



# DEVELOPING INTEREST IN READING AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

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## ABOUT THE LEARNING CYCLE FEASIBILITY STUDIES ON SCALING INNOVATION

This case study is a result of the KIX EAP Learning Cycle "Feasibility Studies on Scaling Innovation". Organised by NORRAG and the Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE), this skills- and outcomes-oriented course ran from September 2020 to January 2021. Across 11 weeks, this professional course enabled national experts to publish evidence-based studies by examining the conditions whereby it is feasible to scale up an existing innovation or a pilot project in their country. Nine teams of educational sector experts from Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan took part in this Learning Cycle.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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CA	Central Asia
RT	The Republic of Tajikistan
RRS	Region of Republican Subordination
RT MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan
RT NSC	National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Tajikistan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
RC	Reading Calendar
PDC	Professional development courses
PP	Percentage Points
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
RWM	Read with Me project
KIX	Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
KIX EAP	KIX, Europe, Asia and the Pacific
NORRAG	Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training
NUGSE	Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report evaluates the potential for scaling up the innovative Reading Calendar pilot of the Read with Me (RWM) project, which aims at improving reading among grade 3 and 4 students in Tajikistan. This project was a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Tajikistan (RT MoES) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Considering the positive results achieved in the Reading Calendar pilot to improve reading commitment among students of grades 3 to 4 learning in Russian classes, we propose to expand this innovative project to cover those in grades 3 to 4 for which Tajik is the language of instruction.

The two key features that were examined to evaluate the successful implementation of the Reading Calendar components within the Read with Me project are: 1) the selection and development of interesting and accessible topics in the Reading Calendar for students in grades 3 and 4, and 2) the mentoring support offered to primary school teachers.

The report consists of five sections. Section 1 describes the data, the education sector context and the problem that existed before the implementation of the pilot project. Section 2 presents the goals, activities, expected results and the theory of change of the project. It also lists the enabling conditions for the successful implementation of the project based on Tajikistan's history and identifies risks that could undermine the successful implementation of the innovations. Section 3 describes the methodology and presents the results of the evaluation. Section 4 considers the potential to scale up the innovative features of the project in grades 3 and 4 for which the Tajik language is used for instruction. To determine the potential for scaling up, attention is paid to the theory of change, project outcomes, implementation arrangements, calculations of financial costs and the identification of limitations and potential challenges. Section 5 presents recommendations and an action plan for scaling innovation in classes where Tajik language is used for instruction. Further details and protocols of the applied research tools are given in the Annexes.

# 1

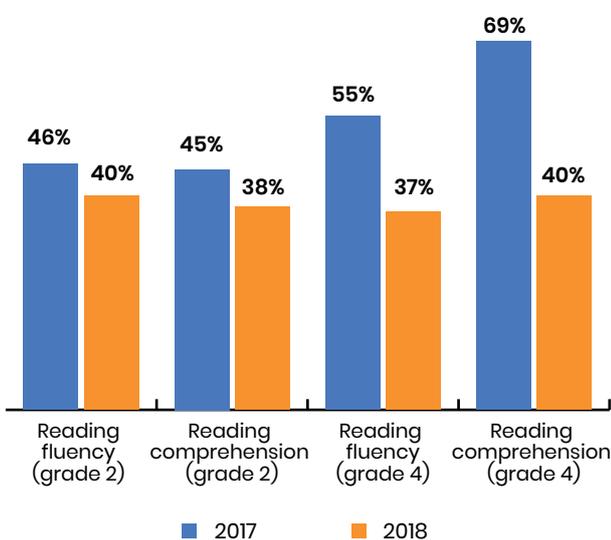
## BACKGROUND

Located in Central Asia, the Republic of Tajikistan has two official languages: Tajik and Russian. Its population of 9.3 million people is one of the youngest in Central Asia. Children under 18 years represent 40.6% of the population, and 66% are people under 30 years old. The number of students in basic primary education (grades 1 to 4) in Tajikistan over the past 10 school years (2010/11 to 2019/20) has grown by 37.1%. There were 916,832 students in the 2019/20 school year, of whom 444,528 (48.5%) were girls. 91% of primary school classes in the country use the Tajik language for instruction, while 4% use Russian as the medium of instruction. The remaining 5% of classes use Uzbek, Kyrgyz, English and Turkmen languages as modes of instruction (MoES, 2019).

When Tajikistan's economy began shifting towards the free market in the 1990s, the country's education system started experiencing multiple challenges. Along with organizational and institutional problems, the pedagogical community and the public began widely discussing the problem of students' low interest in reading and knowledge in general. Students in the early grades of primary school showed particularly low levels of reading skills. This is attested by data from two diagnostic surveys that used the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to evaluate the reading skills of primary students in 2017 and 2018. The first survey consulted over 2,000

students in grades 2 and 4 who learned in the Tajik language, as well as 600 students in grades 2 and 4 for whom Russian was the language of instruction (EGRA, 2017). In the second survey of basic reading skills, 2,761 students in grades 2 and 4 whose language of instruction was Tajik and 1,099 students whose language of instruction was Russian took part (EGRA, 2018). The results of these surveys concerning two indicators of reading skills – reading fluency and comprehension – are presented below in Figures 1 and 2.

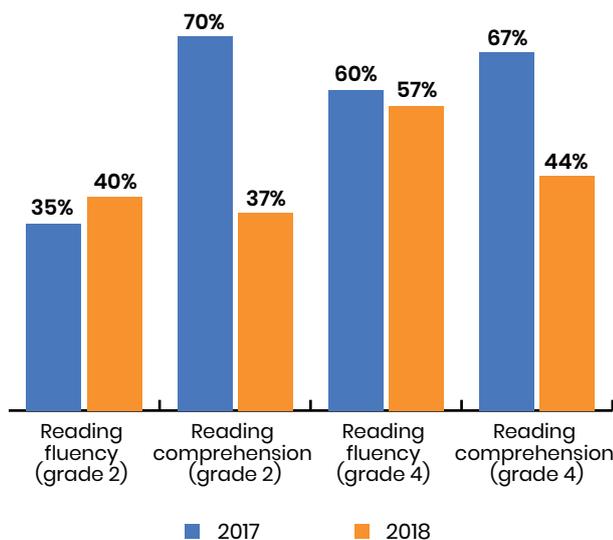
**Figure 1. Percentage of students in grades 2 and 4 whose language of instruction is Russian and who achieved minimum scores in reading fluency and comprehension; Source: EGRA, 2017 and EGRA, 2018**



The data shows a reduction in the number of students who managed to obtain a minimum score on a standardized test. Within one year, the percentage of grade 2 students whose language of instruction is Russian and who achieved minimum scores in reading fluency and comprehension fell by 6 percentage points (pp) and 7 pp, respectively. With respect to grade 4 students whose medium of instruction is Russian, the percentage of children who achieved minimum scores in reading fluency and reading comprehension fell by 18 pp and 29 pp, respectively.

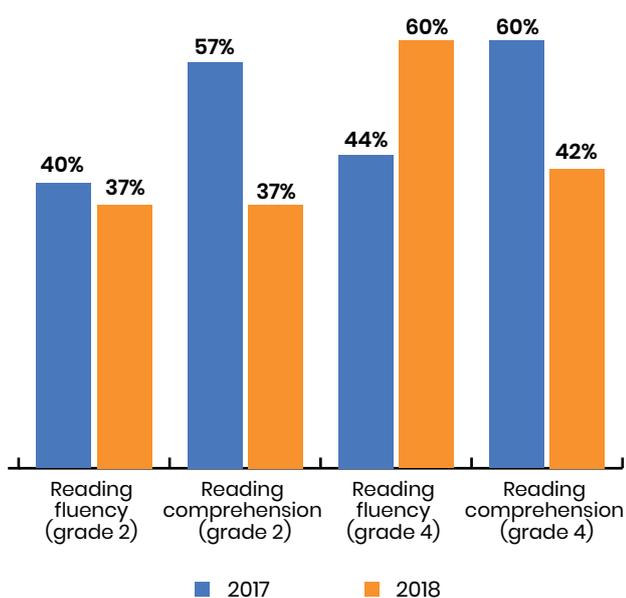
Students in Tajik classes show a similar trend to those in the Russian classes. As Figure 2 highlights, the percentage of grade 2 students instructed in Tajik who achieved minimum scores in comprehension fell by 33 pp over the span of one year. Among grade 4 students, the number of students who achieved minimum scores fell in both categories (in reading fluency by 3 pp and reading comprehension by a significant 23 pp).

**Figure 2** Percentage of students in grades 2 and 4 whose language of instruction is Tajik and who achieved minimum scores in reading fluency and comprehension; Source: EGRA, 2017 and EGRA, 2018



When comparing reading skills in the two languages, the level of achievement among students learning in Russian is often higher than that of their peers learning in Tajik. In 2019, the EGRA was used to evaluate the reading skills of primary students; namely, 2,761 students from grades 2 and 4 instructed in Tajik language and 1,099 students in Russian classes. The results show that in terms of reading fluency and comprehension, significant differences exist in three out of four benchmarks between the two groups of students (i.e. students in Russian classes perform better than their Tajik counterparts) (EGRA, 2019) (see Figure 11). This further demonstrates the need to implement the proposed project in Tajik classes.

**Figure 3** EGRA results in reading fluency and comprehension, grades 2 and 4, disaggregated by classes taught in Russian and Tajik language; Source: EGRA, 2017 and EGRA, 2018



One explanation for these students' lower interest in reading and knowledge is the poor professional preparedness of teachers. This is mentioned in the Medium-Term Development Program of the Republic of Tajikistan for 2016–2020 (RT Government, 2016). The number of classroom hours envisaged for future language teachers to study methods of teaching (15%) and school practice (17%) remains the smallest in comparison to other subjects (Steiner-Khamisi et. al., 2007). Moreover, 14.2% of primary school teachers have just three years or less of work experience (Mirzoev, 2017). To further the problem, pedagogical universities and colleges in Tajikistan have not been training any groups to teach in Russian for more than 10 years. This has caused a decline in new pedagogues being available for Russian classes.

The RWM project identified issues like poor participation among primary school teachers and other pedagogical workers in professional development courses (PDC) and trainings. For example, out of the 23,007 participants of the RWM project, 5% took their PDC five or more years ago, and 21% have never taken any PDC training. An outdated infrastructure and equipment base (RT Government, 2016) also negatively affects students' interest in reading and knowledge, as a scarce library and lack of visual tools prevent teachers from using cognitive activities during the learning process. The situation is further aggravated by an almost complete absence of a Russian linguistic environment in rural areas. For most students who attend classes conducted in Russian, the process of familiarization with the Russian language starts only when students enter school. For example, 43,422 (94%) of the 46,198 students who are learning in Russian in Tajikistan's primary schools are non-active users of the language (MoES, 2019).

