

Institution: University of Cambridge		
Unit of assessment: UoA 23 Education		
Title of case study: Influencing education financing and policy in international development settings by tackling disadvantage from the early years		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Since 2015		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit		
Name(s)	Role(s) (e.g. job title)	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI
Rose Pauline	Professor of International Education/REAL Centre Director	2014 – present
Alcott Ben	University Lecturer	2016 – 2019
Sabates Ricardo	Reader in Education	2015 – present
Singal Nidhi	Professor of Disability and Inclusive Education	2004 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 January 2015 – 31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Research by Cambridge's REAL (Research for Equitable Access and Learning) Centre has led to shifting global policy and funding priorities towards supporting education from the early years and for children disadvantaged by poverty, gender, disability and location. As a result of research findings on educational access and learning, it has secured aid commitments notably by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO -formerly the UK Department for International Development - DFID).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specifically, the REAL Centre's work has: influenced DFID's 2018 Education Policy and investment, including GBP 20,500,000 on research and GBP500,000,000 to reach 1.9m marginalised girls; successfully campaigned for a Sustainable Development Goal indicator on minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics; shaped global advocacy on education for children with disabilities; prompted the government in Ghana to commit 1% of its education budget to a Complementary Basic Education programme affecting 450,000 children; and enabled CAMFED in Tanzania to raise GBP18,000,000 in funding for 51,100 marginalised children, particularly girls. 		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The REAL Centre has adopted a systematic approach to engaging policy and practice by working in partnership with organisations and individuals in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Partners have jointly defined, planned, implemented and analysed the research to promote its uptake. For example, the REAL Centre worked collaboratively with research partners in Pakistan on the Teaching Effectively All Children project to influence government policy on inclusive education [S9].</p> <p>Adopting a multi-disciplinary approach using quantitative and qualitative methods, REAL Centre research highlighted that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, including the poorest</p>		

girls and children with disabilities, face serious risk of not completing primary school. Even for those who do make it through primary school, many are not learning the basics in literacy and numeracy [R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R8]. The research identified that timely and appropriate intervention through pre-school and early primary years education has important benefits for children's learning, particularly for the most marginalised. This requires greater public investment in these early years.

REAL Centre evidence, including from analysis of a large-scale citizen-led assessment dataset in Pakistan (ASER) has shown that children with disabilities are often least likely to attend school, and once there, often face additional obstacles to learning [R8]. In countries such as India and Pakistan, where parents and teachers are able to provide the resources and support to their education, children with disabilities have opportunities to learn, including in mainstream government and private schools [R4].

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Alternative approaches to education are needed for many children who do not complete primary school. In Northern Ghana, the REAL Centre's research on the Complementary Basic Education programme found that many of its participants improved their literacy and numeracy significantly within a year and made a successful transition back into the formal primary school system [R2, R3].

For those who do complete primary school, targeted approaches are needed to give them the opportunity to transition to secondary school. Evidence from the REAL Centre's work with the NGO CAMFED in Tanzania showed that reaching marginalised girls requires multi-dimensional approaches. This costs more but can have considerable impact on school retention and learning [R7].

The REAL Centre's approach places engagement with policymakers and aid agencies at the heart of its research priorities. This model recognises that policymakers often require a body of evidence beyond individual studies. Work undertaken by the REAL Centre has therefore synthesised research on a variety of topics related to education disadvantage [e.g. R6]. Moreover, in her role as Senior Research Fellow at DFID [2015-2017], the REAL Centre's Director, Professor Pauline Rose, was embedded in the work of the Department for three years. This led to continuous exchange about bodies of evidence to inform policy and aid commitment decisions. Her role also enabled professional development and learning opportunities for DFID staff to embed research in their own evidence-based decision-making.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the REAL Centre, in collaboration with researchers in Ethiopia and Rwanda, has undertaken phone surveys to understand the effects of COVID-19 from the perspective of teachers, headteachers and parents, particularly for the most disadvantaged learners. These surveys have been developed in consultation with government and donors in both countries, and has informed their planning including for school re-opening. Rose and Sabates have advised FCDO's Building EdTech Evidence and Research on the design and analysis of surveys to understand the impact of school closures on learning in low- and lower-middle income countries. Singal was invited to co-author an international Response Note on disability and education during COVID19 with the World Bank. Sabates' research on identifying learning loss due to school closures in Northern Ghana has been shared with the Ministry of Education to inform strategies for enhancing distance learning during the pandemic.

