme.

²² Bamberger M and Segone M (2011) How to design and manage Equity-focused evaluations, UNICEF Evaluation Office. Accessed at: http://mymande.org/sites/default/files/EWP5_Equity_focused_evaluations.pdf

Proposed Equity Criteria

Criteria	Scale			
	Equity-blind	Equity-neutral - minimum standards	Equity-sensitive - empowerment	Equity positive - transformative change
Programme design				
<i>Clearly specified goal(s) and objectives</i>				
The extent to which the Programme's objectives and design has been formulated to achieve equity				
The extent to which the Programme's objectives and design are inclusive of equity considerations (mainstreaming equity considerations)				
<i>Representation</i>				
The extent to which key stakeholders in the Programme are representative of equity-focused demographics, i.e., women, low income and marginalised groups, diverse religious and racial groups, human rights-based and environment organisations, among others				
Influence of equity considerations in determining the target population of the Programme				
<i>Awareness and sensitivity, i.e., level of responsiveness</i>				
To what extent were the Programme interventions designed to influence change?				
Were they designed to increase sensitivity to equity considerations?				
Did the Programme design differentiate for equity considerations in the selection of schools for REALS SA?				
<i>Resources</i>				
Did the Programme planning, and design allocate resources for groups considered "worst off" by equity standards?				
<i>Implementation</i>				
<i>Analysing conditions to understand implementation in relation to equity considerations</i>				

Criteria	Scale			
	Equity-blind	Equity-neutral - minimum standards	Equity-sensitive - empowerment	Equity positive - transformative change
The extent to which implementation of the Programme in each of the four workstreams has been inclusive of equity considerations				
Were the materials developed appropriate and relevant to equity dimensions?				
To what extent are the Programme outputs reflective of equity considerations?				
<i>Influence and decision-making</i>				
The extent to which equity concerns were taken up and/or incorporated in the decisions by the education authorities or school management structures				

9.6 Evaluation Data Collection Instruments²³

9.6.1 Circuit Manager Focus Group Guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Note taker:

Attendance Register

Province	District	Circuit	Gender

Introductions

- Let's start by giving each person an opportunity to share their position, the circuit(s) that you are responsible for, and how long you have been in this role.
- In what ways have you have been involved in the programme and which workstreams?

Design

Relevance

- How did the onset of COVID affect curriculum management specifically in schools within your jurisdiction?
- In what way has the training you have received relevant to needs of your duties in relation to curriculum?

²³ Data collection protocols can be found as annexures to Inception Report B.

- Did the training support your understanding of aspects such as gender, human rights, social inclusion, or the environment?

Implementation

Relevance

- What type of support have you received through the REALS SA programme?
- How many sessions have you attended?
- How did you experience the content you were trained on?
- In what way has the training you have received addressed the needs you have to manage the curriculum, reading and assessment?
- Can you identify any needs that are specific to boy and girl learners?

Effectiveness

- Is there anything that you do differently now due to the training you have received?
- How are you monitoring the outcomes of your work? Is monitoring disaggregated for boy and girl learners, learners with disabilities, or other considerations?
- How has the training on the quality assurance framework contributed to your understanding of the quality assurance framework?
- How has the training on the quality assurance framework contributed to your ability to use it appropriately?
- How do you make use of Circuit Manager meetings to improve management of the curriculum, reading and assessment?
- Is there anything you would suggest changing about implementation in future iterations of the programme? How could it be done differently to be more inclusive of equity considerations?

Sustainability

- Was the training you attended similar (content-wise) to any other programmes or trainings you have attended before?
- By the time the programme ends, what do you think will have changed in the way you approach your work going forward? Why?

Closing

- This is the end of my questions. Is there anything else that the group would like to comment on regarding this programme?
- Are there any further questions?

9.6.2 Implementing Partner interview guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Note taker:

Name of participant(s):

Participant(s) Gender:

Introductions

- For the record, please state your name, position, and when you took up this position?
- What is your role in the leadership and management; Recovery Curriculum; Assessment for learning; or the Reading Recovery workstream?
- Can you briefly describe your experience working in your workstream?