# 2

## INNOVATIONS TO IMPROVE READING

The research team selected the Reading Calendar pilot as an innovation with potential for scaling from the Russian language of instruction to the Tajik language of instruction. The research team's interest in the RWM project was brought about by several factors. The main factor is the alignment of the project's objectives and the priorities established in the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan – namely, to improve the quality of education. One of the three basic principles in the country's development plan is "innovativeness or development based on innovations in all areas of the country's life" (RT Government, 2019). In his yearly address to the Parliament in 2019, the President of the RT emphasized the need to take efficient measures for instilling a love for books and reading among students (RT Government, 2019).

The project has touched on this problem of reading commitment, which is topical for Tajikistan and several other countries in Central Asia. A similar RWM project was implemented in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (2013–2017) with the same objective of improving the reading and comprehension skills of primary students.

During the KIX EAP Learning Cycle "Feasibility Study on Scaling Innovations", the team developed an interest in the Reading Calendar component of the project – a Flip Calendar on Reading – which approached reading through a fictional character: "School Year with Luboznaika." Here, Luboznaika is a fictional character who embodies curiosity. The name is derived from two Russian words: 'love' and 'knowledge'. This tool helped teachers improve their students' cognitive capabilities, strengthen their interest in books and reading and expanded their horizons and vocabulary. Second, the team focused on a non-traditional approach to solving the problem detailed above; namely, using the Calendar during out-of-class activities, which is characterized by flexible mechanisms of cognitive interest formation.

### 2.1 Summary of the pilot project

The five-year RWM educational project started in Tajikistan in 2016 and is on track to continue its operations until October 2021. The project is financed by USAID in close cooperation with the RT MoES. The implementing agency is the international development firm Chemonics International, Inc. The total budget of the project is USD 19 million. The main objective of the RWM project is to improve reading outcomes among primary students. It has been implemented in 80% of the schools in the Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS): Kulyab, Khatlon, Sogd, Dushanbe and the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region.

The project consists of three components: 1) increasing the number of print publications for children, 2) supporting educators through training sessions and other means and 3) developing and introducing innovative technologies to teach reading. The analysis carried out in this report will focus on an aspect of the third component of the project, "developing interest in reading among primary students learning in Russian as a non-native language" in the form of a flip calendar on reading, or the Reading Calendar, for reading "School Year with 'Luboznaika'". The component aims to improve the reading skills of students in grades 3 to 4, help teachers foster cognitive interest among their students, strengthen students' interest in books and reading and expand their horizons and vocabulary.

The Reading Calendar is intended to create joint systemic work between teachers and students four times a month (on average once a week) during the whole school year within the time assigned for out-of-class activities. Reading Calendar activities are organised outside class hours because extracurricular activities promote flexible mechanisms for forming cognitive interest. Out-of-class work more often entails something elective rather than compulsory, i.e. it takes place on a voluntary basis and provides greater opportunities for organising different types of activities. This allows teachers to use an optimal mix of conventional and innovative forms and methods of teaching, such as plays and other creative

<sup>1</sup> The KIX EAP Learning Cycles are professional development courses offered to national education experts from 21 GPE partner countries in the EAP region. This learning cycle enabled national experts to publish evidence-based studies by examining the conditions whereby it is feasible to scale up an existing innovation or a pilot project in their country.

and research activities. Thus, a distinct feature of Reading Calendar activities is the absence of external incentives, which are common in in-class learning activities (e.g. marks).

## 2.2 Goals, activities and expected results of the innovation

The goal of introducing the Reading Calendar in grades 3 and 4, where Russian is the language of instruction, is to improve students' commitment to reading. Table 1 presents the expected short-term and long-term results of the project.

**Table 1. Expected results of the reading calendar**

Short-term results	
1.	Teachers actively use the Reading Calendar during out-of-class work and main lessons (Literature Reading, Russian Language, Environment).
2.	Teachers independently create an atmosphere of cooperation among students in the classroom.
3.	Students actively work and interact with the teacher during classes that use the Calendar.
4.	Students do creative works based on the literature they have read.
Long-term results	
The use of the Calendar is expected to help increase interest in reading among students in grades 3 to 4, and it may lead to the achievement of the following long-term results:	
1.	Students reading regularly.
2.	Improvement of students' reading skills.
3.	Stronger cognitive activity among students.

The implementation of the Reading Calendar was made possible by the complex activities planned and carried out as follows:

1. The development of the Flip Calendar on Reading and for Reading (Reading Calendar) and the guidebook took 11 months, from November 2018 to September 2019. It included an analysis of the programme materials (for grades 3 and 4 with Russian as the language of instruction) to select texts and topics that would complement the following contents: literature reading, Russian language and environment. The development process was sensitive to age-specific preferences and the capabilities of young schoolchildren.
2. The development of the program for the Reading Calendar's pilot implementation in 16 primary classes of 16 pilot schools (15% of the total number of schools targeted by the project) was finalized in October 2019.
3. The workshop "Developing Cognitive Interest among Primary Students Learning in Russian" was organized and

carried out in November 2019 for teachers taking part in the pilot program.

4. Teachers were supplied with Reading Calendars and supporting guidebooks.
5. Mentoring support was provided to teachers by four mentors trained within the project from December 2019 to March 2020.

## 2.3 Theory of change

The project's theory of change explains how the development of a complex set of measures contributes to improved reading commitment among students in grades 3 and 4 who are learning in Russian:

*By using the interactive form of work and developing a friendly environment of cooperation between the student and the teacher, the trained educators will positively affect the cognitive interest of students through out-of-class work that will lead to an improved commitment to reading among the students.*

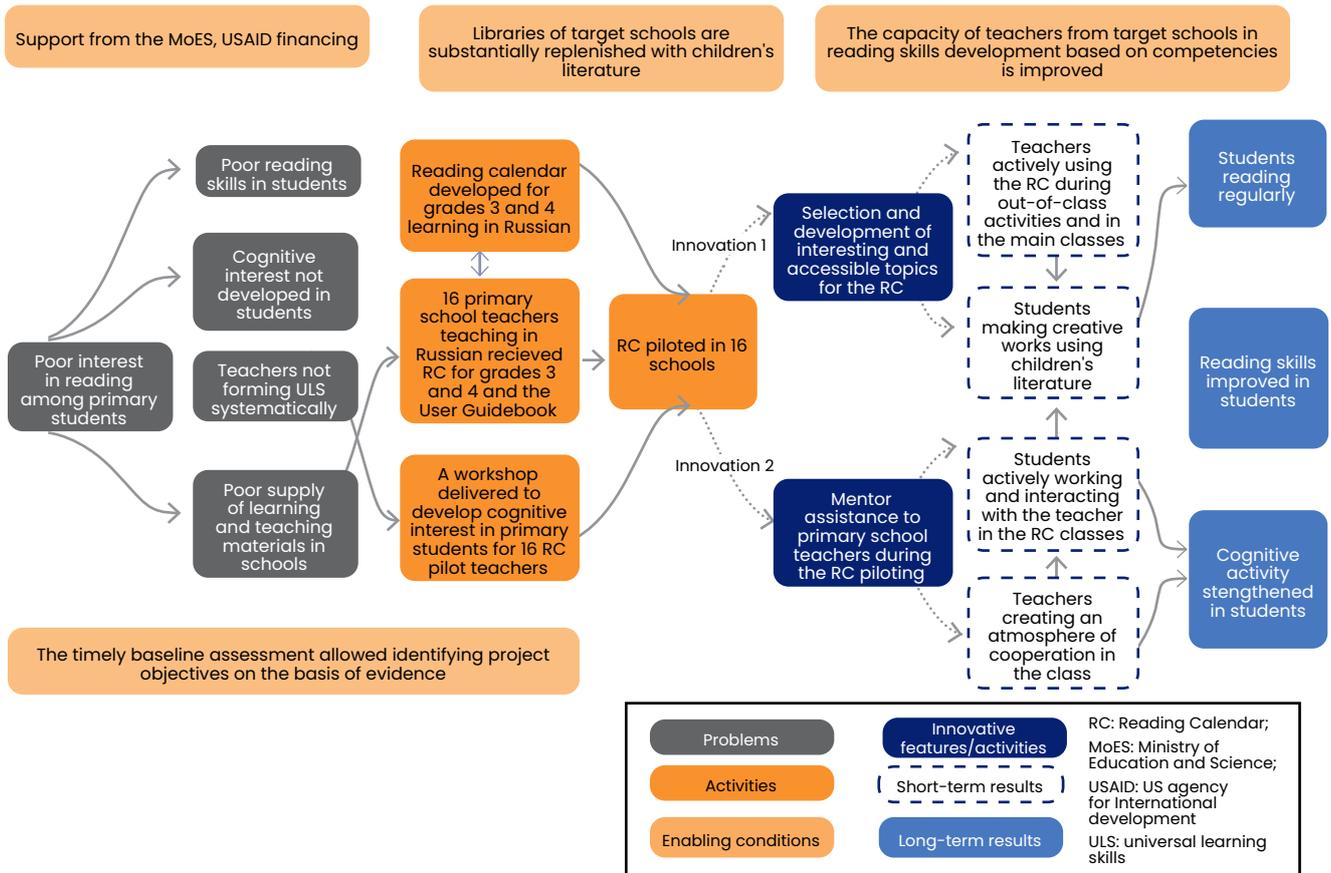
According to the theory of change (see Figure 4), having several planned activities should help overcome the difficulties that have caused the decline in reading commitment among students. The implemented activities explored in the present study included the development of the Reading Calendar for students in grades 3 to 4 and a guidebook on the Calendar's use. Additionally, a workshop on developing cognitive interest among primary students was created for teachers to attend. Mentoring support was also provided during the entire pilot period of the Reading Calendar.

The basis for the theory of change above is the assumption that two key features of the Reading Calendar will play an important role in improving the reading commitment of students in grades 3 to 4. These are:

- 1) the systematic development and selection of topics for the Reading Calendar will contribute to its active use by teachers and students during out-of-class activities, which will positively affect reading skills; and
- 2) efficient mentor support will help teachers to independently create a cooperative environment in the classroom, thus enabling students to be more active, emotionally engaged and relaxed during classroom work and interactions with their teachers and classmates.

These features were expected to help strengthen the students' cognitive activity levels. Further, the Calendar's exploratory nature was predicted to lead children to voluntarily read more, which would in turn positively affect their reading skills.

Figure 4. Theory of change



## 2.4 Enabling conditions for implementing innovations

The factors that contributed to the successful implementation of the Reading Calendar include:

1. Approval of financial support by USAID to introduce the flip calendar in pilot schools.
2. Approval of the framework pilot by RT MoES.
3. Provision of support by local education authorities in target regions.
4. Timely baseline assessment of students' reading skills within the diagnostic survey by the EGRA (2018), which allowed for the project's goals and objectives to be identified.
5. Teachers taking the 9-day training on improving the reading skills of primary students on a competence basis; which improved the capacity of teachers from target schools to allow their students' reading skills to develop on a competence basis.
6. Large-scale library replenishment initiative, in which 614 children's fiction books and 900 popular-science books,

both in Russian and Tajik, were given to target schools; this allowed teachers to efficiently work on the Calendar topics without having to search for supplementary sources of information.