The impact described is a result of this working model of exchange and dialogue, and engagement by Rose and the team at the REAL Centre in carrying out new research along with evidence syntheses of benefit to the policy objectives of FCDO, the broader international development community, and national governments.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Alcott, B. & Rose, P. (2017). Learning in India's primary schools: How do disparities widen across the grades? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 56, 42-51. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R2] Carter, E., Sabates, R., Rose, P., & Akyeampong, K. (2020). Sustaining literacy from mother tongue instruction in complementary education into official language of instruction in government schools in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 76:102195. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R3] Carter, E., Rose, P., Sabates, R., & Akyeampong, K. (2020). Trapped in low performance? Tracking the learning trajectory of disadvantaged girls and boys in the Complementary Basic Education programme in Ghana. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 100:101541. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R4] Malik, R., Raza, F., Rose, P., & Singal, N. (2020). Are children with disabilities in school and learning? Evidence from a household survey in rural Punjab, Pakistan. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Early view. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R5] Iyer, P., Rolleston, C., Rose, P., & Woldehanna, T. (2020). A rising tide of access: What consequences for equitable learning in Ethiopia? *Oxford Review of Education*, 46(5), 601-618. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R6] Rose, P. & Alcott, B. (2015). *How can education systems become equitable by 2030?* Institute of Development Studies. HEART (Health and Education Advice and Resource Team). [\[Link\]](#)

[R7] Sabates, R., Rose, P., Alcott, B., & Delprato, M. (2020). Assessing cost-effectiveness with equity of a programme targeting marginalised girls in secondary schools in Tanzania. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, Early view. [\[DOI\]](#)

[R8] Singal, N., Sabates, R., Aslam, M. & Saeed, S. (2018). School enrolment and learning outcomes for children with disabilities: Findings from a household survey in Pakistan. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(13), 1410-1430. [\[DOI\]](#)

All research has been peer reviewed and therefore meets the 2* minimum requirement.

Funded research projects associated with the outputs

FCDO, GBP3,967,751, April 2017-October 2022. Research for Improving Systems of Education – Ethiopia (Rose - International Lead, Sabates - Research Manager Lead). Institutional Partners: Addis Ababa University, Policy Studies Institute, Ethiopia, University College London

ESRC-DFID, GBP457,732, July 2015-Dec 2018. Teaching Effectively All Children (TEACh) in India and Pakistan (Rose – PI, Singal - Co-I, Vignoles - Co-I). Institutional Partners: Cord, India, IDEAS, Pakistan

Echnida Giving, June 2016-December 2017, Costs of scaling up CAMFED's girls' secondary education model in Ghana (Rose - Co-PI, Sabates - Co-PI, Alcott - Co-I)

DFID, GBP109,880.00, November 2017-November 2018. Understanding Complementary Basic Education in Ghana (Sabates - Cambridge PI, Rose - Co-I). Institutional Partner: University of Sussex

Cambridge-Africa, GBP19,287.50, May-November 2020. The effects of COVID-19 on education in Ethiopia: Informing short- and medium-term policy responses (Rose PI). Institutional Partners: Addis Ababa University; Ethiopia Policy Studies Institute

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Cambridge-Africa, GBP19,287.50, May-November 2020. The effects of COVID-19 on education in Ethiopia: Informing short- and medium-term policy responses (Rose PI). Institutional Partners: Addis Ababa University; Ethiopia Policy Studies Institute

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Impact on global funding

Research by members of the REAL Centre was influential in the design of DFID's 2018 Education Policy, *Get Children Learning* [S2] and subsequently influenced funding decisions in a number of ways. As Senior Research Fellow within DFID, Rose summarised evidence, including REAL Centre research, prompting DFID's Education Policy (2018) to focus on targeted interventions to address intersecting disadvantages, such as related to poverty, gender and disability. This led to investment of an additional £500m to reach 1.9m of the most marginalised girls, as part of DFID's *Leave No Girl Behind* programme [S1].

Analysis by Alcott and Rose showing that learning gaps start from early childhood [R6] was included in the policy [S2]. This influenced a spending commitment of GBP20,500,000 on research to inform early childhood education programming. As DFID's Chief Scientific Adviser acknowledges, "*REAL Centre evidence pressed us to focus on tackling the learning crisis for the early years by supporting the most disadvantaged children to learn the basics of literacy and numeracy. This is one of DFID's key contributions to achieving the vision set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4 of inclusive and equitable education and lifelong opportunities for all*" [S1].

