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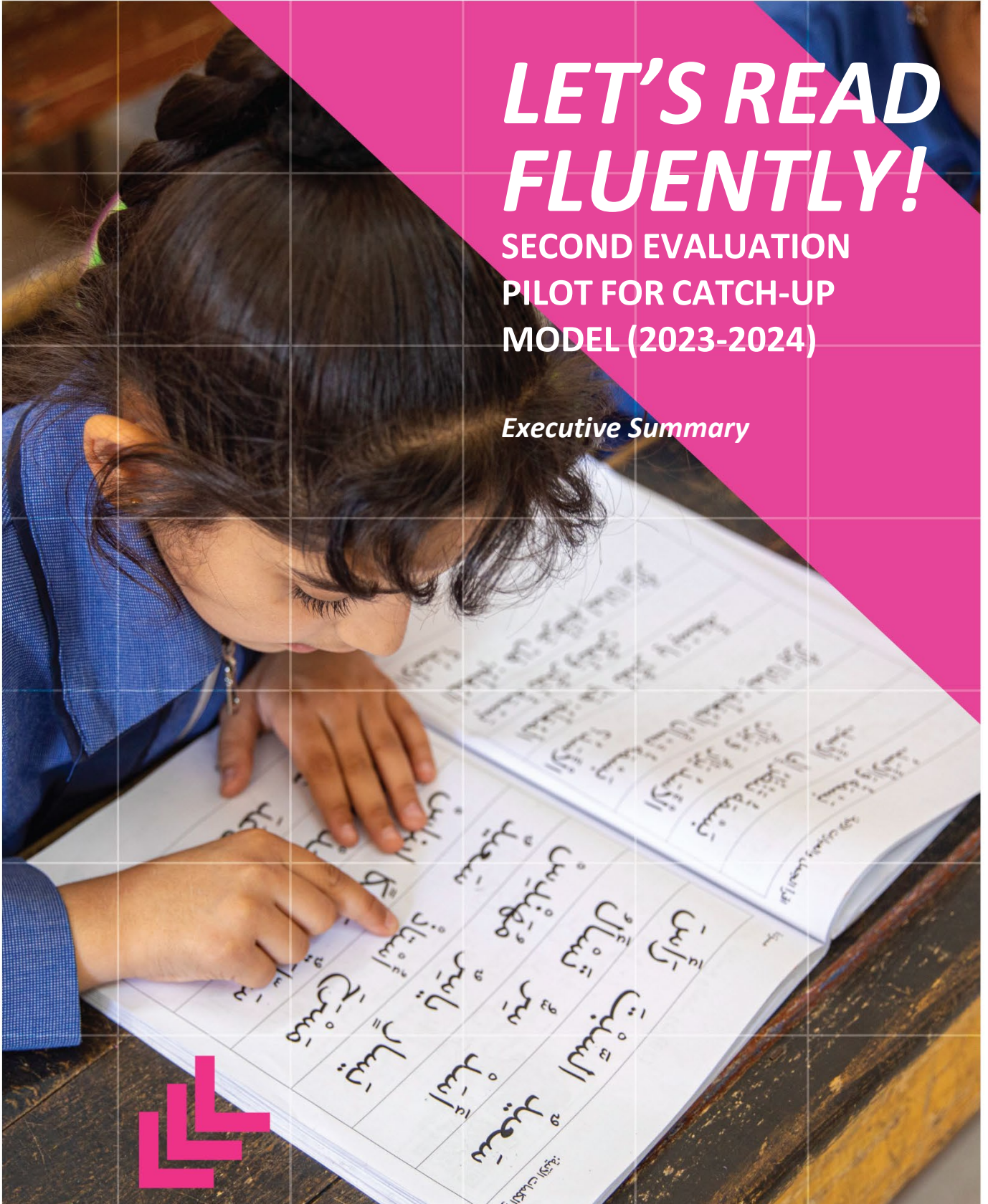
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LET'S READ FLUENTLY!

SECOND EVALUATION
PILOT FOR CATCH-UP
MODEL (2023-2024)

Executive Summary



EVALUATION TEAM

The evaluation team includes the following staff from NatCen and Integrated International: Enes Duysak, Hayley Leonard, Abbi Rennick, Charlotte Bessant, Rebecca Parker, Anjhana Damodaran, Andi Fugard, Gayle Munro, Nedjma Koval, Samah Goussous, Marwa Alsamneh, Rasha Al-Khateeb, and Taimaa Khalaf.

The principal investigator was Enes Duysak.

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OVERVIEW

The Let's Read Fluently! (LRF!) Catch-Up (C/U) Model is a targeted intervention aimed at supporting students who struggle with reading in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This pilot evaluation, commissioned by the Queen Rania Foundation (QRF) and supported by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and BHP Foundation, was conducted by NatCen in collaboration with Integrated International. The study focused on assessing the feasibility of a refined delivery model and its readiness for an efficacy trial.

LRF! is grounded in Dr. Helen Abadzi's cognitive science framework, which emphasizes the development of automaticity in letter recognition and decoding as a precursor to reading fluency. The model uses structured, repetitive practice to support perceptual learning and improve working memory efficiency, addressing key challenges of Arabic script complexity.

