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# Widening the Education Evidence Base: Country Trials of Draft Guidance

Education.org is an independent, non-profit initiative, dedicated to bringing the best available evidence to education leaders worldwide, and to transforming the learning of every child and young person.

## The Challenge

Globally, education systems are looking increasingly towards a strong evidence base to inform their policy and practice. However, the definition of “good” or “quality” evidence is usually limited to research published through academic and traditional channels. The omission of large volumes of work of great value – so-called ‘grey literature’ – severely limits the available evidence base. Much of this ‘grey literature’ is locally-contextualised and practice-derived evidence, produced by non-governmental and civil society organisation, and researchers based in the Global South.

Developing ways of using this broader range of evidence – including making it easier to find, access and appraise – will help policy makers to draw up national policies and guidelines that address their specific challenges and contexts.

## A way forward

To address this challenge, Education.org established an ‘International Working Group’ (IWG) to build on existing appraisal guidance and to develop a new, coherent and intellectually rigorous system for making a wider range of evidence easier to identify, access, and use in educational decision-making.

The IWG is made up of technical experts from 27 organisations globally, including representation from nine African countries, who have deep experience of working with educational evidence as policymakers, practitioners, researchers, synthesisers and funders.

## Country Trial Process

Trials of the proposed new approach will follow four main strands:

- A thematic focus for testing the draft guidance will be identified through a consultation with government and knowledge producers. This should be a priority policy area of concern in that country.
- A Country Working Group is set up, comprising knowledge producers, including academics, practitioners and government analysts.
- An Induction Workshop for the Country Working Group is held during which the Trial Process is discussed in detail.
- Through a series of workshops, the Working Group tests the Guidance, discusses lessons, and records its recommendations to make the Guidance more effective and purposeful.

## Expected Outcomes

- The Country Trials will produce customised Guidance to address the specific needs of each group's education system and will provide feedback that will be used for revising the global Guidance.
- Country participants will gain valuable experience in accessing and using a wider range of evidence sources, acquiring skills which can be deployed in future evidence-driven exercises.
- The IWG's revised Guidance will be published by Education.org, giving full recognition to its individual members and the country Working Groups. It will be made widely available for use by the education policy, practice and research communities.

## Timeline

- **October-November 2023:** Consultations are held with Governments, to discuss a potential thematic focus and nominations for Country Working Group members to participate.
- **November 2023 -January 2024:** Prospective members are briefed and invited to participate.
- **February – March 2024:** The Country Working Group tests the guidance, discusses and captures their recommendation.
- **April – June 2024:** Representatives from the Country Working Group join the International Working Group in a Learning Roundtable.
- **July – August 2024:** The IWG Guidance is revised and disseminated for wider use.

## Our mission and strategy

Our mission is to improve the learning of every child and young person by helping leaders access and use the best evidence to guide their national policies and plans. Our Strategy 2023-2028 sets out how we do this:

### ■ Establish an evidence synthesis gold standard for education system leaders

Our first Synthesis and Policy Brief on Accelerated Education Programmes (AEPs) in Africa are examples of our methodology and approach, in which locally-generated and contextually-relevant evidence is included to give actionable insights to education leaders.

### ■ Catalyse a transformation in the way education leaders work with evidence

We aim to transform the way policymakers work with evidence, by supporting Ministries of Education to put evidence at the centre of system-level decision making.

### ■ Lead a global movement to build an Education Knowledge Bridge

To advance evidence use in education we published a major advocacy paper 'Calling for an Education Knowledge Bridge' to be built through collective action. We want to partner with organisations and education leaders who share our commitment to evidence-informed policymaking.

The International Working Group is an initiative led by Education.org and supported by USAID and Education.org's principal funders, who are committed supporters of education research, including Dubai Cares, Echidna Giving, the Jacobs Foundation, Oak Foundation, Porticus and Rockdale Foundation.

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