## 2.5 Existing risks of the project

While the Reading Calendar was being implemented as an innovative initiative of the RWM project, some risks were identified that could challenge the successful implementation of the initiative:

1. **The difficulty in collecting certain data due to the short length of the Reading Calendar pilot.** The Reading Calendar was designed to be implemented during the full school year and included a system of monitoring work between teachers and students. However, the pilot project was planned for less than five months.
2. **The complexity of the content included in the Reading Calendar.** During the pilot period, the teachers observed that the language used was not accessible for all students. In response, specialists simplified the language used in several topics included in the Calendar.
3. **The possibility of teachers failing to deliver all planned classes of the Reading Calendar.** During the pilot, some

teachers were not very active, i.e. they delivered classes on the Calendar inconsistently or cited various pretexts. For this reason, the pilot program was designed to include not only planned visits to schools but also weekly telephone check-ins between mentors and teachers.

One risk that could not have been foreseen was that of participant dropout due to the death of a teacher, as well as weather conditions that affected the successful implementation of the project. Participants from the Sogdiyskaya region could not attend their planned one-day workshop and later did not take part in the program. Four teachers from that region were then replaced with participants from other regions.

# 3

## INNOVATIVE FEATURES OF THE PROJECT TO INCREASE INTEREST IN READING AMONG PRIMARY STUDENTS LEARNING IN RUSSIAN AS A NON-NATIVE LANGUAGE

This section demonstrates that the two innovative features of the project detailed above<sup>2</sup> played an important role in improving the reading commitment of students in grades 3 to 4 during the Reading Calendar pilot. This occurred because of the following: 1) thorough selection and development of Reading Calendar topics sensitive to real-life interests, age-specific preferences and capabilities of children aged 9 to 11 years; 2) provision of assistance to teachers through regular mentoring support to help them create an atmosphere of cooperation with their students, which in turn positively affected the students' interest in reading.

### 3.1 Methodology of the feasibility study

A qualitative study was conducted on the Reading Calendar pilot initiative. The feasibility study for scaling up the Reading Calendar innovation was conducted based on data from the entire Reading Calendar pilot program. The data collected during the feasibility study were interpreted from a new perspective.

The Reading Calendar pilot program included 16 primary school teachers in Russian from 16 schools (1 teacher from each of the 16 schools). The selected teachers were of various ages and had varying degrees of pedagogical experience working in primary grades (from 3 to 40 years), as well as different interactions with the professional-pedagogical culture. The schools were selected based on location (city/village) – eight urban and eight rural schools. Those selected were from the capital city, Dushanbe, cities and RRS (Vakhdad, Gissar, ShakhriNAV, Tursunzade) and the Khatlonskaya region (Bokhtar, Kubodiyon, Levakand, Yavan). Schools from the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region and Sogdiyskaya region were not included in the pilot due to the complicating factors of remoteness and adverse weather conditions.

The pilot was evaluated using data collected through 1) monitoring the 16 teachers' activities from December 2019 to

March 2020; 2) semi-structured interviews with all 16 teachers and structured interviews with 13 teachers, which took place in December 2020; 3) a focus-group discussion with 10 students in December 2020 and 4) survey responses from 15 teachers at the end of the pilot.

The use of various sources allowed for the obtained data to be triangulated. To evaluate the innovations accurately, the project team collected additional data in December 2020 via a focus-group discussion with 10 students from one of the pilot schools, as well as through telephone interviews with 13 teachers who had implemented the Reading Calendar. The data collection methods are described in Table 2.

**Table 2. Data collection methods**

Method		Description
Interview	Observation	Four consultants of the RWM project observed 16 primary classes conducted in Russian, from 16 Tajik-Russian schools (one class from each school). The observation spreadsheets included questions and statements conventionally grouped into four thematic blocks (see Annex 1). During the first and second observations, the consultants used similar observation spreadsheets to ensure the future comparability of the collected data.
	Semi-structured interview	Four consultants of the RWM project conducted 16 phone interviews with the 16 teachers who took part in the Reading Calendar pilot. Each interview involved 22 basic questions (see Annex 2). The consultants filled in questionnaires based on the answers given by teachers over the phone.
	Structured interview	Four of the report authors conducted interviews with 13 of the teachers who had used the Calendar. The interviews consisted of 18 questions (see Annex 3). The consultants filled in the questionnaires based on the answers given by teachers over the phone.
	Focus-group discussion	One report author held a focus-group discussion with 10 fourth-grade students who had worked on the Reading Calendar (see Annex 4). The focus-group discussion took place in a classroom at school.

<sup>2</sup> The innovative features are: (i) the systematic development and selection of topics for the Reading Calendar and (ii) efficient mentor support to teachers

**Table 2. Data collection methods (contd.)**

Method	Description
Survey	After the Reading Calendar pilot concluded, four RWM project consultants distributed a survey to 15 teachers who had gone through the whole pilot cycle. The survey consisted of 27 questions (see Annex 5). Variations between the questions asked during the previously described interviews and the survey allowed for the accuracy of the teachers' answers to be confirmed, as well as for dynamics to be better visualized.

### 3.2 Findings of the study

This section presents the data analysis on two key features of the project: 1) selection and development of interesting and accessible topics of the Reading Calendar for students in grades 3 to 4, and 2) mentoring support for the teachers.

This study tested the theory that the identified key features may contribute to improving reading commitment among students in grades 3 to 4, instructed in the Russian language. This influence may lead to the following project outcomes:

- 1) The Reading Calendar will help to increase interest in reading among children in grades 3 to 4, who make creative works based on reading materials.
- 2) Teachers may independently create an atmosphere of cooperation among their students in the classroom.

Below are the results of the activities and the evaluation of the two innovations to test this theory.

#### Feature 1: Selection and development of interesting and accessible topics in the Reading Calendar for grades 3 and 4

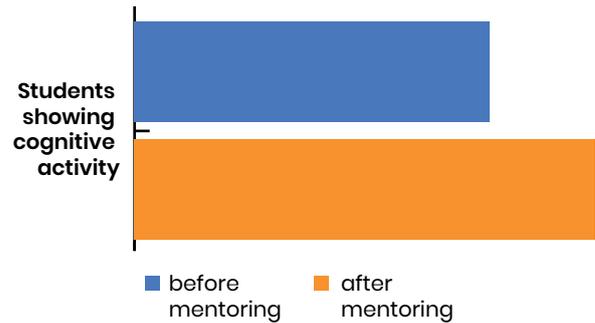
The analysis of the data collected for this innovation provided the following results:

1. During out-of-class activities per the Reading Calendar, students showed cognitive interest and actively took part in Reading Calendar activities.

During the planned observations, it was noted that 47% of the students demonstrated cognitive activity during the first observation and 61% during the second observation (Figure 4). In this context, cognitive activity is expressed by the children showing an interest in accepting information during the lesson, the extent of the efforts they make during the work process and their desires to clarify, deepen their knowledge, and apply the received information to other materials.

The students' interest in the Reading Calendar topics was confirmed by data from the focus-group discussion held with the children. This discussion revealed that the Reading

**Figure 5 Students showing cognitive activity**



Calendar topics attracted children because of their writing style (e.g. direct communication with children), which helped the students better understand words and themes found in core subjects.

*"The topics were explained by Luboznaika, who talked to us as a friend, a helper and advisor..."*  
(Denis, grade 4 student)

*"I really liked the topics on 'stress'. I realized that I used to wrongly pronounce many common words. Now I know their correct pronunciation."*  
(Sayora, grade 4 student)

The cognitive activity shown by the children during the Reading Calendar classes and the children's interest in the Reading Calendar topics confirm that the Calendar was accessible and interesting.

2. Teachers actively used the Reading Calendar as part of the main school program during Reading, Russian Language and Environment classes.

As observed during activity monitoring, all 16 teachers used the Reading Calendar and its topics during Reading classes. This was confirmed by the teachers' own statements. For example, when teaching new vocabulary on landscape lyrics, the teachers found the three poetic dictionaries included in the Reading Calendar to be helpful.

*"Poetic dictionaries of the Reading Calendar were used in Reading classes, since they match the poetic workbook of the Reading textbook."*  
(Maryam, grade 3 teacher)

*"On a daily basis, when studying literary works, we met epithets, reifications and comparisons and referred to the three pages of the Reading Calendar for the explanation of these concepts and examples."*  
(Svetlana, grade 4 teacher)

Further, during the focus-group discussion, the students noted that their teachers had referred to the Reading Calendar in Reading, Russian and Environment classes. The interviewed students confirmed that during Russian

language classes, their teachers referred to the section of the Reading Calendar titled "Say it Correctly." This topic helped the children better understand the norms of stress in the Russian language and remember ways to confirm the correct stress using various types of dictionaries.

### 3. The students found the language used in the Calendar topics accessible.

The accessibility of the Reading Calendar's language for children was confirmed by the results of two phone interviews with teachers and by data from the focus group discussion with students. Most of the interviewed teachers noted that the language used in the Reading Calendar was clear and easy for children to understand. According to these teachers, this was achieved by the omission of unknown words and complex sentences, as well as by the child-stylized speech of the Reading Calendar narrator. This ensured cohesion between pictures and text.

*"Frankly speaking, before, I had never touched topics that related to the means of artistic expression. They seemed too complicated for children in grade 3. Yet, it appears quite easy, if one selects the right words for the explanation, and this is exactly what the Reading Calendar could do for my students."*

(Elena, grade 3 teacher)

The Reading Calendar's language accessibility was also mentioned by children who took part in the focus-group discussion.

*"It was much easier for me to read the Reading Calendar than the textbooks. To prepare for my library research paper, I used information from the Reading Calendar..."*

(Gleb, grade 4 student)

*"It was easy to read because the Reading Calendar texts had no complicated scientific words, and if [they] were found, Luboznaika explained their meaning in a manner that was understandable for us..."*

(Zulfia, grade 4 student)

### 4. The Reading Calendar topics reflected the students' real lives and considered the capabilities of children aged 9 to 11 years.

All teachers voiced the advantages of the Reading Calendar being reflective of the real lives of children. The teachers noted that the Reading Calendar topics touched upon important children's matters, such as relationships with peers and adults, school life, connecting with nature, historical events and holidays.

*"Each topic of the Reading Calendar refers to some specific events from the children's real lives and their relationships*

*with friends, animals, books, school..."*

(Lena, grade 3 teacher)

*"The fact that after the topic 'World Pets Day or Injection against Indifference' several children from my class gave shelter to three dogs and two cats attests to the fact that the topic is indeed important for children..."*

(Inna, grade 3 teacher)

All 13 teachers who were interviewed confirmed that the Reading Calendar topics were sensitive to children's ages. The teachers noted the presence of several examples and pictures, as well as corresponding recommended books, that were appropriate for the ages of the children.

### 5. The students referred to additional literature related to the Reading Calendar topics.

To perform Calendar tasks, the children consulted additional literature works related to Reading Calendar topics. This was discussed during the focus group discussion with the students. For example, after playing the games "Finish the Word" and "Tour Guide" offered in the Reading Calendar, children used their stress dictionaries to find the correct pronunciation for the most common words encountered in the games. When performing the Calendar task, "Foreign Words in My Backpack", students worked with their parents to search the Internet for information about the origins of school-related words.