Design

- What were the envisaged obstacles or risks to smooth implementation on your workstream? How were they planned for?
- How were gender equality, child rights and equity considerations mainstreamed within the design?
- By the time the programme ends, what lasting change is intended to remain in place for each of the key groups that your workstream is targeting?

Implementation

- Overall, how has implementation gone so far? What would you highlight as the key successes and key challenges?

[Facilitator to prepare customized questions per workstream based on review of data on implementation so far. Be sure to cover programme reach (nr of persons to be reached, training implementation, and the distribution of materials). The questions that follow may be adapted to ensure this.]

Materials

- How do you ensure that the material is appropriate for learners/teachers/parents/subject advisors?
- How has the distribution of material unfolded?

Training implementation

- What were some of the challenges with the trainings?
- Which aspects of the training do you believe were helpful to participants?
- How did you ensure that participants understand and absorb the training?
- On reflection, would you say that the training was equity-neutral or equity-sensitive? Why?

Equity and mainstreaming of cross-cutting issues

- How were gender equality, child rights and equity considerations mainstreamed within the implementation of the programme?
- How does your workstream approach the differences between schools in its implementation?

Effectiveness

- What factors do you believe will lead to a successful uptake of new curriculum practices, assessment for learning practices, leadership and management and reading recovery? (Choose based on relevant workstream)
- Earlier we discussed which lasting changes are intended to remain in place when the programme ends. To what extent is the programme on track to achieve these changes by the end of the programme? Why / why not?

Programme management

- As you know, we are using some of the monitoring data that you generate, in our evaluation. How else do you use or expect the data collected to be used?
- You have tabled various outputs to the workstream Task Team and reported back to them on progress at certain points. To what extent has the Task Team enabled or hindered implementation of the workstream so far?

Closing

- This is the end of my questions. Is there anything else that the group would like to comment on regarding this workstream?
- Are there any further questions?

9.6.3 Parent/caregiver interview and SGB focus group guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Note taker:

Attendance register

School	Role i.e teacher, parent	Gender

Introductions

- For the record, please state your name, and your relationship to the learner?
- Which grade is the learner/s? (*For parent interviews, SGB members will fill the attendance register*)
- Can you describe your experience with the REALS programme? How were you introduced to it?
- How are you involved in school structure? i.e SGB member (*for parent interviews*)

Implementation

Relevance

[I am now going to ask you questions about how the programme deals with the learning needs of your child and your needs to help your child with school responsibilities]

- What challenges do you experience with supporting your learner with reading and homework? What type of support have you received from your child's school SGB members about supporting your child to read?

Effectiveness

[I am now going to ask you questions about how the programme works in real life in your experience]

- How do make use of SGB meeting to improve management of the curriculum, reading and assessment? (*SGB members*)?
- Have you used the training to support parents?
- Have you made use of the training to support parents (*SGB members*)?
- What did you learn/gain, if anything, from the workshop? (*For SGBs and parents/caregivers*).

[As part of this programme, various learning tools such as the parent guides, radio episodes and reading books have been developed and distributed to schools and parents. I am now going to ask about your experience and your child's experience with this learning tools]

- Which of these have you used: 10-page parent guide and reading radio episodes?
- Can you describe your experience with accessing and using the 10-page parent guide?
- Do you find it easy or hard to implement the instructions from the 10-page parent guide? Please explain.
- How has your child responded to your support using the parent guide?
- Can you describe your experience with listening to the reading radio episodes?
- How has your child responded to listening to the reading radio episodes?
- Does your child use the reading books from school at home?
- How do you ensure your child has time and space to read and do homework?

- Which parts of the overall support are aligned with your needs (i.e parent guide or SGB members)?
- How has the support from this programme contributed to your ability to help your child with homework and reading?
- How has the support from this programme contributed to your ability to support parent with children's school needs?

Closing

- This is the end of my questions. Is there anything else that you would like to comment on regarding this programme?
- Are there any further questions?

