

## **Webinar: Can Life Skills Be Measured? Lessons Learned from a Seven-Country Pilot**

June 27, 2019

### **Audience Q&A**

#### **Big picture questions**

- 1. Which skills do you feel have had the largest impact in supporting girls to thrive?**

Response: We do not have enough data to determine this (though we hope to in the future), but anecdotally, girls and parents/teachers alike tend to cite: self-control/managing emotions, communication, and decision-making as having been the most helpful or impactful in girls' lives.

- 2. Madison: I'm interested in hearing more about how the life skills learned impact their lives post-graduation. You gave examples related to decision-making and agency. What about the other life skills?**

Response: Our alumnae survey aims to capture a snapshot of girls' lives post graduation at the one-year and five-year mark after secondary school. While we have initial data, we are hoping to continue to refine the survey and get further data to make some statements about girls' outcomes that might be attributable to our Girls' Education Program, or our life skills curriculum in particular. Our life skills overlap with one another so it is hard to isolate an outcome to any one life skill, but our survey includes questions about marriage, income, number of children, pursuit of tertiary education, etc.--we hope the data will tell us more about how and whether girls may have benefitted from having exposure to skills building on communication, relationship-building, critical thinking, perseverance, etc.

- 3. Zoe Mann: Question: Specifically any being used in South Africa?**

Response: We have not implemented our Girls' Education Program in South Africa (only our Literacy Program is active there), so we likewise do not have any life skills measurement data/learnings to share from that specific country context.

- 4. Maeen Al-Aghbari: thanks Linda for your fruitful informative presentation. in fact your program is similar to what we want in adapt and implement in Yemen. my question is will be interested to expand your program to Yemen.**

Response: Room to Read does not yet have experience implementing the Girls' Education Program in Western Asia or the Middle East, but we are open to considering expanding our reach (via technical assistance/working with local partners and/or government) should there be a viable opportunity and available funding for this to happen.

- 5. Laura 2: Were these assessments tested in the US, or only the countries listed on the previous slide? Any Latin American countries?**

Response: Our life skills assessment tools have only been piloted in our program

countries which span across Asia and Africa--Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Tanzania. We have not tested in the US or in any Latin American countries.

### **Process Questions**

**6. What tools do you use to identify girls who are likely to drop-out and need mentoring?**

Response: We have developed an internal monitoring system called 'Risk & Response System' through which each girl is tracked monthly across 4 key risk factors: absence from school, absence from life skills sessions, academic performance, and parent absence from a parent workshop/meeting. Based on initial internal data, we have determined that these 4 factors are highly indicative of whether a girl will drop out of school. Some countries add one or more further indicators to capture context-specific risk dynamics. Based on whether a girl exhibits any one of these risk factors, a staff member (called Social Mobilizer) then conducts an individual mentoring follow-up with the girl to try to understand challenges/circumstances that the particular girl may be dealing with and mitigate dropout as possible. Individual mentoring can take the form of a private conversation with the girl after school, a home visit, discussion with the girls' parents or teacher, etc.

**7. You stated that it was hard to determine what to change and what not to change in the refinement process, can you speak more on how R2R filtered this information?**

Our process of contextualization includes a number of steps designed to identify areas of the tool where we need to make changes. Firstly, our in-country teams review the tools item by item and flag any that may create a challenge in their context due to cultural factors, language, or any other reason. We then go through translation and back-translation into the local language - differences at this stage between the original and back-translated tool often reveal not just translation errors, but also ambiguities in either the English or translated text that may need to be rewritten to be more explicit. Finally, we test each item with adolescent girls in the context and probe their answers, which sometimes reveals questions that girls do not readily understand, or that they understand differently than intended. Any changes that are made through this process are then re-tested with additional girls until we are confident that we have a tool well-adapted to the cultural and linguistic context.

**8. Can you elaborate on the process of contextualising the tool, please**

I think the answer to the previous question now addresses this.

**9. Lisa Lauxman: How adaptable is it for the tool with ICT/phone?**

Very! Most of our recent assessments have been conducted on tablets using Tangerine or other similar software. At various points in development the tool has included some elements that might be more challenging to adapt to digital data collection, but in its current form it is a pretty straightforward matter.

## Measurement Questions

- 10. Catie Honeyman - World Learning: Have you tried any hybrid, where questions are posed orally to a group of participants, but they write down their response on paper?**

We haven't, but this is an interesting idea! We have done some of our pre-testing through small focus groups, but doing the whole assessment that way would be an interesting thing to test.

- 11. Todd drummond: does room to read analyze for differential item functioning by gender or across languages?**

We have done some of this across languages though not extensively thus far. Regarding gender, your question is timely! We just completed our first pilot test of the tool with boys in Cambodia and will start analyzing the results soon.

- 12. Sarah Gates: With the high baseline scores in mind, do you have any ideas for testing/administration strategies that might be able to help the tool pick up change over time?**

For future evaluations we can try to incorporate some more challenging items and perhaps some scales designed for older adolescents and even adults. For the baselines that have already been conducted we're obviously somewhat limited in what we can do at this point, though one strategy we've employed in other similar work is a retrospective pre-post strategy, where we can ask questions at endline about the changes that the participants themselves see (e.g. 'As compared to three years ago, are you now more likely/less likely to XYZ...'). It's a method with some obvious limitations but it can provide some indicative insights at least.

- 13. Erika Jooste: Did you measure Marital status and/or having given birth?**

Yes, in the alumnae survey we measure both.

## Final

- 14. Emilie Bagby: Will Room to Read make the tool available for others to use?**

- 15. Cait Hone: When you describe the life skills measurement survey as a "tool" do you mean that it is actually something that other organizations can be trained on and can use themselves?**

Taking these two together--we do intend to share the tool but are not ready to do so at this time. Part of the reason is that we feel the tool itself is not all that useful without accompanying documentation on the process, lessons learned, best practices and pitfalls to avoid as well as training resources. So what we ultimately share will be less a tool and more a toolkit. We don't have a detailed timeline for this yet (we're a small team!) but it's something we're definitely prioritizing.

- 16. Emmy Zoomlamai: We also work with secondary schools girls promoting similar soft skills. We would like to connect for more interaction with you.**

Response: Please email Linda ([linda.tran@roomtoread.org](mailto:linda.tran@roomtoread.org)) if you would like to discuss programmatic features.

- a. **Emmy Zoomlamai: We are struggling with assessment methodology and M&E tools.**

Response: Please email Ryan ([ryan.hebert@roomtoread.org](mailto:ryan.hebert@roomtoread.org)) if you would like to discuss measurement and tools.