*"I liked doing the tasks given by Luboznaika on the topic 'Foreign Words in My Backpack' because my father was helping me with them. Together, we found information about the origins of the words 'mathematical compass' and 'ruler' on the Internet."*

(Sukhrob, grade 4 student)

*"During the winter holidays, I read the Encyclopedia of Pets which I took from the library. The Calendar had told me about this book. After the holidays, I learned that our library had other encyclopedias and I read two more!"*

(Amir, grade 4 student)

### 6. Students voluntarily made their own creative works on Reading Calendar topics.

During the focus-group discussion, the students talked about creative works, the making of which required them to read books. For example, after completing the topic "Poetic Dictionary," the students made their own Reading Calendars from materials at hand. Here, thematic sections were identical to topics in the official Reading Calendar, but the students created examples from their own experiences (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Reading Calendars made by students in grades 3 and 4; Source: USAID Read with me project, n.d.



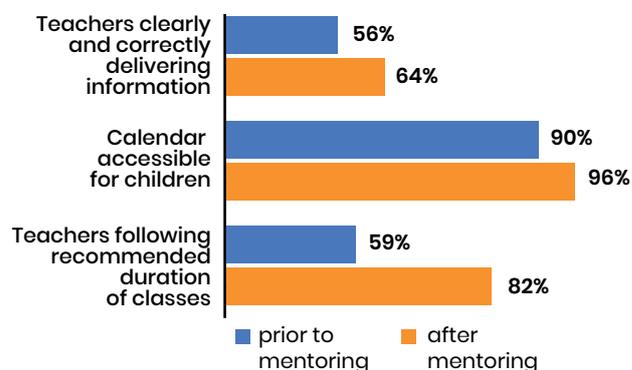
## Feature II: Mentoring support to teachers

The provision of regular mentoring support to the teachers helped to create an atmosphere of cooperation between teachers and students, which positively affected students' interest in reading. The following results were observed after analyzing the collected data before and after mentoring:

### 1. The teachers ensured efficient organization of classes using the Reading Calendar.

The teachers expressed that they were able to efficiently organize Reading Calendar classes. For these classes, they knew the materials well and delivered them to their students in an accessible manner within the recommended timeframe. After mentoring, the number of Reading Calendar classes with well-prepared teachers increased by 9 pp; the number of classes in which teachers clearly and correctly delivered information to their students increased by 8 pp; the number of classes in which the Reading Calendar was kept in a place accessible to the students increased by 6 pp and the number of classes in which teachers followed the recommended class duration increased by 23 pp. These results are shown in Figure 7.

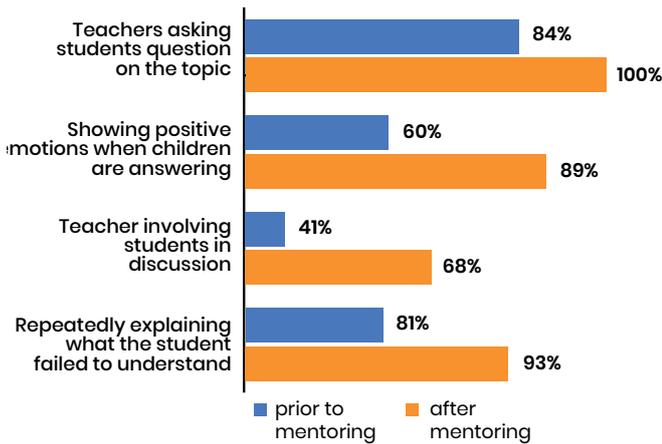
**Figure 7.** Efficient organization of classes using the Calendar



### 2. The teachers organized dialogues with their students.

After receiving mentoring support, teachers improved at organizing dialogues with their students. The number of classes in which teachers asked the students questions increased by 16 pp, and the number of classes in which teachers responded to their students' answers with positive emotions increased by 19 pp. The number of classes in which teachers facilitated dialogues between students increased by 27 pp, and the number of classes in which teachers re-explained topics that the students had failed to understand the first time increased by 12 pp. These trends can be observed in Figure 8.

**Figure 8. Organizing dialogues with students**



The positive effect of the mentoring support on teachers' capacity to facilitate dialogues with their students was further evidenced during the additional teacher interviews. During the structured interviews, several teachers noted that owing to their mentors' recommendations, they started replacing one-way lectures with more open dialogues and exchanges with their students. Because of these open dialogues, the teachers showed more interest in their students' opinions, which helped them involve every child in class discussions.

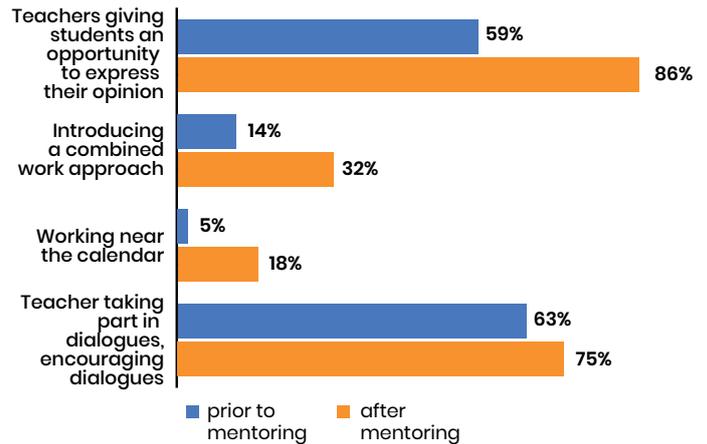
*"The children stopped waiting for me to deliver ready-made information that they would need to memorize. There are more questions in classes now (from children and me), there is also an increased tendency among children to answer or jointly look for answers to the questions. The children have become more emotional, perhaps, because I have changed myself as well – I have started to listen to my students..."*

(Zamira, grade 3 teacher)

**3. The teachers remained open to the expression of opinions by children and to interactions between students during Reading Calendar classes.**

Teachers encouraged the open expression of opinions by their students, as well as interactions between students during Reading Calendar classes. These changes to classroom practices are summarized in Figure 9. There was a considerable increase in the number of classes in which teachers gave their students the opportunity to express their opinions. This included a 12 percentage point increase in classes in which teachers themselves participated in dialogues with their students and encouraged topic-related conversations among the class. Teachers combined various forms of work with their students in an additional 18% of the observed classes.

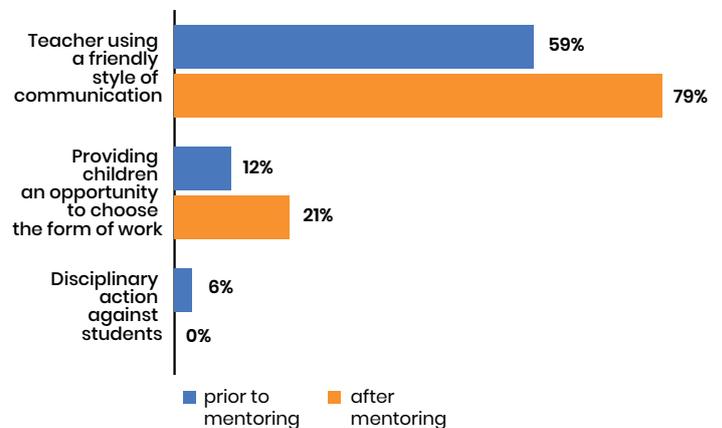
**Figure 9. Open expression of opinions by students in classes and students interacting with each other**



**4. Teachers applied the principles of positive discipline during Reading Calendar classes.**

Teachers started to use a friendly style of communication with respectful wording and offered children the right to choose between group or individual activities more often. They fully dropped the authoritarian style of communicating and taking disciplinary actions against children. These results are shown in Figure 10 below.

**Figure 10. Teachers using the principles of positive discipline in Calendar classes**



**3.3 Conclusion**

According to the analysis results, students demonstrated cognitive activity during their Reading Calendar classes and an active interest in Reading Calendar topics. This indicates that the Reading Calendar topics were relevant to children's lives and sensitive to their age-specific interests. Furthermore, the subjects included examples, illustrations and recommendations for supplementary age-appropriate books. Reading Calendar topics also matched with regular academic subjects, which allowed teachers to actively use the Calendar as a textbook in core classes. Finally, the language of the Reading Calendar was accessible for children, and the

thorough selection and development of its topics allowed teachers to spark cognitive interest among their students.

Our analysis also revealed the importance of the mentoring support provided to teachers. This mentoring support ensured the efficient organization of Reading Calendar classes, encouraged teachers to enter into dialogues with their students and use positive discipline during class. All these factors led to the creation of an atmosphere of cooperation between teachers and students that resulted in children associating reading with joy rather than boredom or coercion (see Figure 11).

These results indicate that the thorough selection and development of Reading Calendar's topics positively affected its active use by teachers in both out-of-class activities and core classes. Further, the Calendar created an environment that enabled students to voluntarily make creative works. While preparing these works, the students referred to books and other sources of information, thereby further improving their reading skills. The addition of an efficient mentoring support system helped teachers to independently create an atmosphere of cooperation in their classrooms, which in turn allowed students to work more actively, freely and be emotionally invested in their work.

# 4

## PROJECT SCALABILITY FOR INCREASING INTEREST IN READING AMONG PRIMARY STUDENTS LEARNING IN TAJIK

Considering the positive results achieved during the Reading Calendar pilot to improve reading commitment among students in grades 3 and 4 learning in Russian, we propose to expand this innovative project to cover grades 3 and 4 that use Tajik as the language of instruction. We recommend disseminating two key features of the project:

1. The thorough selection and development of Reading Calendar topics to be sensitive to the preferences and capabilities of children aged 9 to 11 years and to reflect their real lives;
2. Regular mentoring support to help teachers create an atmosphere of cooperation with their students.

In an earlier stage of the RWM project, attempts were made to introduce the innovation to classes in which Tajik was the language of instruction. This proved unsuccessful because the recruited developer failed to fulfil the Terms of Reference. However, after the successful implementation of the initiative in Russian classes, we now have significant expertise to better attempt scaling up the project.

Since 2020, the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan has been paying specific attention to attempts to foster interest in reading among schoolchildren (RT Government, 2019). In the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, the government envisaged the implementation of measures to improve the quality of education at all levels. In this context, the efficient scaling-up of the Reading Calendar innovation to improve reading commitment among students may contribute to achieving the government's objective.

The innovation's performance in classes for which Russian was the language of instruction showed a high level of efficacy over a short period of time. The innovation, which uses an interactive form of work and helps to build a friendly atmosphere of cooperation between students and teachers, is highly applicable for Tajik classes. Trained teachers in Tajik classes are expected to positively affect the cognitive interest of their students, which in turn should improve the students'

reading commitment.