9.6.4 Subject Advisors Focus Group Guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Note taker:

Attendance register

Province	District	Subjects	Gender

Introductions

- Let us do a round of introductions. Would every person please share your district, and subjects that you are responsible for?
- What has the involvement of this group been in the Assessment for Learning sub-programme that is being implemented as part of the REALS SA Programme? [either establish this through group discussion if it is similar for everyone; or if it appears necessary, go around the room again.]

Relevance

- What do you understand the REALS SA programme as being?

Implementation

Access and participation

- As far as the group is aware, what has the Assessment for Learning training consisted of so far? [confirm which of the following the participants can speak to: workshops, materials, LMS, and communities of practice]
- What did you learn/gain, if anything, from the training you attended?
- How easy or hard have you found it to participate fully in the training and activities so far? Why?
- Describe your experience with accessing all the AfL materials?
- Did the training consider the different needs of women, men, people with disabilities, or other equity criteria?

Quality of implementation

- What has been your experience of the capacity development workshops?
- What has been your experience using the learning material provided?
- What has been your experience of the communities of practice?
- What has been your experience of using the Learning Management System (LMS)?
- Have there been any key benefits or challenges to having the materials available on an online platform?
- Which resources have you found most useful? Why?

Communication and expectations

- As far as you understand, what are you expected to do once you have completed the training?
- How do you plan to share and monitor the implementation of AfL among teachers?
- Is there any
- Is there anything that remains unclear to you about this training?

Effectiveness

- How has the training received helped you in your day-to-day responsibilities?
- Given your experience thus far, would you recommend that other Subject Advisors get this type of training? Why or why not?
- What would help you with further with implementing the AfL content and training?
- How has the training on quality assurance framework contributed to your understanding of the quality assurance framework?
- How has the training on quality assurance framework contributed on your ability to use it appropriately?
- Has the training informed or shaped your awareness of the different needs of boy and girl learners, learner with disabilities?

Closing

This is the end of our session. Would you like to make any further comments about the Assessment for Learning workstream?

9.6.5 Teacher interview Guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Note taker:

Participant Gender:

School:

Introductions

- For the record, please state your name, position, and when you took up this position.
- Which subject/s do you teach? In which grade/s?
- Can you briefly describe your experience teaching learners to read?
- In what ways have you have been involved in the programme and which workstreams? *Probe on training from SGB and reading and material. Check if they are lead teachers.*

Design

Relevance

- What are the challenges do you experience with teaching your learners to read?
- In what way are the reading material appropriate for your learners' reading needs? *Check language and grade appropriateness.*
- In what way has the training you have received addressed the needs you have to teach your learners, considering the different needs of your learners? *(Lead teachers)*

Implementation

- What type of support have you received from Subject Advisors and SMT in relation to **reading**? Have you found it helpful? *Probe of the usefulness if the support.*
- What type of support have you received from Subject Advisors and SMT in relation to **Assessment for Learning**? *Probe of the usefulness if the support.*
What type of support have you received from Subject advisors and SMT in relation to **curriculum management**? *Probe of the usefulness if the support.*

Relevance

- Do you find the language of the learners' books appropriate in relation to their home language needs?
- Do you find the books to be appropriate for the level of the learners you teach?
- Do your learners take reading books home?
- Do you find AfL material appropriate materials to learn from and to support schools? *(Lead teacher)*

Effectiveness

- Do you find that your class now has sufficient appropriate material? Please elaborate?
- In what way has using ATPs contributed to how you do your work as a teacher?

Confirm whether the teacher/s have attended the training on quality assurance framework

- How has the training on quality assurance framework contributed to your understanding of the quality assurance framework?
- How has the training on quality assurance framework contributed on your ability to use it appropriately?

Efficiency

Overall, do you have any recommendations for how the programme can be strengthened?

Closing

Do you have any questions?