The REAL Centre submitted written evidence to the International Development Committee (IDC)'s report on DFID's programme *Leaving No One Behind in Education*, further influencing DFID's policy. Rose's oral evidence to the Committee was later quoted by the IDC in a letter to Priti Patel (then Secretary of State of DFID) and to her successor, Penny Mordaunt: "*We have heard particularly compelling evidence... including [from] the University of Cambridge... to suggest DFID should be spending far more on early childhood education*" [S3]. According to the IDC Chair, "*The REAL Centre's rigorous, policy-relevant research was helpful in highlighting that intersecting disadvantage, associated with poverty, gender, disability, and where a child lives, needs to be tackled from the early years.*" Stephen Twigg MP, IDC Chair, August 2019 [S4]. He goes on to conclude: "*This recommendation was successful and early years education is now a cornerstone of DFID's 2018 Education Policy, resulting in increased investment for this crucial stage in a child's education.*" [S4].

Global policy impact

Collaborating with the charity Theirworld, the REAL Centre highlighted how little governments and donors invested in early childhood education [S5]. This work was referenced in the 2016 UNICEF's flagship report 'State of the World's Children: A fair chance for everyone' [S7]. Save the Children CEO, Kevin Watkins wrote, "*The education section of State of the World's Children drew almost entirely on REAL analysis...which has reached a global audience of policy-makers*" [S6]. This REAL Centre evidence influenced UNICEF's 2019-2030 Education Strategy, and its commitment to spend 10% of its education budget on early childhood education. Sarah Brown, Chair, Theirworld reported that "*The REAL Centre...has played an unprecedented role in using data and research to drive forward policy change in global education focused on early childhood development*" [S5].

REAL Centre research proved the need for an indicator within Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on achieving a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics by Grade 2 or 3 – essential for monitoring children's learning from the early grades of schooling. The UNESCO

Institute for Statistics (UIS) described the work as ‘pivotal’ in the push for monitoring early learning [S8].

Singal’s research has shaped global advocacy on education for children with disabilities [S9]. Through leadership on the ESRC-DFID’s Impact Initiative, Singal collaborated with over 30 organisations to prepare a Statement of Action. This promoted evidence-based approaches to inform a focus on inclusive education at the first Global Disability Summit, hosted by DFID in July 2018: *“This collective Statement of Action was used extensively...to build momentum and capture commitments within the Global Disability Summit’s Call to Action [and] was instrumental in the establishment of the Inclusive Education Initiative, hosted by the World Bank, including a commitment of £4.7 million by DFID”* [S1].

National impact

In Ghana, the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Programme had been funded by aid organisations. Sabates and colleagues used longitudinal, quantitative analysis to show how the CBE programme was improving access and learning for some of the country’s most disadvantaged children. This evidence persuaded the Ghanaian Government to commit to funding the programme: *“Thanks to the robust evidence, 1% of the government’s basic education budget has been promised to support the continuation of the programme from 2019.”* This funding supports around 450,000 of the most disadvantaged children in Ghana [S1].

In Tanzania, REAL Centre analysis of the cost-effectiveness of CAMFED’s educational programme used large-scale, quantitative data to show that, while it costs more to reach marginalised girls, the impact of keeping these girls in school is substantial. *“...the evidence generated has been instrumental in enabling CAMFED to raise new funding to support the education of marginalised girls at secondary school. Over 2018-20, this has included institutional grants to the value of £18m, which will benefit 51,100 marginalised children to improve their retention and learning at secondary school, including financial support for 16,200 of the most marginalised girls to complete a full cycle of secondary school education.”* [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[S1] Written testimonial from the Chief Scientific Adviser, Department for International Development (01 July 2019).

[S2] DFID (2018) Education Policy: Get Children Learning. Link [here](#).

[S3] International Development Committee (IDC) on [Leaving No one Behind in Education](#) – oral and written evidence; Letter and Report to DFID Secretary of State. Written and [oral evidence](#) and letter [here](#). Final report [here](#) (2017-2018)

[S4] Written testimonial from the Chair of IDC Committee (5 August 2019)

[S5] Written testimonial from the Chair of Theirworld (5 June 2020)

[S6] Written testimonial from the CEO of Save the Children UK (24 January 2020)

[S7] UNICEF (2016). [State of the world’s children: A fair chance for every child](#). UNICEF. Cited on pgs. 49, 104, 105,

[S8] UNESCO Institute for Statistics – citation in blog by Montoya, Silvia ‘We Are Ready to Start Monitoring Early-grade Learning’ (November 2018). Link [here](#)

[S9] ESRC-DFID Impact Initiative Impact Story: Research on Disability influences Education Policy in Pakistan (May 2019). Link [here](#)

[S10] Written testimonial from Lucy Lake, CEO of CAMFED (14 January 2020)