The survey results from the Russian classes showed that the thorough selection and development of topics for the Calendar allowed teachers to spark cognitive interest among their students. The results also showed that the provision of mentoring support to teachers was very important for creating an atmosphere of cooperation in the classroom. Currently, Tajikistan has no alternative initiatives aimed at generating interest in reading among students in grades 3 and 4.

### 4.1 Necessary conditions for expansion

One of the conditions for the successful scaling of the initiative is the setting up of clear objectives by the government for instilling a love for books and reading in students. The main objective of this scaling is to improve reading commitment among students in grades 3 and 4, learning in Tajik, using practices already successfully applied in Russian classes. The targeted beneficiaries of the scaling are teachers and students in grades 3 and 4 in classes for which Tajik is the language of instruction. In total, the plan will cover 5,000 students in grades 3 and 4 who are learning in Tajik.

The innovation for this scaling project is an interactive teaching technology called the "Flip Calendar on Reading and for Reading." It has the following key features:

- A thorough selection and development of topics in accordance with the mindsets and interests of students in the relevant grades.
- The provision of high quality and timely mentoring support to teachers from enthusiastic practitioners.

This innovation will be scaled along with some aspects from the pilot project adapted to the new application environment (i.e. classes that use Tajik as the medium of instruction). Cultural specifics and values of the Tajik people will be considered, as well as the specifics of the educational space in classes for which Tajik is the language of instruction. For example, when

selecting topics and literature for the Reading Calendar, the need for using Tajik children’s literature will be considered. The number of topics in the Reading Calendar will be the same as the pilot project (36). Of these 36 topics, 10 will have the same content as the pilot, 21 topics will be partially different and five will change completely to meet the needs of Tajik classes. Some illustrations from the Russian Reading Calendar can be used for the Tajik version. USAID and RT MoES are both potential parties for scaling the innovation within the new five-year educational megaproject, “Learn Together Activity,” which started in 2021 as a logical continuation of the RWM project.

Expanding the program requires the training of teachers in 80% of the schools in the country in the innovation’s theoretical and practical basis, specifically in using a competency-based approach to develop students’ reading skills. Another important favourable condition is the significant replenishment of current library stock with children’s literature to further encourage reading among students.

## 4.2 Feasibility of operational activities

The project’s implementation in Tajik classes is possible based on the earlier implementation in Russian classes. However, the operational feasibility of the new project will be difficult due to the increased number of participants involved. This is because there are far more schools that use the Tajik language than those that use Russian. In this new implementation phase, the sample size will increase to 200 primary school teachers from 50 schools. There will also be an increase in the number of schools due to the need to cover all five regions of Tajikistan (Dushanbe City, the regions of Republican Subordination, Khatlonskaya region, Sogdiyskaya region and Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region). This was a limitation in the previous project, which covered only three regions because these were those in which Russian was the language of instruction.

The schools for this implementation phase will be selected based on their location. Due to the increase in the number of targeted beneficiaries, we propose to use a method of cascade training, meaning the transfer of knowledge and execution of control from top to bottom (i.e. from national trainers and mentors to regional ones). This constitutes an element of innovation in the operational aspect of the new project and will provide an opportunity to involve all levels of project management.

Per this process, the following team should be mobilized: two specialists from the RWM technical unit, four consultants, one artist, one designer, one editor, 16 national trainers and 25 national mentors.

The project for execution in Tajik classes should begin in March 2021 and end in February 2022, with a gradual implementation as follows:

### First stage (4 months, March – June 2021):

- Developing the Calendar for Tajik classes
- Selecting schools and classes (with teachers)
- Getting approval from MoES to introduce the Calendar into the learning process

### Second stage (2 months, July – August 2021):

- Training trainers and mentors
- Preparing and carrying out trainings for teachers in selected Tajik classes

### Third stage (4 months, September – December 2021):

- Mentoring support provided to teachers of selected Tajik classes

### Fourth stage (2 months, January – February 2022):

- Conducting a study by collecting and analyzing data on the results of the innovation

## 4.3 Feasibility of the cost structure

The financial costs for running the project in Tajik classes are identified based on the estimates made for the Russian classes. Of course, the costs involved in implementing the new project are greater due to the significant increase in the number of participants. The project’s implementation costs in Russian classes, on average, was USD 26,650. The project’s cost for the Tajik classes is estimated to be USD 42,195, a difference of USD 15,545 (see details of both project budgets in Annex 7).

As the project is scaled up, the costs will grow due to increases in the following items of expenditure: 1) Reading Calendar printing, 2) training of trainers (16 people instead of 4), 3) teacher training (200 instead of 16) and 4) mentoring support to teachers. However, some savings can be achieved because some of the more costly activities will be adapted from the pilot initiative. There will be reduced spending on the analysis of the program material, Reading Calendar development and its artistic finish, the absence of costs to carry out large-scale training for teachers, and the development of students’ reading skills.

## 4.4 Risk assessment

Despite several enabling conditions for the project’s successful implementation in Tajik classes, some conditions may represent risks to the project’s efficacy:

- Most Tajik classes are concentrated in rural areas, where parents have fewer opportunities to take part in their children’s learning processes because of having to spend much of their time on agricultural work
- The reading skill levels of students in Tajik classes are lower than those of their peers from Russian classes (EGRA, 2019)

- There is a shortage of specialists with highly developed creative thinking for grades 1-4
- COVID-19 may limit the activities that may be carried out within the project

## 4.5 Summary

Expanding the program to students learning in Tajik coincides with the government's current education policy priorities, which aims to increase the interest in reading among children and the quality of education overall.

For the scaled-up version of the project, the plan is to cover all five regions of the country. This will mean extending the program to more schools and beneficiaries. Doing so will require more trainers and mentors, who will be prepared via a cascade method of training. Quantitative and qualitative changes will be made to the development and selection process of Reading Calendar topics by mobilizing consultants for selection, development and adaptation, as well as recruiting RT MoES specialists. In terms of finances, the scaling-up will cost more than the pilot due to the significant increase in the number of schools and teachers.<sup>3</sup> However, some cost savings can be achieved using learnings from the pilot initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the calculations in the annex the unit costs remain constant.

# 5

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the pilot study and the obtained evidence about approaches to improving students' commitment to reading, we recommend scaling up the project to Tajik classes. In this section, we detail the conditions that must be satisfied for the scale-up to be implemented successfully.

The evaluation above highlights that the successful implementation of the project in Tajik classes critically depends on RT MoES support at all levels. At the regional level, it is important for local education authorities to provide comprehensive assistance. There is also a need for the education authorities to explain and disseminate the innovation at municipal levels to teachers and school managers. Relaying the positive experiences of teachers' and methodologists' use of the Calendar in the pilot project will help provide valuable support to the new teachers.

Another key condition for successful scaling will be financial support from the USAID. Well-established cooperation between the RT MoES and USAID will favourably affect the implementation and awareness of the project. Still, the responsibilities of the project's partners to sustain the initiative should be determined. The priorities identified by the RT government in terms of increasing the reading commitment of students may positively influence the potential to gain further financing for the innovation from public funds.

At the educational institution level, managers will have to ensure active class attendance and find efficient ways to involve students in reading. Any and all tactics should be developed by educators and tested in practice. Involving parents in school activities and the process of joint reading with children at school and in libraries can help foster close cooperation between teachers, parents and local communities.

To efficiently disseminate the innovation to Tajik classes, we propose the following actions for the project:

- Use the results of the reading skills assessment of primary students done through the EGRA in 2020 and 2021 during the RWM project. This will allow the goals of the scaled-up project to be set based on data.

- Thoroughly select and develop topics for the Reading Calendar in accordance with the mindset and cultural specifics of students learning in Tajik and the values of the Tajik people.
- Make sure the sample includes those schools that piloted the Reading Calendar in Russian classes. This will allow teachers to exchange experiences.
- Form a team of national and regional trainers and mentors with extensive experience teaching in Tajik, practical experience in competency-based approaches to teaching and who worked on the RWM project as national, regional, or school trainers.
- Develop several backup scenarios for carrying out planned activities, depending on the epidemiological situation of COVID-19, to prevent or minimize the risk of infection.
- Carry out a thorough analysis of program materials for Mother Tongue and Motherland Studies in grades 3 and 4, for which Tajik is the language of instruction. When developing and selecting topics for the Tajik Reading Calendar classes, adapt the Reading Calendar topics from the Russian classes to the interests of students learning in Tajik (Annex 6).
- When developing Reading Calendar topics, follow the list of children's books in Tajik that have been provided by the RWM project. This will allow teachers to efficiently work on the Reading Calendar topics that require a referral to the children's literature without the need to search for additional sources of information.
- To develop and select Reading Calendar topics, carry out a thorough and competitive selection of specialists. When developing Reading Calendar topics, involve specialists on a voluntary basis from the city branch of the Primary School Teacher Training Institute.
- To pilot the Reading Calendar in Tajik classes, include schools from all four regions of the country (eight schools from each region, or 32 schools in total) to ensure a representative sample based on the minimum possible coverage.

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# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1. CALENDAR CLASSES OBSERVATION FORM

Region:		Date:				
School:		Class:				
Observer:		Time of visit:				
Teacher:		Number of students (actual):				
No	Sections	Questions	Assessment			Short comments
1	Including work on Calendar in the learning process	1. Is there a Calendar in the classroom?	Yes	No		
		2. Is the Calendar located in a place accessible for children?	Yes	No	Partially	
		3. When does the teacher work on the Calendar?	Prior to the lesson	During the lesson	After the lesson	
		4. Does the teacher tell the students the purpose of referring to the Calendar?	Yes	No		
		5. Was the teacher ready to work on the Calendar topic? (Speaks with confidence, makes comments about the reading material, asks the students questions, draws attention to all sections on the Calendar page, etc.).	Yes	No	Partially	
		6. Was the duration of work associated with the Calendar page identified correctly?	Yes	No		
		7. How does the teacher deliver the information when working with the Calendar (form of work)?	The teacher gathers children near the Calendar	Children work from their seats	Other	
		8. Did the teacher use additional materials and/or data when working on the Calendar topic? (Was their choice justified?)	Yes	No	Partially	

2	Comfortable learning environment	1. Does the teacher encourage students to voice their comments on the topic from the Calendar page?	Yes	No	Partially	
		2. Does the teacher ask the students questions when working on the topic from the Calendar page? (Note: which questions were asked)	Yes	No		
		3. How does the teacher respond to questions from students?	Listens attentively	Without any emotional reaction	Other	
		4. Are the students relaxed when working with the Calendar?	Yes	No	Partially	
		5. What style of pedagogical communication was used during Calendar work?	Communication – joint search, friendly disposition	Communication – distance	Communication – intimidation	
3	Instilling interest/ Arranging a dialogue	1. Is information delivered by the teacher in a clear, correct and loudly audible way?	Yes	No	Partially	
		2. Are the students active during their work? Do they show interest?	Yes	No	Partially	
		3. Do the students understand the information?	Yes	No	Partially	
		4. Does the teacher involve the students in a dialogue (teacher–student; student–student)?	Yes	No	Partially	
		5. Are all students involved in the work process? (Indicate the number of students that don't participate at all, and those who listen without any interest)	Yes	No		
4	Discipline	1. How does the teacher maintain discipline?	Motivation and special intonation	Disciplinary action	Other	
		2. How does the teacher contribute to the performance of a task in regards to the Questions and Tasks section?	Makes proposals and requests to fulfil	Dictates	Other	
		3. Does the teacher give clarifications in the case that something is not clear to the students?	Yes	No	Partially	
		4. How does the teacher support the students' initiative?	Proposes joint activity	Proposes to do the work independently	Other	

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## ANNEX 2. QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS

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1. Which topics (pages) sparked the greatest interest among your students? Which topics (pages) did not spark any interest? Why do you think this was?
2. How would you assess the complexity of the language used for Calendar topics? Is the vocabulary accessible for the children in your class? Are there children in your class for whom the language is too difficult? Give reasons for your answers.
3. How would you assess the readability of the Calendar texts? Were they easy for your students and yourself to understand the texts when reading (font, colour scheme, contrast, the length of sentences and paragraphs, accessibility of complicated terms, page structure)?
4. Which topics (pages) would you remove from the Calendar? Why?
5. Which topics (pages) would you move to another place in the Calendar? Why?
6. Are you able to work through the Calendar systematically and consistently? Do you ever miss topics (pages) from the Calendar? If yes, why?
7. Do you refer to the Calendar during the week? How often? For what purpose?
8. Can you find agreements within the program material? Do you refer to the Calendar topics during your core classes? In which classes?
9. Do your students ever refer to additional literature (or other sources of information) to expand their knowledge on the studied topics? After which topics (pages)? Which literature or other sources of information did they refer to?