9.6.6 Technical Team Focus Group

Date:

Facilitator

Note taker:

Introductions

Attendance register (to be completed by the facilitator’s assistant during the introductions)

Organisation	Workstream	When did you join the technical team?	Gender

Design

Relevance

- What do you understand to be the purpose of the workstream you are involved in?
- To what extent has the technical team been able to fulfil its role so far? Why?
- What were the envisaged obstacles or risks to smooth implementation of the programme? How were they planned for?
- How were gender equality, child rights and equity considerations mainstreamed within the design of each workstream?

Implementation

- How far has implementation of progressed so far?
- Earlier we discussed the obstacles and risks that were envisaged. Which obstacles or risks have you encountered in practice?
- What would you describe as the key success factors so far?

[Facilitator to prepare customized questions per workstream based on review of data on implementation so far. Be sure to cover programme reach (nr of persons to be reached, training implementation, and the distribution of materials)]

- What factors do you believe will lead to a successful uptake of new curriculum practices, assessment for learning practices, leadership and management and reading recovery? (Choose based on which workstream)
- How were gender equality, child rights and equity considerations mainstreamed within the implementation of the programme?

- Earlier we discussed which lasting changes are intended to remain in place when the programme ends. To what extent is the programme on track to achieve these changes by the end of the programme? Why / why not?

Effectiveness

- How were the initiatives such as trainings and material, received by the intended target groups in your workstream?
- How have you been monitoring changes in beneficiaries of the workstreams?
- What kind of changes, if any, in the attitudes, knowledge, and capabilities of the target groups have you noticed? Cover SGBs, Teachers, SMTs and CMs.

Sustainability

- By the time the programme ends, what lasting change is intended to remain in place? Why?

Closing

- This is the end of my questions. Is there anything else that the group would like to comment on regarding this workstream?

Are there any further questions?

9.7 Informed Consent for Data Collection

INFORMATION STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT: READING AND LEADERSHIP STRENGTHENING IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS (REALS SA) EVALUATION

Information Statement for focus group and interview participants

Please keep this statement for your records

Introduction

Palmer Development Group (PDG) has been appointed by UNICEF to conduct an evaluation on the REALS-SA programme. The following information is provided to inform you of the evaluation research. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, without providing any reasons.

Purpose of the study

To evaluate the REALS SA programme design and implementation in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, and Limpopo. The focus is to understand whether the programme was designed and partially implemented in a way that is meaningful to achieve the intended outcomes. The results of the evaluation will be used to identify what is working well and what can be improved.

Procedures

As part of this study, programme stakeholders such as DBE officials, programme implementers, subject advisors and circuit managers will be interviewed to give their views on the programme. Parents and SGB members will participate in focus groups and teachers will be interviewed to share their experiences of the programme. A virtual survey of senior management teams will also be conducted. Your participation will help the programme partners to understand whether the project is on track to meet its goals, and to improve results going forward.

All interviews and focus groups will be recorded for reference purposes. Where quotes are used, PDG takes reasonable care to anonymise respondents within the context of the study. No quotes or responses will be attributed to individuals.

Participants in focus groups are requested to keep the discussion confidential, i.e. not to share what was discussed with anyone who was not present.

Benefits

The information that participants share in surveys, interviews and focus groups will inform the evaluation of the REALS SA programme in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Limpopo. This will contribute to

identifying lessons and making recommendations for improvement going forward. Ultimately this is expected to contribute to help learners recover from the learning losses experienced from the impact of COVID-19 and improve learner outcomes. There are no direct personal benefits to your participation.

Questions about participation

Should you have any questions regarding participation in the interview, please contact Ms Cara Hartley (PDG), or Dr Stephen Taylor (Department of Education).

