

APRIL 2022

NEPAL

Using Incentives along the Book Chain to Improve Book Corners

Introduction

Nepal enjoys near-universal access to education, but its 20,000-plus primary schools struggle to provide effective learning, with 60 percent of Grade 2 students not able to read a single word of a short text in the Nepali language, according to a 2018 assessment.

One potential driver of the poor learning outcomes is the country's shortage of textbooks and supplementary reading materials. Evidence suggests students must regularly use quality learning materials to improve literacy and learning outcomes. While Nepal requires primary schools to have a "book corner," few do; others lack quality books. Part of the problem lies with Nepal's book supply chain, with publishers prioritizing private schools as customers and operating few outlets outside the capital Kathmandu. Schools' lack of funds is another issue.

The Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund partnered with World Vision International to explore whether results-based financing could change publisher and school behavior in Nepal. The intervention established an online marketplace for selling and ordering quality books, offering incentives for use, with a goal of increasing the availability of quality children's books in local languages.

Intervention

Knowledge Improvement through Access to Books (KITAB) covered 898 primary schools in two districts and comprised two parts. The first involved establishing an online marketplace, KITAB Bazaar, which provided a central location where publishers could list supplemental reading materials for lower grades, and schools could order books. The second part offered incentives at multiple stages along the book chain to promote creation, procurement, distribution, and utilization of quality books.

Publishers received financial incentives for each book listed on the marketplace, with the size of bonuses determined by



The Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund under the World Bank Group seeks to help countries strengthen their education services by focusing initiatives on results. The IMPACT series describes how results-based projects funded by REACH influence learning, education systems, and policy making.

publication language and by whether it was endorsed by the government’s Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) or peer reviewed. Publishers also received bonuses for delivering books on schedule to local municipalities, or Palika, where head teachers could collect their orders.

Schools received nonfinancial incentives for buying and using books from the online marketplace, with “vulnerable” schools receiving nine free books for each book they bought at the start of the school year, and other schools receiving four free books for each book purchased. The intervention offered one bonus book for each book bought in a later round but for vulnerable schools only.

Schools received nonfinancial incentives for utilizing book corners, in the form of a book holder or rack, or teachers’ supply kit, depending on if the schools were using the book corners during one or two visits by Palika education officials.

Impact

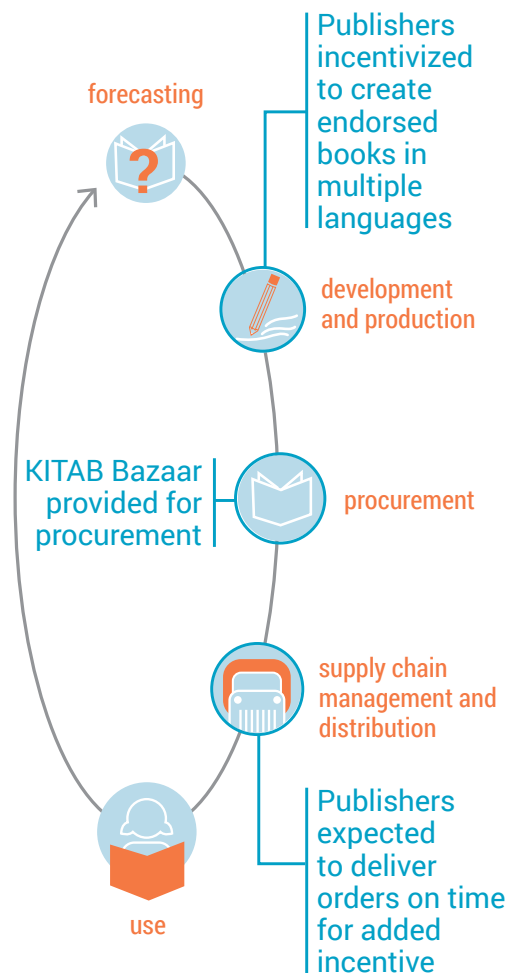
The school incentives increased the number of book corners and books in schools, with 92 percent (828 schools) having their own book corner at the end of the program compared to 15 percent at the beginning. Some 133,008 books were ordered and delivered, benefiting an estimated 53,198 students. Book usage also rose, with the share of schools utilizing book corners increasing during the second visit by district officials.

For the coming school year, the two districts have earmarked funds from their own budgets for 898 schools to buy 150 additional books each for their book corners. The program is also being rolled out to 90 other schools in five districts. All schools are receiving training to use the online marketplace, which has undergone upgrades, including opening the platform to any schools, individuals, or organizations to buy books during two windows. The platform-management takeover by a local IT company will help to ensure its sustainability.

Publishers are expected to add 100–150 new titles to the 250 books on the platform, with the targeted grade range expanding to eighth grade from the current G1–3. The book corners have boosted enthusiasm for reading among students and coincided with a modest increase in learning outcomes for first through third graders in the two districts, based on government assessments.

Palika officials’ visits to schools to verify book corner usage also provided schools with an opportunity to point out infrastructure and other needs. And training on use of the online platform demonstrated to schools the value of digital literacy, with several schools opening computer labs for students.

Book Supply Chain



RESULTS IN EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN (REACH) RESOURCES

For more information on the REACH Cameroon intervention please refer to the RBF Education EVIDENCE note, “Can School Grants and Teacher Incentives be Used to Increase School Access and Improve Quality?” on the REACH web page.

worldbank.org/reach
reach@worldbank.org

Co-funders: the Governments of Germany, Norway, and the United States



Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung



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