## ANNEX 3. FINDINGS FROM THE ADDITIONAL TEACHER INTERVIEWS

	Question	Answer
1	Length of work at school	11 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	Winged words: Why do we say this way? (found the etymology of known words), Bilibin (new information about illustrators, whose works they find in textbooks), International Book Giving Day (liked giving books to each other and packaging presents).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Each topic of the Calendar is about events from the children's real lives, their interactions with friends, pets, books, school.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics. The Calendar developers selected the age-appropriate topics adequate for children in grades 3 and 4. The illustrations also reflected the topics to a full degree and were well-understood by the children in grades 3 and 4.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	Yes, there were such topics in the Calendar (for example, The Main Song of the Country, Word Pets Day). When studying these topics, children shared relevant stories from their own life.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	The impact took place due to the interesting delivery of the material on behalf of Luboznaika, who spoke in common language on various topics. Children perceived him as a friend, and that is why they tended to follow his advice about reading books.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	The Calendar was developed very well, and I did not notice any weaknesses.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Mentors were very helpful to me; their friendly attitude, competent advice gave me power and confidence. I started work under the preliminary prepared plan and elaborated the cases of unplanned conversation development.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Yes, it can be used. Tajik classes will require an adapted version of the Calendar.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	This is what we did in the classes of Reading, Russian Language and Environment
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Illustrations, interesting topics, calendar design.

Question	Answer
On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Attending classes of experienced teachers, making joint analysis.
In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	The Calendar is developed in such a way that it is easy and interesting to work with. I think, if a teacher is experienced, it is possible
Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	I am happy to have this Calendar. Very thankful to the authors of the Calendar and the artist.

	Question	Answer
2	Length of work at school	19 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	All topics seem interesting. The Calendar is developed in such a way that it attracts the attention of every child due to the accessible language and lots of high-quality and well-selected illustrations to go with all the topics.
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Poetic dictionary, stress (help during Reading classes).
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics. Even if a topic was complicated, the Calendar offered children examples to help them understand it. The illustrations were also helpful.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	All topics reflected the children's lives. For example, Why Does the School Year Start on September 1? And The Main Song of the Country. Children shared their impressions and stories from their lives.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	The topics for children were interesting and made them want to learn more; it motivated children to read books. Not only the children, but parents were also attracted to this process (jointly looking for information with children).
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	The Calendar was developed very well, and I did not notice any weaknesses.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Mentors were very helpful and redirected me to a necessary track, helped improve my speech (expression, accuracy, emotional intensity), and my attitude toward children. Now I communicate with children at a different level.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Yes, it can be used. The Calendar is very interesting to all children, irrespective of the type of school.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	The Calendar is a ready-made compendium with interesting topics, and many of them repeat those that exist in the program material.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Design, illustrations, interesting topics.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Yes, they will need some help so that they do not distort the topics and information provided in the Calendar and deliver them correctly.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	We need to thank the Calendar authors for developing the Calendar in such a way that even a young teacher can use it. Yet, induction training is necessary.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	It would be great if the Calendar were introduced into the curriculum.

	Question	Answer
3	Length of work at school	16 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	All topics were perceived with delight; they were very easily and accessibly presented to the children. The topics related to their artistic means of expression, i.e. those topics that usually cause and leave lots of questions in children and are unclear. Illustrations made for the topics (colorful, of good quality) also attracted the children.
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	How is the book born? International Children's Book Day (important since children learned a lot about something they see in every class: a book).
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	There were no such topics.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	All topics reflected their lives (topics related to holidays and life situations). For example, The Main Song of the Country, Snowy Words.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	After the topic about International Book Giving Day, children gave books to each other; having read the presented books, they told what they were about, acting as promoters.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	I think this is the best of what could be done.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Ideas of creative works, recommendations on the voluntary selection of homework. Creating a friendly environment, advice on how to involve all children in the work process, work with passive children.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	I think it is quite possible to use the Calendar in other classes, irrespective of the language of instruction.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Yes, it can be used, for example, in the Russian Language and Reading classes.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Ready-made material for an interactive form of work.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Young teachers always need mentor support, and the Calendar is not an exception.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	Using the Calendar Guidebook, one can certainly deliver classes, but they will not be equally efficient.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	I think if the Calendar format is made bigger, it will become even more attractive.

	Question	Answer
4	Length of work at school	19 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	Poetic dictionary, Speak correctly, What is a rhyme? These topics caused the desire to independently search for information on the topic, arrange competitions, make their own dictionaries and pictures and invite their parents to take part in joint creative work (when doing tasks on the Calendar at home).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Each topic made the children crowd near the Calendar for a discussion. Idioms and Say It Correctly were the pages that contained program material topics that helped the children to learn them better.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't find such topics. The Calendar would not be so interesting for children if it had topics inappropriate for their age.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	Each topic referred to some events from the children's real lives: their interactions with friends, the animal world. More importantly, owing to the Calendar, the children got their parents to participate.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	After the topics The Book Birthday, International Children's Book Day, children decided to establish a class library, started reading and exchanging books.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	The calendar is designed well for children of grades 3 and 4, though, of course, a lot depends on the teacher as well: how he/she will deliver this material, so that it is done correctly to generate feedback.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you?  How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Mentors helped me to be thoroughly prepared for classes on the Calendar. A big effect for myself and the children was noticed when mentors were visiting and carrying out informal conversations with the children, praising their creative works, asking questions and requesting them to share their opinions. After such visits, the children and I felt an emotional uplift, and it stimulated efficient work with the Calendar.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	I think not only it can, it should be used there. For example, I delivered an open lesson on one of the Calendar topics, and it was attended by many of our teachers. After the lesson, the main question that was asked was: why is this Calendar missing from Tajik classes?
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Of course, it can. Many topics of the Calendar reflect topics from the main subjects.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	The Calendar has topics that can be met in the school program, but the Calendar delivers them in an accessible and visual manner.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	In order to efficiently and correctly use the Calendar, young teachers need to take part in the workshop on cognitive interest development among children. They also need help from mentor.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	A lot depends on the teacher's competency in the matters of cognitive interest development among students, and on the desire of the teacher to go for self-development.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	Just words of deep gratitude to all those who have been involved in the creation of such a wonderful additional material that helps instilling love for reading in children.

	Question	Answer
5	Length of work at school	10 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	How is the book born? What is a rhyme? These topics related to the artistic means of expression (colorful illustrations about the topic, opportunity to play, make a discovery about the known and unknown).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Main rivers of America (a work by an author known to the children, which helped them to adopt a positive attitude toward schooling).
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	All topics were accessible and clear for children.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life?  What were they?	The brightest topic reflecting children's lives is World Pets Day.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	After the poetic dictionary from the Calendar, children became willing to make their own calendars with the same topics, but the examples were taken from the read books.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	I like everything in the Calendar.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you?  How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	They were very helpful. It was very nice to work with them, because, first of all, they found strengths in our work, even if something was going wrong. They advised on what could be done to improve the result.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	No doubt, it can. I think the teachers from other schools will be happy to have such an additional material.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Of course, it can be used by teachers. It is not difficult at all to work with the Calendar. Actually, working with the Calendar is entertaining, interesting and productive.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Attention should be captured by the work on poems and means of expression because these are exactly the problematic topics.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Mentor support is mandatory. Exchange of experience with the teachers who have worked with the Calendar.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	If there is a will, it is not difficult to work with the Calendar even for an inexperienced teacher, but some introductory workshop is still necessary.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	It would be good to have a similar calendar related to safe lifestyles.

	Question	Answer
6	Length of work at school	8 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	World Pets Day, How Is a Book Born?, February 14 is International Book Giving Day (new information for them, opportunity to share it at home, opportunity to express their own opinion, informal environment when studying topics).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Epic poems, Snowy words, Tour Guide play (touched upon topics that are part of Reading and Russian Language lessons, which helped the students to better understand the classes).
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't find such topics. On the contrary, the topics fully match the age specifics. For example, those books which are recommended by Luboznaika for reading are age appropriate.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	World Pets Day: after this topic, the students explained how they convinced their parents to get a pet. The Main Song of the Country: the children (and teachers, too!) learned about symbols.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	The topics related to the artistic means of expression made an impact. The children became willing to do semantic readings of poems and researching poems, thus reading more and consciously.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It would be good to have the Calendar in a bigger format.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Owing to the mentors' recommendations, I started replacing monologue explanations with dialogues, openly exchanging thoughts with the children, showing interest in their opinions, involving every student in the class and making them participate in the activities.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	It is very useful and necessary: 1) vocabulary is expanded in an entertaining, interesting way through plays; 2) horizons are broadened; easy memorization; 3) the topic about the library and its history helps children to fall in love with books.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	In the classes of Reading, Russian Language and Environment. Studying the same topics with the Calendar, we managed to approach them from a different angle. For example, taking another look at Reading classes, making them deeper. В таджикских классах возможно в адаптированном варианте.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	I cannot speak for others. As for me, the Calendar opened an opportunity to explain those topics that were not very interesting for children.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Training on cognitive skills development, mentor support.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	I think, without additional help from mentors, it will not be very efficient.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	No, I don't.