Ms Cara Hartley	Dr Stephen Taylor
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9.8 Document List

#	Document Title	Author	Document Type	Date
Documents Dated 2020				
1	Using Formative Assessment to Improve Learning and Teaching	DBE	Booklet	Aug-20
Documents Dated 2021				
2	REALS SA Technical Teams Management Plan for 2021	Unknown	Management Plan	2021
3	Limpopo REALS SA Schools	Limpopo Province Department of Education	List of Participating Schools	2021
4	Eastern Cape REALS SA Schools	Unknown	List of Participating Schools and individuals	2021
5	KwaZulu-Natal REALS SA Schools	Unknown	List of Participating Schools and individuals	2021
6	REALS SA High Level Plan	Unknown	High level workplan	2022
7	Task Team and Project Management Team Schedule of Meetings	Unknown	Schedule of Meetings	2022
8	The Time Slots	Unknown	PowerPoint Presentation	2022
9	Version 1 of 2023 REALS SA Plan	Unknown	Activity Plan	2023
10	Curriculum Task Team Meeting Minutes	UKZN, DBE & NECT	Meeting Minutes	02-Mar-21
11	Annexure C of Programme Document: NECT and UNICEF Agreement	UNICEF	Service Level Agreement	21-Apr-21
12	Annexure 3B: Results Matrix – UNICEF EU Funded Budget	NECT	Excel Workbook	05-May-21
13	Curriculum Task Team Meeting Minutes	UKZN, DBE & NECT	Meeting Minutes	18-May-21
14	Terms of Reference for Reading Consultant	NECT	Terms of Reference	14-Jul-21
15	Service Level Agreement between Tshwane University of Technology and NECT	NECT	Service Level Agreement	05-Aug-21
16	Contract Request Summary between TUT and NECT	NECT	Contract Request Summary	12-Aug-21
17	REALS SA Update Meeting	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	13-Aug-21
18	REALS SA Report to UNICEF: April – July 2021	NECT	Report	30-Aug-21
19	REALS SA Management Plan	Unknown	Excel Workbook	10-Sep-21
20	Curriculum Recovery Theory of Change and Logic Model	UKZN	Theory of Change and Logic Model	14-Sep-21
21	Programme Document Amendment Form	UNICEF	PDF Document	16-Sep-21
22	REALS SA Update Meeting	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	17-Sep-21
23	KwaZulu-Natal REALS SA Advocacy Participants List	Unknown	List of Participants	23-Sep-21
24	Limpopo Department of Education REALS SA Language Offerings	Limpopo Province Department of Education	Excel Workbook	14-Oct-21
25	Presentation on Curriculum Recovery Review Plan	UKZN	PowerPoint Presentation	22-Oct-21
26	REALS SA Report to DBE: April – October 2021	NECT	Report	26-Oct-21
27	REALS SA Report	Unknown	Bullet-point report	29-Oct-21
28	Draft 1 of the Review Template of Annual Teaching Plans of Trimmed Curriculum	Unknown	Template	02-Nov-21
29	Supporting Reading in the Classroom: A Guide for Primary School Teachers v3	Unknown	Guideline	11-Nov-21
30	School Guidelines for Managing Resources	Unknown	Guidelines	11-Nov-21
31	Service Level Agreement between Performance Solutions Africa and NECT	NECT	Service Level Agreement	19-Nov-21