Previous Pilot Evaluation

Previous pilot evaluation of Let's Read Fluently! have tested both Catch-Up (C/U) and Whole-Classroom (W/C) models:

- The W/C model was previously piloted and demonstrated promising literacy gains for a broader student population.
- The first C/U pilot revealed challenges in adapting the intervention to resource room settings, prompting modifications in training, coaching, and student selection.

The current pilot aimed to refine the C/U model by enhancing teacher support mechanisms and refining the multi-staged screening process.

Intervention Implementation

The intervention was implemented over a 12-14 week period, with three 30-minute sessions per week delivered in small groups of five or six students by the resource room teacher. The sessions focused on structured reading exercises, decoding strategies, and guided fluency practice, aligned with the LRF framework to reinforce automaticity in reading.

Screening of students occurred through a multi-staged process:

1. Coarse-Grain Screening from the Reading and Mathematics Program (RAMP Tool): Classroom teachers identified the lowest-performing 20% of students.
2. PTI Diagnostic Assessment: Specialists conducted assessments to exclude students with broader learning difficulties, who would not benefit from the intervention.
3. Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) Testing: Students scoring ≤ 29 correct words per minute for oral reading fluency (ORF) were identified as needing intervention support.

EVALUATION METHODS

The study employed a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) design, complemented by an Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE):

Impact Evaluation (IE):

- Sixteen schools were randomly assigned to intervention or control arms. The study was implemented in schools located in Amman, Karak, Madaba, Balqa, Jarash, and Ajloun governorates.
- Primary Outcome: Oral reading fluency.
- Secondary Outcomes: Letter Sound Identification, Syllable Identification, Oral Reading Fluency, Reading Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, Word decoding.
- The instrument used to measure primary and secondary outcomes was the EGRA Grade 2 assessment with the addition of a set of pre-literacy items developed and piloted for the previous pilot evaluation, for both baseline and endline.
- The primary outcome analysis followed an Intention-To-Treat (ITT) approach, with 161 students included in the analyses, taken from a random selection of classrooms in grades 2 and 3 from the 16 schools.
- Evidence of Promise Criteria: Effect sizes and confidence intervals were assessed against Minimum Relevant Effect Size (MRES) thresholds.

Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE):

Data collection included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and structured surveys with classroom and resource room teachers in intervention and teaching-as-usual schools, as well as a FGD with coaches from QRTA. The following IPE domains were explored:

- Fidelity: Measured adherence to the intervention.
- Reach: Measured rate and scope of participation in the intervention.
- Responsiveness: Evaluated the degree to which participants engaged with the intervention.
- Perceived impact: Evaluated whether teachers and coaches perceived the intervention had achieved its intended outcomes.
- Usual practice: Identified how the intervention differed from usual literacy teaching.

The IPE findings were used to inform conclusions on the feasibility of the intervention and to identify any barriers to large scale implementation, including logistical and resource challenges.

KEY FINDINGS FROM CURRENT PILOT

1. Evidence of Promise:

- The pilot demonstrated indicative evidence of improvement in students' oral reading fluency, the primary outcome investigated.
- Among secondary outcomes: Syllable identification and word decoding showed positive results, while letter sound identification, reading comprehension and listening comprehension were not conclusive.
- Enhanced training contributed to improved instructional delivery.

2. Feasibility of Implementation:

- Resource room teachers benefited from structured training and coaching, yet challenges remain in scaling the model.
- The multi-staged screening process (RAMP, PTI assessment, EGRA) remains inconclusive, with continued concerns about accurately identifying students most in need.

3. Feasibility of the Efficacy Trial

- School Recruitment: Recruitment was largely effective, but over 60% of schools approached were unreachable due to incorrect contact details. Future efficacy trials must account for this by expanding the pool of schools and improving outreach strategies.
- Retention Rates: Both school and student retention were high, an improvement over the previous pilot evaluation, suggesting feasibility in maintaining engagement over the trial period.
- Resource Feasibility: The LRF! training materials, practice book, and intervention resources were generally well-received. However, suggested improvements—such as simplifying the practice book and including visuals—may enhance usability for teachers and students.
- Screening Tools: The feasibility of the coarse-grain screening and PTI tools remains unclear. A move toward standardised literacy and cognitive development assessments may improve accuracy in student selection.

4.. Readiness for Efficacy Trial:

- While the intervention showed promise, scalability is limited due to teacher workload and logistical constraints.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is indicative evidence for an effect of the LRF! C/U model on oral reading fluency, as well as syllable identification and word decoding.
- The student screening process remains uncertain, requiring further refinement.
- Teacher training and coaching mechanisms were effective, but scaling is a concern due to operational constraints.
- A full-scale efficacy trial is not yet recommended based on these two pilots for the C/U model. A future pilot evaluation should focus on refining student selection, improving implementation, and assessing scalability.

Given the challenges in scaling the C/U model, findings suggest that the W/C is a more viable candidate for an efficacy trial. The W/C model demonstrated feasibility in reaching a larger student population while maintaining instructional effectiveness. The second C/U pilot provides insights into shared instructional elements that could enhance the W/C model's delivery.

The LRF! intervention aligns with Jordan's national literacy priorities and has the potential to improve early-grade reading outcomes, but further refinements are necessary before scaling the C/U model program.