Question	Answer
Length of work at school	10 years
How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	What is a rhyme? (accessible explanation, opportunity to compose own poems).
Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	The fact that after the topics World Pets Day and Injection against Indifference several children from my class gave shelter to three dogs and two cats best of all confirms that the topics were indeed important to the children.
Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics.
Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	The fact that after the topic World Pets Day and the Injection against Indifference several children from my class gave shelter to three dogs and two cats best of all confirms that the topic is indeed important to children.
Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	Having become interested in the topic about illustrators, children started searching for and examining closely the illustrations from library books; they were also reading some of those books.
Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It's an excellent option for having out-of-class activities. No weaknesses found.
How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	The mentor support was helpful. I always managed to get a response to my questions.
Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Of course, it can and should be used in Tajik classes as well, but not all topics will be suitable
Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Not only it can, but should be used in the main subjects, because there is a close connection between the topics.
In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	I am sure the teachers will like working with the Calendar. The topics are interesting for children; the design is entertaining; it helps with the work on main subjects
On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Inexperienced teachers, as a minimum, need a theoretical basis in the form of a thematic workshop.
In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	It is desirable for teachers to get some additional training
Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	Add pictures to help explain the meaning of words from poetic dictionaries.

Question	Answer
8 Length of work at school	5 years
How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	5 months
Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	Topics devoted to artistic means of expression, the topic Stress (interest is aroused because children learned in these topics those things that they had not understood in their main classes).
Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Topics related to the means of expression in speech (help to improve reading: learning through acknowledged reading, ways to manage one's voice).
Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics.
Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	Almost every topic reflects children's lives. For example, when studying Snowy Words, the students talked about winter, recollected the read stories and shared impressions about winter plays.
Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	After the topic November 30 is World Pets Day, the children became interested in the information about animals. Following the recommendation of the Calendar and after getting additional information from me, they took out encyclopedias in the library and read them.
Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	My students and I liked everything about the Calendar. The only wish is to have it bigger, because the class is big, and not everyone can see text from their seats.
How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Children stopped passively waiting for me to deliver ready-made information. During the class, we started hearing more questions; children became willing to answer or jointly look for answers to questions. Children became more emotional, probably, because I changed myself: I started to listen and hear my students.
Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	No doubt, all teachers need this material. In Tajik classes, it makes sense to emphasize the section Important Names and Dates because the students will not be familiar with global children's literature.
Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	The topics have much in common. For sure, one has to use the Calendar in the classes of main subjects.
In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	For sure, teachers will be attracted by the topics that help to explain in a rather accessible manner those topics that can be found in the main classes.
On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Mentor support, preferably meetings.
In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	Now it is difficult to say, because we have received some support and it seems to us that it is possible. But if we look back, without assistance it would not have been that efficient.
Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	No, I don't.

	Question	Answer
9	Length of work at school	4 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	5 months
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	World Pets Day and February 14: International Book Giving Day were the favorites (discovery of something new, appropriate illustrations, photos).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	I worked with the Calendar in grades 3 and 4. The topics were interesting and accessible for children from both classes. Illustrations were also made with due regard for children's perceptions: kind, clear and helping them to understand the information.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	I worked on the Calendar in grades 3 and 4. The topics were interesting and accessible for children from both classes. The illustrations were also sensitive to children's perceptions: they were kind, clear and helped the children to understand the information.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	Every topic reflects children's reality. For example, The Main Song of the Country, Billibin (the artist's illustrations), poetic dictionary (the link to Reading classes).
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	Many topics promoted the books presented by the project Read with Me to the school. The interesting advertisement of books and their accessibility caused the children to read them.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	I like everything about the Calendar: topics interesting for children, colorful illustrations on the topic, help for the teacher during Reading and Russian Language classes.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Mentors helped me to pay attention to every child in my class. I started making more efforts to give the opportunity to express themselves to every student.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	A Calendar for every teacher! In Tajik classes, it will be useful and fascinating for children to learn many new and interesting things.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	It is a great help to the teacher in explaining program material topics. It can be found in many topics of the Calendar.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	None of the teachers trying to develop a love of reading in children will miss an opportunity to work with such material.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	A mentor to support a young teacher.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	The Calendar is very convenient and easy to use when one has the information we have received on how to work with it.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	No, I don't.

	Question	Answer
10	Length of work at school	40 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	Means of expression (helps to master the topics of the program material), World Pets Day (opportunity to share stories from one's own life), February 14 as the day for book lovers (new information, opportunity to tell parents, an idea to carry out this holiday at school).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	The most important were topics related to literature classes because they helped children in an interesting way, through playing, to master topics that they did not fully understand before (for example, topics related to artistic means of expression, stress).
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics. All topics were selected properly for my class age. The books, stories, poems, children's speech, unambiguous illustrations – all attest to the fact that the material is appropriate for the children of this age.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	I think, all the topics one way or another reflected children's lives. For example, when studying the topic The Main Song of the Country, they recalled the hymn, symbols, sang and told stories from their lives.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	I was very surprised, but my children became interested in FABLES after studying this topic in the Calendar. They started learning by heart the fables for grade 5.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It's an excellent Calendar. If the paper were thicker, I could call it an ideal one.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	In regards to how to work with the Calendar, it all became clear to me as early as the 9-day training course and 1-day workshop, with the help of the guidebook on how to use the Calendar. That part of the methodological manual exists as a separate document. I understood how to work with the Calendar and verified my approach at that stage. Telephone conversations, most likely, helped emotionally and helped me to feel more confident.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	I am sure all teachers will be able to work on the Calendar, but on the condition that mentor support is provided.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Yes, it can, because it is a good resource in the work on many topics of the program material (stress, idioms, means of expression of the language, fables, epic poems, etc.).
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	This is an excellent tool to instill love of reading and books.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Young teachers from our school several times visited my classes on the Calendar. They are very much interested in the Calendar.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	The Calendar is not an entertaining magazine with pictures, it is a serious work requiring certain knowledge. I think, without additional training, a distortion of the goals and objectives of the material can occur.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	No, I don't.

	Question	Answer
11	Length of work at school	20 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	3 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	1 year
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	Topics related to work with dictionaries: poetic dictionary, Epic poems; topic related to the birth of books; topics on the means of expression (the main cause of interest is the link to the program material; children were interested in things they had encountered in other subjects but in a more boring, dry version).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	The topic on expression of speech for my students proved one of the most important because it helped them to master the ways of managing the voice, making speeches and reading with emotion. It helped the children to become more confident readers and speakers.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	Perhaps, there were topics that were not that easily and quickly mastered (for example, Epic Poems), but there were no topics that would be totally incongruous.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	All topics reflect the real lives of children. For example, the topics related to the means of expression refer to the topic that accompanies children in their school life.
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	Poetic dictionary of the Calendar motivated children to make their own dictionary, where they started writing down the meaning of unknown words. Children seemed to start reading more deliberately to find words that were new to them.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It would be good to have a Calendar of a bigger format.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	Mentors' recommendations were helpful in providing an accurate, emotional and expressive dialogue with the children.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Yes, it can be used. The Calendar is very interesting to all children, irrespective of the type of school. For classes with Tajik language of instruction, some topics should be changed in accordance with the curriculum.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	Yes, it can. In Reading, Russian Language and Environment, there are topics that are explained in the Calendar in a rather interesting and, sometimes, more accessible form.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	I am sure that teachers will be happy to use it in their work. It helps to manage and spark the children's interest in learning, reading and searching for information.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Taking a training, mentor support.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	I think an additional training is necessary. Personally, during the trainings, I made lots of discoveries for myself, and it helped me when working on the Calendar.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	Enlarge the Calendar format.

	Question	Answer
12	Length of work at school	3 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	5 months
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	World Pets Day, World Library Day (the novelty of topics, nature of tasks entailing out-of-class joint work).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	All topics reflect current realities and are important for children.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't. There were no such topics. The topics had lots of examples; the books recommended by Luboznaika were accessible, and the illustrations were clear.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	All topics. For example, Snowy Words (they made a parallel with life situations); Bilibin (parallel with the illustrations from books).
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	World Pets Day is the topic that stirred up the most interest in reading among the children. First, it was a thin encyclopedia taken from the library. Afterwards, children started bringing more books to the classroom, exchanging them, reading during breaks.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It would be good if the Calendar format were bigger.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	I am thankful to mentors for their help. I have learned to correctly allocate time during classes, ask questions myself and analyze the delivered classes.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Yes, it is quite possible for Tajik classes as well. Now there are lots of new words in the Tajik language, which are difficult to explain to children, so the Calendar can become a ready-made vocabulary sheet.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	I used the Calendar in Reading and Russian Language classes. It is easy to make parallels; many topics from the program materials are present in the Calendar.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Colorful illustrations that support texts and explain new words for children, interesting information (for children and teachers as well), ready-made material for open lessons.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	It is necessary for the teachers to take those trainings and workshops that we have taken. Then it will be clear under which conditions the cognitive interest can and should be developed.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	I think an additional training is necessary for efficient work.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	Enlarge the Calendar format.

	Question	Answer
13	Length of work at school	7 years
	How long have you been involved in the 'Read with Me' project?	2 years
	How long have you been / were you implementing the Calendar?	5 months
	Which topics/pictures sparked the greatest interest among your students? Why?	What is a Rhyme and World Pets Day were favorite topics of children in my class (interesting, previously unknown information, funny illustrations, easy language of narration).
	Which topics of the Calendar proved to be the most important for your students (significant, topical)? Why?	Such topics as Stress and Idioms helped children a lot during their Russian Language classes because these subjects can be difficult to study.
	Did you find any topics that were extremely inappropriate for the children of this age?	No, I didn't find such topics.
	Did children find topics in the Calendar that reflected their real life? What were they?	Foreign Words in My Backpack (etymology of words that children use in school life).
	Which topics of the Calendar helped children to be interested in books and reading?	The topic related to the book-giving day launched a tradition in our class to present books on students' birthdays.
	Are there any weaknesses in the Calendar that need to be improved?	It would be good to have more pictures in the poetic dictionary.
	How helpful was the mentor support to you? How did the mentor support help to make your interaction with the students more efficient?	They helped to solve the problem of having a dialogue with the children. During the visits, mentors showed methods of efficient communication with children. Afterwards, I started doing the same.
	Do you think the Calendar can be used in other schools, including schools with the Tajik language of instruction?	Teachers from other schools will be happy to work with the Calendar. They have the same problems to solve.
	Can it be used in teaching main subjects? Why?	It helps teachers to explain cross-cutting topics and helps children to better understand the topics of the main subjects.
	In your opinion, how can the Calendar attract teachers from other schools? Will they be interested in using the Calendar (or some of its topics) in their classes?	Teachers from other schools have already attended an open lesson that I delivered on one of the Calendar topics. They hope to get the same material.
	On the whole, what kind of support is necessary for young and inexperienced teachers to efficiently use the Calendar in their teaching?	Mentor support, preferably with mentors visiting the classes as often as possible.
	In your opinion, can a teacher efficiently use the calendar without additional training/instructions?	An experienced teacher can manage. Young and inexperienced ones will find it more difficult to achieve the potential effect.
	Do you have any other recommendations for the Calendar?	Add topics about Tajikistan.