#	Document Title	Author	Document Type	Date
32	Service Level Agreement between University of KwaZulu-Natal and NECT	NECT	Service Level Agreement	19-Nov-21
33	REALS SA NECT Teams	NECT	List of Participants	23-Nov-21
34	REALS SA Update Meeting	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	26-Nov-21
35	REALS SA Report to UNICEF: August – October 2021	NECT	Report	30-Nov-21
36	Final Advocacy Circular for KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education	KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education	Advocacy Circular	Dec-21
37	REALS SA Report to DBE: October – November 2021	NECT	Report	03-Dec-21
38	REALS SA Report to PMT	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	15-Dec-21
Documents Dated 2022				
39	Limpopo REALS SA Schools Vhembe East Update	Limpopo Province Department of Education	List of Participating Schools and individuals	Jan-22
40	EU-REALS SA Financial Report	UNICEF	Excel Workbook	Jan-22
41	Circular on REALS SA Advocacy for the Eastern Cape	NECT	Advocacy Circular	11-Jan-22
42	REALS SA Overview	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	21-Jan-22
43	REALS SA Update Report	Unknown	Bullet-point report	28-Jan-22
44	REALS SA Reporting Template for Curriculum Recovery	UKZN	Reporting Template	03-Feb-22
45	Curriculum Task Team Meeting Minutes	UKZN, DBE & NECT	Meeting Minutes	03-Feb-22
46	Curriculum Task Team Meeting Agenda	UKZN, DBE & NECT	Meeting Agenda	03-Feb-22
47	Final Programme of REALS SA Limpopo Province Advocacy and Planning	Limpopo Department of Education	Advocacy Agenda	07-Feb-22
48	REALS SA Report to DBE: January – February 2022	NECT	Report	07-Feb-22
49	Supporting Reading at Home: Guide 1 of 2 for Parents and Caregivers	Unknown	Guideline	14-Feb-22
50	Supporting Reading at Home: Guide 2 of 2 for Parents and Caregivers	Unknown	Guideline	14-Feb-22
51	REALS SA Proposed Radio Content	Unknown	Radio Episodes Proposal	14-Feb-22
52	Draft 2 of the Quality Assurance Framework for Implementation of Trimmed Curriculum	UKZN	Quality Assurance Framework	17-Feb-22
53	Reading Recovery Technical Team Meeting	DBE & NECT	Meeting Agenda	17-Feb-22
54	Reading Recovery Technical Team Meeting Minutes	DBE & NECT	Meeting Minutes	17-Feb-22
55	Leadership and Management Technical Team Meeting	NECT, DBE & PSA	Meeting Agenda	23-Feb-22
56	REALS SA Update Report	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	25-Feb-22
57	Assessment for Learning Technical Team Meeting	DBE, NECT	Agenda	03-Mar-22
58	REALS SA Update Report	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	04-Mar-22
59	REALS SA Update Report	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	11-Mar-22
60	REALS SA Update Report	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	18-Mar-22
61	REALS SA Update Report	NECT & DBE	PowerPoint Presentation	25-Mar-22
62	Report of the Review of the Recovery Curriculum for Grades 1 to 7 of the South African Public School Education System	UKZN	Report	28-Mar-22
63	REALS Programme Leadership and Governance Component	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	Apr-22
64	REALS School Functionality Interim Progress Report	PSA	PDF version of PowerPoint	Apr-22
65	Assessment for Learning Report	TUT	Work Plan	28-Apr-22
66	REALS SA MPA Baseline Report	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	11-May-22

#	Document Title	Author	Document Type	Date
67	REALS SA Activity Plan	Unknown	Activity Plan	25-May-22
68	School Functionality Scores	PSA	Excel Workbook	31-May-22
69	Assessment for Learning Professional Development Plan	TUT	PowerPoint Presentation	Jun-22
70	REALS SA Programme: Project Team Update on Leadership and Governance Component	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	26-Jun-22
71	REALS SA Project Management Team Meeting	Unknown	Meeting Agenda	27-Jun-22
72	REALS SA Storybook Monitoring Management Plan	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	29-Jun-22
73	Results-Oriented Monitoring Africa	EU	Field Phase Agenda	22-Aug-22
74	Results-Oriented Monitoring	UNICEF	Programme	01-Sep-22
75	REALS SA Reading Programme Radio Broadcast 10 Episodes	Unknown	Excel Workbook	03-Sep-22
76	REALS SA Reading Programme Radio Broadcast Presenters	Unknown	List of Broadcasters	05-Sep-22
77	Results-Oriented Monitoring Report	UNICEF	Report	30-Sep-22
78	Results-Oriented Monitoring Report	UNICEF	Report	30-Sep-22
79	REALS SA Updated Logical Framework	Unknown	Logical Framework	Oct-22
80	REALS SA Programme: Leadership and Governance Component	PSA	PDF version of PowerPoint Presentation	Oct-22
81	REALS SA Update Report	Unknown	PowerPoint Presentation	04-Nov-22
82	REALS SA Assessment for Learning Sub-programme	TUT	PowerPoint Presentation	18-Nov-22
83	Report to the REALS PMT on the Recovery Curriculum Project Stream	UKZN	PowerPoint Presentation	18-Nov-22
84	REALS SA PMT Meeting: Reading Recovery	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	18-Nov-22
85	Notes from PMT Meeting	Unknown	PowerPoint Presentation	18-Nov-22
86	REALS SA Update Report	Unknown	PowerPoint Presentation	02-Dec-22
87	Revised EU-REALS SA Financial Report	NECT	Excel Workbook	Dec 2022
Documents Dated 2023				
88	REALS SA Update Meeting	DBE, UNICEF, NECT	Meeting Agenda	14-Jan-23
89	Performance Solutions Africa Training Schedule v10	PSA	Excel Workbook	24-Jan-23
90	REALS SA Update Meeting	DBE, UNICEF, NECT	Meeting Agenda	04-Feb-23
91	Appendix 1: Activity Status and Plan for 2022-2023 Appendix 2: Updated Work Plan for 2022-2023	Unknown	Excel Workbook	2022 – 2023
92	NECT JAN-MAR 2023 REALS SA NARRATIVE REPORT	UNICEF	Report	23-Mar-23
93	AfL Report Reflection Meeting February	TUT	PowerPoint Presentation	Feb 2023
94	2023 REALS SA PLAN	NECT	Activity Plan	2023
95	Final Reading Recovery Report to REALS SA Reflection Meeting	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	15-Feb-23
96	REALS SA Leadership and governance Progress Report for Reflection Meeting	PSA	Report	Jan 2023
97	Curriculum Recovery Report to the REALS PMT	UKZN	PowerPoint Presentation	Feb 2023
98	REALS SA Update Report	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	10-Mar-23

