



USAID EDUCATION: EARLY LEARNING AND FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

PHOTO CREDIT: USAID

By ensuring children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills, USAID advances economic opportunity and life-long learning.

Education is a foundational driver of development, and fundamental to achieving self-reliance. When children and youth build skills they can use for work and school, they can pursue more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, their communities, and their countries. USAID works in more than 50 nations to promote education that enables all children and youth to acquire the skills they need to be productive members of society.

SKILLS-BASED LEARNING THAT CHANGES LIVES

Worldwide, 617 million learners do not meet minimum standards in reading and math. Two-thirds of these young people, or 400 million learners, are already in school. Children and youth who do not develop foundational language, reading, math, and socio-emotional skills struggle to catch up with their peers later in life. The inequities they experience can be compounded by discrimination, crisis and conflict, and identity-based violence in and around schools.

Gaining foundational reading, math, and social and emotional skills is a strong predictor of whether an individual will stay in school, obtain a degree, get and maintain a job—or become involved in a crime.

USAID works to build foundational skills for children and youth at all levels from the pre-primary level onward. In both formal and non-formal settings, USAID strengthens students' holistic development in literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional learning (SEL). USAID invests in educational standards, materials, teacher professional development, school leadership initiatives, student assessment, and community engagement to teach learners these essential skills. USAID promotes the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across its portfolio, ensuring that disabled students and those experiencing other barriers to learning (i.e. crisis & conflict, poverty, discrimination, etc.) build a strong academic foundation.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND COUNTRY HIGHLIGHTS

The UN Sustainable Development Goals call for ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education. USAID's global networks for improved learning support the achievement of this ambition. Through partnerships such as the **Global Book Alliance**, the **Global Reading Network**, and the **Mobiles for Education Alliance**, USAID works to enhance the long-term impact, scale, and sustainability of innovative initiatives to improve language, reading, math, and SEL outcomes for students around the world. Examples of our work from pre-primary to secondary education include:

- The **All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development (ACR –GCD)** is a partnership for innovation in education technology between USAID, World Vision, and the Australian Government that prioritizes literacy development for children with disabilities. Recent prize competitions such as Sign On for Literacy and Book Boost have catalyzed the use of accessible materials for sign language users and learners with print disabilities.
- In **Mali**, it is not unusual to have 100 students in a classroom with a single teacher and very few, if any, books. The Selective Integrated Reading Activity has developed techniques that are improving reading and writing instruction even in these challenging circumstances. Midway through the program, four times more students in the participating schools could read at national standard levels than could before the program started.
- In **Nigeria**, the Northern Education Initiative Plus (NEI+) activity supports in- and out- of school children to read and write in Hausa and English. In 2018, 2000+ teachers and more than 600,000 primary school children benefited from over two million NEI+ student books. NEI+ has demonstrated significant improvement in reading gains for children and youth, and has helped 68,000 learners to qualify for formal schooling.
- In **Egypt**, USAID partnered with the Ministry of Education to create a network of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) schools so high-performing students from remote areas across Egypt can access premium quality STEM education. These schools established curriculum, trained teachers, and implemented an assessment system. To date, the program has benefitted 1,468 high school students, 44 percent of whom are girls.

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