## ANNEX 4. QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOCUS-GROUP DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

Region/area:	
School:	
Class:	
Date:	
Questions:	Answers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did you like working with the Calendar? What did you like to do most of all?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which pages (topics) of the calendar did you like best of all? (Give a list.) Why exactly them?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was it interesting to do tasks that the Calendar offered on these topics? Which tasks were the most interesting for you? What did you need to be able to do those tasks? Did you refer to books when doing tasks? To which books? Where did you find those books? What other sources of information did you refer to?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which creative works did you make? (Give a list.) After studying which topics of the Calendar? Who took part in making those works (independently/as a group)? Did you refer to books or other sources of information when making creative works? Which literature did you refer to? Which additional sources of information did you use?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the teacher refer to Calendar topics during classes? During which classes? To which topics? Were the Calendar topics helpful to you when studying? In studying which subjects? (Give a list.)</li> </ul>	

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## ANNEX 5. QUESTIONS FROM THE TEACHER SURVEY

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1. How much time (on average) did you spend working with each page (topic) of the Calendar?
2. Which pages (topics) were the most interesting for your students? How did you maintain that interest?
3. Which pages (topics) did not spark any interest among your students? Why, in your opinion?
4. In which classes were there parallels with Calendar topics? When studying which topic from the lesson? At which stage of the lesson?
5. Did the children understand the information? Was the language of narration accessible? If not, what would you recommend be changed?
6. How would you evaluate the readability of the Calendar texts? Was it easy for children and yourself to understand the texts when reading them (font size, color scheme, contrast, length of sentences and paragraphs, accessibility of complicated terms, page layout)?
7. Do you think the illustrations match the texts? If not, indicate which ones don't match. Why do you think so? What would you recommend instead of those illustrations?
8. Were additional out-of-class activities carried out after studying certain topics (pages) of the Calendar?
9. Which topics (pages) would you exclude from the calendar? Why?
10. Which topics (pages) would you swap? Why?
11. Did your students refer to additional literature (or other sources of information) to continue learning about completed topics (pages) from the Calendar?
12. Were all the students involved in the work process throughout the week for each topic (page) of the Calendar? Did any students not participate or show no interest in listening? How many? Did you notice any dynamics among the students' cognitive activity levels?
13. Were parents aware of the work on this Calendar? Were they involved in the work?

## ANNEX 6. CHANGING THE READING CALENDAR TOPICS FOR TAJIK CLASSES

Degree of modification	No changes	Partial modification	Full modification
Number of topics	10 topics	21 topics	5 topics
Features to be modified	Ensure equivalent translation to achieve the same information and communication objectives that the original text aimed for.	Select examples for the topic that are culturally relevant to a native Tajik speaker; to be taken from the program material for grades 3 and 4 and/or relevant Tajik children's literature.	Replace the authors and genres of Russian children's literature with authors and genres of Tajik children's literature so as to be relevant to students learning in Tajik; Tajik culture and values should inform the program material, especially for Mother Tongue (Tajik) classes and out-of-class reading.
Names of topics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why does the school year start on September 1?</li> <li>2. The main song of the country</li> <li>3. How is the BOOK born?</li> <li>4. World Library Day</li> <li>5. How to easily learn a poem or five steps to get 5 in Reading!</li> <li>6. Foreign words in my backpack</li> <li>7. February 14 is the Day of Book Lovers!</li> <li>8. March 26 is the Book's Birthday</li> <li>9. April 2 is International Children's Book Day</li> <li>10. How to learn reading in roleplay</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Poetic dictionary ('А'-'И')</li> <li>2. Expression of speech</li> <li>3. A fairy tale or a narrative?</li> <li>4. Stress</li> <li>5. November 30 is World Pets Day</li> <li>6. How to animate the unanimated or a secret of literature</li> <li>7. What is a rhyme?</li> <li>8. The secrets of colorful characterizations</li> <li>9. Snowy words</li> <li>10. Finish the Word play</li> <li>11. Bilibin</li> <li>12. Tour Guide play</li> <li>13. Poetic dictionary ('К'-'П')</li> <li>14. How to understand the meaning or the secret of literature</li> <li>15. Winged words (idioms)</li> <li>16. Poetic dictionary ('Р'-'Я')</li> <li>17. Idioms</li> <li>18. Which idioms can we often hear at school?</li> <li>19. Destroyer words</li> <li>20. Tale of sense, if not of truth!</li> <li>21. Stress</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Russian Epic poems</li> <li>2. Fable</li> <li>3. Victor Dragunskiy, "Main Rivers of America"</li> <li>4. Leonid Panteleev, "Littera You"</li> <li>5. Aleksandr Volkov, "The Wizard of Oz"</li> </ol>

## ANNEX 7. PILOTED AND SCALED-UP PROJECT BUDGETING

Activities (pilot project)	Results (pilot project)	Costs of activities (pilot project)	Total, USD	Activities (scaled-up project)	Results (scaled-up project)	Costs of activities (scaled-up project)	Total, USD
1. Analysis of the program material for grades 3 and 4 in Russian	Program material analyzed and topics for the program material selected for the Calendar	2 specialists from the technical unit of RWM × 1 month × \$2 000	4 000.00	Analysis of the program material for grades 3 and 4 in Tajik	Program material analyzed and topics for the program material selected for the Calendar	2 specialists from the technical unit of the project (coordinators × 0.5 month × \$2 000/month; 2 consultants x 11 workdays x \$35/ work day; 2 volunteers from TTI x \$0	2 770.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>4 000.00</b>				<b>2 770.00</b>
2. Development and selection of topics for the Calendar for grades 3 and 4 in Russian	Topics developed and selected	1 specialist from the technical unit of RWM × 4 months × \$2 000	8 000.00	Development and selection of topics for the Calendar for grades 3–4 with the Tajik language of instruction	Topics developed and selected	2 specialists from the technical unit (coordinators) × 0.5 month × \$2 000 (per month); 2 consultants x 44 workdays x \$35/work day; 2 consultant-volunteers from TTI x \$0	4 080.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>8 000.00</b>				<b>4 080.00</b>
3. Pre-printing preparation of the Calendar for Russian classes:	Calendar approved and ready for printing			3. Pre-printing preparation of the Calendar for Tajik classes:	The calendar approved and ready for printing		
3.1 Artistic finish of the Calendar;		3.1. 1 artist × 36 pages × \$35/page;	1 260.00	3.1 Artistic finish of the Calendar;		3.1. 1 artist × 18 pages × \$35/page;	630.00
3.2. Calendar design;		3.2. 1 designer × 36 pages × \$12.5/page;	450.00	3.2. Calendar design;		3.2. 1 designer × 36 pages × \$12.5/page;	450.00
3.3. Calendar editing;		3.3. 1 editor x 36 pages × \$5/page;	180.00	3.3. Calendar editing;		3.3. 1 editor × 36 pages × \$5/page;	180.00
3.4. Coordination of work by the artist, designer and editor.		3.4. 1 specialist from the technical unit × 0.5 month × \$2 000/month.	1 000.00	3.4. Coordination of work of the artist, designer, editor.		3.4. 2 specialists of technical unit × 0.5 month × \$2 000/ month.	1 000.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>2 890.00</b>				<b>2 260.00</b>

Activities (pilot project)	Results (pilot project)	Costs of activities (pilot project)	Total, USD	Activities (scaled-up project)	Results (scaled-up project)	Costs of activities (scaled-up project)	Total, USD
Printing Calendar for Russian classes	Calendar printed	22 calendars × \$10;	220.00	Printing Calendar for Tajik classes	Calendar printed	235 calendars × \$10;	2 350.00
4. Training on how to develop reading skills in primary students:	16 teachers took a 9-day training			-	-	-	-
4.1. Training of trainers;		4.1. 1 specialist from the technical unit of RWM × 0,5 month × \$2 000/month;	1 000.00				
4.2. Printing handouts (methodological guidebook for teachers on developing reading skills of primary students);		4.2. 18 guidebooks × \$40	720.00				
4.3. Carrying out the training for 16 primary school teachers.		4.3. 2 trainers × 9 days × \$40;	720.00				
		16 participants of training × 9 days × \$30.	4 320.00				
Total			6 650.00				0
5. Workshop on how to develop cognitive interest among primary students:	16 teachers participating in the Calendar pilot program took a 1-day workshop.			5. Workshop on how to develop cognitive interest among primary students:	200 teachers participating in the Calendar piloting program took a 2-day workshop.		
5.1. Training 2 national trainers;		5.1. 1 specialist from the technical unit of RWM × 0.5 month × \$2 000/month;	1 000.00	5.1. Training 16 national trainers;		5.1. 2 specialists from the technical unit × 0.5 month × \$2 000/ month;	1 000.00
5.2. Carrying out the workshop for 16 primary school teachers participating in the pilot program.		5.2. 2 trainers × 3 days (1 day – preparation, 1 day – delivering the workshop, 1 day – preparing the report) × \$40/day;	240.00	5.2. 16 national trainers carrying out the workshop for 200 primary school teachers teaching in Tajik and participating in the pilot program.		5.2. 16 trainers × 4 days (1 day – preparation, 2 days – delivering the training, 1 day – preparing the report) × \$40/day;	2 560.00
		16 participants × 1 day × \$30.	480.00			200 participants of the workshop × 2 days × \$30.	12 000.00
Total			1 720.00				15 560.00

Activities (pilot project)	Results (pilot project)	Costs of activities (pilot project)	Total, USD	Activities (scaled-up project)	Results (scaled-up project)	Costs of activities (scaled-up project)	Total, USD
6. Mentoring support to teachers:	The 4 trained mentors visited Calendar classes in 16 pilot schools and provided mentoring support to the teachers by phone.			6. Mentoring support for the teachers:	The trained 5 national mentors coordinating the work of 25 regional mentors; regional mentors visiting the Calendar classes delivered by 200 teachers from 50 pilot schools and providing support to the teachers by phone.		
6.1. Training 4 national mentors and coordinating their work;		6.1. 1 specialist from the technical unit of RWM x 1 month x \$2 000/month;	2 000.00	6.1. Training 5 national mentors and coordinating their work;		6.1. 2 specialists from the technical unit of RWM x 0.5 month x \$2 000/month;	1 000.00
6.2. National mentors visiting Calendar classes;		6.2. 4 mentors x 4 days x 40/day;	640.00	6.2. National mentors delivering a workshop for regional mentors;		6.2. 5 national mentors x 4 days (1 day – preparation, 2 days – delivering the workshop, 1 day – writing the report) x \$40/day;  25 participants of the workshop (regional mentors) x 2 days x \$30/day;	800.00 1 500.00
6.3. Mentoring by phone.		6.3. 4 mentors x 4 days x \$40/day;	640.00	6.3. Regional mentors visiting Calendar classes;		6.3. 25 regional mentors x 4 days x \$40/day;	4 000.00
				6.4. Regional mentors providing support to the teachers by phone;		6.4. 25 regional mentors x 8 days (16 calls/day) x \$40/day;	8 000.00
				6.5. National mentors coordinating the work of regional mentors		6.5. 5 national mentors x 5 days x \$35/day.	875.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>3 280.00</b>				<b>16 175.00</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>26 650.00</b>				<b>42 195.00</b>

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