#	Document Title	Author	Document Type	Date
Documents with no dates				
99	REALS SA Implementation Plan for 2022	Unknown	Implementation Plan	No Date
100	Report on Advocacy and Planning in KZN	Unknown	Bullet-point report	Unknown
101	REALS SA Description of Action	EU, DBE, UNICEF	Programme Document	Unknown
102	REALS SA Governance Management Structure	Unknown	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
103	Final REALS SA Technical Teams	Unknown	List of Contacts	Unknown
104	Vhembe East District – REALS SA Project Officials	Unknown	List of Participants	Unknown
105	Summary of Databases of Provincial Officials	Unknown	List of Participants	Unknown
106	REALS SA Storybook Monitoring Report	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
107	Budget Showing Removed Items	UNICEF	Excel Workbook	Unknown
108	Example Report on Standard Quality Assurance Framework	UKZN	Report Template	Unknown
109	Quality Assurance Framework for the Implementation of a Recovery Curriculum	UKZN	Quality Assurance Framework	Unknown
110	Training Manual for Subject Advisors and School Leaders	UKZN, NECT & DBE	Training Manual	Unknown
111	Performance Solutions Africa Sample of MPA Scores	PSA	Excel Workbook	Unknown
112	Leading for Reading REALS SA: Principals and Deputies Facilitator Notes	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
113	Remote Planning, Performance and Governance – District Officials Facilitator Slides	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
114	Resilient School Leadership in Times of Crises: Principals and Deputies Delegates Notes	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
115	Reading Recovery Monitoring Tool	NECT	Template	Unknown
116	Synopsis of the REALS SA Project	PSA	PowerPoint Presentation	Unknown
117	Baseline Assessment Indicators	PSA	PDF	Unknown
Documents received after the REALS SA Colloquium '23				
118	Budget document	EU, UNICEF	PDF	Unknown
119	Presentation to the REALS SA Colloquium	Deva Govender	PowerPoint Presentation	27 June 2023
120	REALS Final Report May 2023	PSA	PDF	May 2023
121	20230623 REALS SA Update Report	NECT	PowerPoint Presentation	09 June 2023
122	REALS SA Progress Report III to the EU	UNICEF	PDF	February 2023
123	UNICEF Progress Report to the EU, March 2022	UNICEF	PDF	March 2022
124	Final Report on the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Recovery Curriculum	UKZN	PDF and Word Document	25 June 2023

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