Terms of Reference: Small Grants to Pilot RISE Education Systems Diagnostic

October 2021

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Project Description

School enrolment has dramatically increased worldwide, but millions of children spend years in school without gaining foundational skills. Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) is a long-term multi-country research endeavour studying how education systems can overcome the learning crisis and deliver learning to all children.

A systems perspective on education first asks: why are learning outcomes poor in this school, district, or country? Then asks why do those conditions which we have identified as causing low learning exist.

Once we understand why an education system isn't producing learning, we can work to realign the relationships in the system to be coherent for learning, meaning that every component works together as a whole with the goal of improving learning.

RISE has developed a framework for understanding education systems and adapted it to create a diagnostic approach to identify constraints to progress and priorities for reform in an education system (See "Applying Systems Thinking to Education: The RISE Systems Framework" for more details on this framework). The approach identifies the key actors in the education system, specifies the relationships between them, identifies the primary alignment(s) of the relationships, exposes incoherencies within the system, and identifies priorities for reform.

RISE is looking to collaborate with several organisations to conduct pilot projects of how the RISE diagnostic tool can be applied in practice.

Successful candidates will demonstrate their ability to execute the pilot and the ways in which the results of the pilot will be practically useful, preferably to the grantee's counterpart(s), but potentially also to the grantee itself. Possible counterparts include government ministries, education authorities, education organisations outside of government, civil society groups, communities of frontline providers, or service recipients.

Pilot

Objectives
The RISE Diagnostic is a process to facilitate and support actors in government, civil society, or community in selecting high-level strategic reform priorities to improve learning, based on the latest education systems research. At this pilot phase learning and improvement of the diagnostic is also a critical objective. The RISE programme is seeking proposals for pilots that will provide useful recommendations for strategic priorities by applying the diagnostic framework to identify areas of incoherence and priorities for reform and learning about and improving the diagnostic approach.

1. **Learn**. Facilitate joint learning of the RISE team and partners on the methodology and implementation of the RISE diagnostic approach.
   a. Identify key lessons from the pilot and modify the approach accordingly.
   b. Identify which components or features of the approach are critical and which are ancillary.
   c. Identify ways in which the framework could/should be adapted to a variety of contexts.
   d. Evaluate usefulness of in determining how systems thinking can improve learning outcomes, make suggestions for modifications and improvement
2. **Diagnose.** Facilitate use of systems thinking to diagnose the components of the education system that are not working together as well as they could to deliver learning (i.e., alignment for learning, alignment for other purposes, and incoherences within the system.
   a. To achieve this a successful pilot will use the RISE Systems Diagnostic Framework as a guide to develop a tailored project to the needs of the specific context.
   b. To achieve this a successful pilot will draw on the organisations existing connections to the various layers of the local education community, either via government counterparts, community practitioners, or other groups that relate to citizens, education authorities, or service recipients.

3. **Prioritise.** Engage with counterpart(s) (government, ministries, education authorities, education organisations outside of government, civil society groups communities of frontline providers, or service recipients) to facilitate their prioritisation of one or two key areas of the system for reform, to create better alignment around improving learning outcomes.

Roles and responsibilities

The Diagnostic is a joint effort of the RISE Team and the grantee. The RISE Team is responsible for developing the framework, delivering training on the framework and the diagnostic process and providing support during data collection, implementation, and analysis. The grantee is responsible for developing (or building on existing) relationships counterparts to facilitate the diagnostic, adapting the diagnostic framework to fit their context, developing any tools or instruments needed in their context, implementing the diagnostic, leading the analysis, and writing the report.

Grantee staffing needs

The grantee will need to assemble a team that can deliver on the full range of responsibilities to execute the diagnostic. These include but may not be limited to:

1. **Main point of contact** to lead the engagement.
2. **Senior researcher(s)** to adapt the methodology to their context, lead analysis and writing.
3. **Researchers** to conduct the desk review, workshops, and interviews, and assisting with analysis and writing, including researchers who bring expertise in qualitative methods.
4. **Project management** to provide oversight on delivery.
5. **Administrative support** for workshop organisation, logistical details, finances, etc.

Scope of Work

The diagnostic will be carried out by the grantee with support as required from core RISE team members. All successful grantees will receive training at the outset of the grant period on the RISE framework and the diagnostic process.

The RISE diagnostic process is typically separated into five phases, with associated deliverables. There is flexibility to adapt these phases and deliverables to the grantee's context, though core principles and deliverable scope should be maintained. Information on planned phases and deliverables should be included in the grant application.

1. Training and preparation;
2. Desk review;
3. Consultative workshops;
4. Analysis, preparation of findings for steering committee and, write up; and
5. Sharing, prioritising workshops, and final report writing.

Further details about each of the phases as they could potentially be carried out is given below. To note, these are indicative and grantees should consider how the process should be adapted to fit their approach and context.

   1. *Training and preparation*

      During this phase the grantee will work with the RISE team to prepare to carry out the Diagnostic. This includes:

      - Participation in trainings on the RISE Diagnostic. Training will be organised by the RISE core team and includes a detailed discussion of the objectives of the Diagnostic, in-depth discussion of diagnostic tables and instruments, and discussion of diagnostic methodology
      - Scoping of stakeholder engagement, securing the participation of key counterparts. Identify a steering committee of counterparts who will participate in shaping the diagnostic

- Preparation and logistics. Including agreeing on timeline, planning for activities, logistic arrangements.

