

# RISE

RESEARCH ON IMPROVING  
SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

## Transforming education systems and learning outcomes



UN Photo/Evan Schneider (Timor-Leste)

RISE—Research on Improving Systems of Education—is a new multi-country programme that aims to build understanding of education systems and how they can transform to significantly improve learning. RISE is funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, which has allocated £21 million for high-quality research in up to five countries over six years.

RISE aims to provide the evidence base on education systems needed to improve learning outcomes by:

- 1) commissioning high-quality research on education

### Background

Over the past twenty-five years, the share of children enrolled in school in sub-Saharan Africa has jumped to 78 percent from barely half; in South Asia, to 94 percent from 75 percent. Yet despite the growth of enrolment, the world faces a learning crisis. The 2014 UNESCO Global Monitoring Report stated that 250 million children are unable to read, write, or do basic

systems and systems reform that responds to locally-identified challenges; 2) engaging with researchers and practitioners to develop an analytic framework to understand how education systems function; and 3) ensuring that researchers, teachers, policymakers and other education practitioners globally have access to the most relevant, up-to-date research on the impact of education systems on learning for all.

*“Going to school is visible. Parents, communities, and public officials can see children going to school. Governments and donors have been obsessed with counting that. But now that in many countries most children are in school, it is time to make learning equally visible.”*

**Rukmini Banerji (2015), Member of the RISE Intellectual Leadership Team**

mathematics, and 130 million of those children are in school. Many students—even those who have been in school for years—lack a solid foundation in the skills they need.



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It is 'education,' not sitting in a school, that is included in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Many elements have to fit together coherently to produce learning: ministries, teachers, school financing, management and more. Millions of children eager to learn end up having their time wasted by systems that fail them. The tragic fact is, if one wants to find uneducated children today, the vast majority can be found in schools.

## Why education systems research?

The RISE programme aims to understand how school systems in the developing world can overcome the learning crisis. RISE intends research to go beyond the proximate causes of test score performance to the underlying ingredients of both well-functioning and poorly-functioning systems. Education systems include policies, institutions, and actors, in both public and private sectors, that work together to ensure children leave schools with the skills they need to participate in society and the economy.

Perhaps many reforms show mixed performance because they work best (or at all) only when embedded in an effective system that supports and values high performance. RISE seeks to gain understanding of what features make particular systems coherent and effective in their contexts, and of how the

## Research timeline and focus countries

In summer 2015, RISE will solicit bids from individuals and organizations to carry out a country research programme on learning-oriented reforms in education systems, focused on basic education, over six years. Research teams will be composed of locally-based researchers and education experts who are integrated

## Further information

The RISE programme is directed and delivered through a collaboration among the Center for Global Development in Washington DC, Oxford Policy Management Group, and the University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government. The overall research direction for the programme is led by Harvard University professor and Center for Global Development senior fellow Lant

## Contact

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The world needs audacious goals that will inspire substantial acceleration and progress towards true 'Education for All', particularly for the most marginalised. However, the existing evidence base is short on answers for how these goals can be achieved. There is an urgent need for more research on solutions beyond business-as-usual, incremental increases in materials, infrastructure or other inputs—instead, RISE seeks holistic, practical answers about how education systems can innovate, improve learning outcomes, and better serve all children and communities.

*"Improving learning outcomes for children is a pressing challenge globally. There is a massive body of high-quality research on proximate determinants of learning—but less on how and why some countries' education systems function well, while other countries stay at low levels of performance. The key feature of RISE is to focus on the capabilities of education systems to sustain a dynamic of innovation and improvement."*

**Lant Pritchett, RISE Research Director**

complex dynamics within a system allow a policy to be successful. Such features may include: the way in which goals are set; progress is assessed and measured; the teaching profession is structured and supported; schools are financed and managed; how students and parents engage with the system and make choices; and how innovations are produced, evaluated and diffused to scale.

into the domestic education policy dialogue, potentially supported by researchers from outside the country.

Bids are encouraged from Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam; proposals for research in other countries will also be considered.

Pritchett, while programme management, governance and research coordination is delivered through a partnership between Oxford Policy Management and the Blavatnik School of Government. An Intellectual Leadership Team comprised of world-renowned scholars provides thought leadership and research advice to the programme.