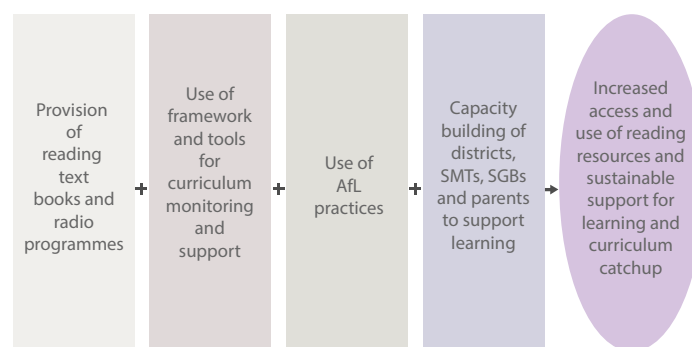


Evaluation of the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS SA) Programme



Despite SA achieving near universal access to education, with gender parity, at primary and secondary levels, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic 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, creating 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). 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.

PDG, with Dr Mark Abrahams as Education Expert, was commissioned to conduct a Design and Implementation Evaluation of the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS SA) Programme. The 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 was scheduled to conclude by mid-2023. The purpose of the evaluation was 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.



REALS SA High-level Theory of Change

The team completed the evaluation by conducting desktop research, fieldwork visits, and engagements with relevant programme stakeholders in order to collect data. Once all data was collected, it was triangulated and analysed using NVivo for qualitative data and Excel for the quantitative. The outputs from that process were a fieldwork and final evaluation reports, which helped the client better understand the design and implementation of their programme and how to improve on similar programmes going forward

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ERLS PROJECT:

Project Profile: Evaluation of the Reading and Leadership Strengthening in South African Schools for Learning during COVID-19 and Beyond (REALS SA) Programme

Client: United Nations’ Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Date: 2021 - 2023