  Deliverables

  - An inception report, that includes a project implementation plan, detailed budget, and timeline (mindful that flexibility in timeline may be needed in light of COVID).

2. *Desk Review*
   This phase focuses on gathering information about the system that can be learned from secondary sources, government documents, and government or external reports. Using these materials and the knowledge of team members, the team compiles a hypothesis of the completed diagnostic framework. Identifying key organisations and individuals, their relationships, and conjectures about the possible alignments of relationships and potential incoherence's in the system.

   The desk review phase informs the design and identification of participants for consultative workshops (see next phase).

   Deliverables

   - Draft desk review including draft completed diagnostic framework based on desk review findings.

3. *Consultative workshops*
   This stage focuses on engagement with groups of stakeholders in and out of government, conducted in the form of workshops. During these workshops facilitators introduce the framework to participants and work with them to apply the framework to their own education system. Participants identify the actors and relationships in their system and describe their understanding of relationships and alignments based on their own experiences. This participatory process exposes government partners to the system concepts and messages and facilitates their understanding of the education system in terms of the key relationships, feedback loops, and interactions which the framework highlights.

   Follow up interviews may be conducted with key informants as needed, to answer any questions, discuss areas of divergence identified in the analysis, and provide insights on aspects of the system not covered during the workshops.

   Deliverables

   - Completed workshops
   - Instruments used in data collection
   - Raw data collected during fieldwork

4. *Analysis, preparation of findings for steering committee and, write-up*
   During this phase of the diagnostic the team reviews the information gathered in the desk review, workshops to conduct the diagnostic analysis and prepares key findings to share back with counterpart steering committee. This analysis outlines the key actors and relationships of the system, the primary alignments of each relationship, and the main incoherence's identified in the diagnostic. Briefing materials to share these results with the counterpart are prepared.

   Deliverables

   - Preparation of key findings to share with steering committee,
   - Completed desk review

5. *Sharing, prioritising workshops, and final report writing*
   During this final phase of the diagnostic, the team shares the results back with the counterpart steering committee. These workshops should facilitate the committee to identify priority areas for action based on the results of the diagnostic. The results of these priority discussions can then be added back into a revised version of the final report, a concise (10-15 page), narrative description of the education system in terms of the diagnostic framework and description of the priorities for reform identified by the steering committee.

   Deliverables

   - Data collected during prioritisation workshops
   - A blog detailing the experience of the pilot from the organisation's perspective
   - Final report

Additional obligations

Outside of completing the diagnostic pilot project, successful applicants will be expected to participate in RISE community activities. These include but are not limited to:

- Regular (monthly) team meetings with all grantees and the RISE core team to share progress of the pilots, challenges that have been met and to stimulate peer learning
- Regular check in meetings with RISE core team
- Participation in a final public workshop to present the learning from the grant

Additional benefits to grantees

This grant scheme aims to offer several benefits to successful applicants during the pilot of the project and beyond. Benefits of participation in this programme would include.

- A learning partnership with the RISE Directorate team facilitating this project, opportunity to contribute to further development of the RISE Systems Diagnostic Framework.
- Participation in a supportive, peer to peer learning focused community with the other successful grantees, facilitated by RISE. Opportunity to give and receive feedback from other grantees and learn from each other's experiences.
- Access to the wider RISE community including participation in public community events, and potential for invitation to contribute to RISE blog or participate in internal community events.
- Opportunity to develop familiarity with RISE Systems Framework and RISE research, with potential applications and spill overs to other organisational work in the future.
- Opportunity to participate in the final public RISE workshop to share learnings from pilots.

Timeline

The diagnostic pilot project grant scheme is intended to run for **6 months** from award stage. Each grantee organisation will be expected to run the pilot and **complete all requested deliverables by the end of July 2022.**

Tentative deliverables and payment schedule

The allocation of resources for the grant is 50% available for fees and 50% available for reimbursables. Payments of fees will be made in lump sums on delivery of payment milestones, with one sixth of the total grant value payable at each of three payment milestones. Along with each lumpsum payment the grantee may submit receipts for reimbursable expenses incurred in completing pilot activities.

The final deliverables and payment schedule will be finalized during contracting, and Table 1 below provides a proposed outline for these.

Date	Deliverable	Payment on Delivery	Value
Feb 2022	• An inception report, that includes a project implementation plan, detailed budget, and timeline (mindful that flexibility in timeline may be needed in light of COVID).	Yes	1/6 of contract value plus any reimbursables (based on receipts)
March 2022	• Draft desk review including draft completed diagnostic framework based on desk review findings.	No	
May 2022	• Completed workshops • Instruments used in data collection • Raw data collected during fieldwork	No	
June 2022	• Preparation of key findings to share with steering committee, • Completed desk review	Yes	1/6 of contract value plus any reimbursables (based on receipts)
July 2022	• Preparation of key findings to share with steering committee, • Completed desk review	Yes	1/6 of contract value plus any reimbursables (based on receipts)