

# U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education

2024–2029







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Photo: USAID Cambodia

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Providing quality education for all children and youth is integral to achieving sustainable development in partner countries and the U.S. government remains committed to achieving this goal.<sup>1</sup>

Quality and inclusive education has the ability to build the skills, capacities, and human capital that individuals and communities need to thrive, which in turn promotes innovation, work opportunities, and the elimination of extreme poverty, while also addressing harmful social norms and societal inequalities.<sup>2</sup> Finally, strengthening education systems advances U.S. foreign policy goals, promotes U.S. and international security, and helps accelerate economic growth at home and abroad.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest disruption to education and learning in modern history. Learning loss from the pandemic and continued disruptions to education from humanitarian crises and natural disasters make the vision for U.S. international basic education assistance more relevant than ever: to achieve a world where resilient education systems in partner countries enable all individuals to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society.

Despite challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts and crises disrupting education, U.S. government programs increased the number of learners who attain minimum proficiency in reading in 15 countries during and after the pandemic emergency. Programs implemented over the course of the 2019–2023 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education reached more than 34 million learners annually. In total, U.S. government programs trained 2.9 million teachers and educators, supplied 176 million textbooks and other teaching and learning materials, and worked to strengthen systems, including by adopting 525 new or reformed laws and policies. In addition, the U.S. government provided 17 million children and youth with school meal services during this Strategy period, recognizing that children must be healthy when they enter school, so they are ready to learn.

The U.S. government will continue building on these efforts and partner with countries and stakeholders to increase capacity and strengthen education systems to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners and educators, particularly girls and other historically marginalized groups. This includes strengthening cross-sectoral coordination to reduce barriers to education and increase learning outcomes. Each agency and department involved in international basic education brings distinct resources, expertise, capabilities, and experience to address global challenges. The collective results of the U.S. government's efforts will further learning for students and improve their quality of life more broadly by supporting economic growth, improving health outcomes, reducing violence, and increasing participation in democratic governance.

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES

U.S. government activities will be guided by four strategic approaches: (1) prioritize country ownership and locally led development; (2) generate and use data and evidence to drive decision-making and investments; (3) strengthen the capacity and performance of education systems; and (4) promote equity and inclusion.

## OBJECTIVES

The U.S. government will work toward three common objectives: (1) improve learning outcomes across the education continuum; (2) expand access to quality education, particularly for the most historically marginalized; and (3) coordinate and leverage resources to drive results.

### 1. Improve Learning Outcomes Across the Education Continuum

In 2019, learning poverty, the share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, had reached 57 percent in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>3</sup> Post-COVID-19, an estimated 70 percent of ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read a simple text and only 25 percent of youth are on track to attain the full range of skills needed to thrive in school, work, and life.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. government is committed to ensuring all learners acquire the skills that are critical to future success—from early childhood to primary and secondary education, youth workforce development, and vocational training—in both formal and nonformal settings. To do so, the U.S. government will work to (1) provide children with strong beginnings; (2) improve foundational skills; and (3) develop the capacity of youth to build the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.

### 2. Expand Access to Quality Basic Education, Particularly for the Most Historically Marginalized

To achieve Objective 1, improve learning outcomes, it is critical that all learners have access to quality education. No country can achieve its development objectives if any part of the population is denied access to a quality education. To reach all learners, education systems must address how aspects of a person's identity can intersect and compound barriers that decrease a person's likelihood of benefiting from education. It is essential that education systems are inclusive of diverse learners and educators, ensure all people are safe and supported, and are able to respond and adapt to shocks and stressors that can result in learning loss and students dropping out of school.

The U.S. government will work to expand access to quality education, particularly for learners experiencing marginalization, by working with partner countries and diverse stakeholders to: (1) strengthen education systems to be more inclusive, accessible, equitable, safe, and resilient, and increase learning outcomes for all learners; (2) address barriers to learning, particularly in conflict and crisis; and (3) prevent and respond to discrimination and marginalization, including violence, abuse, and exploitation.

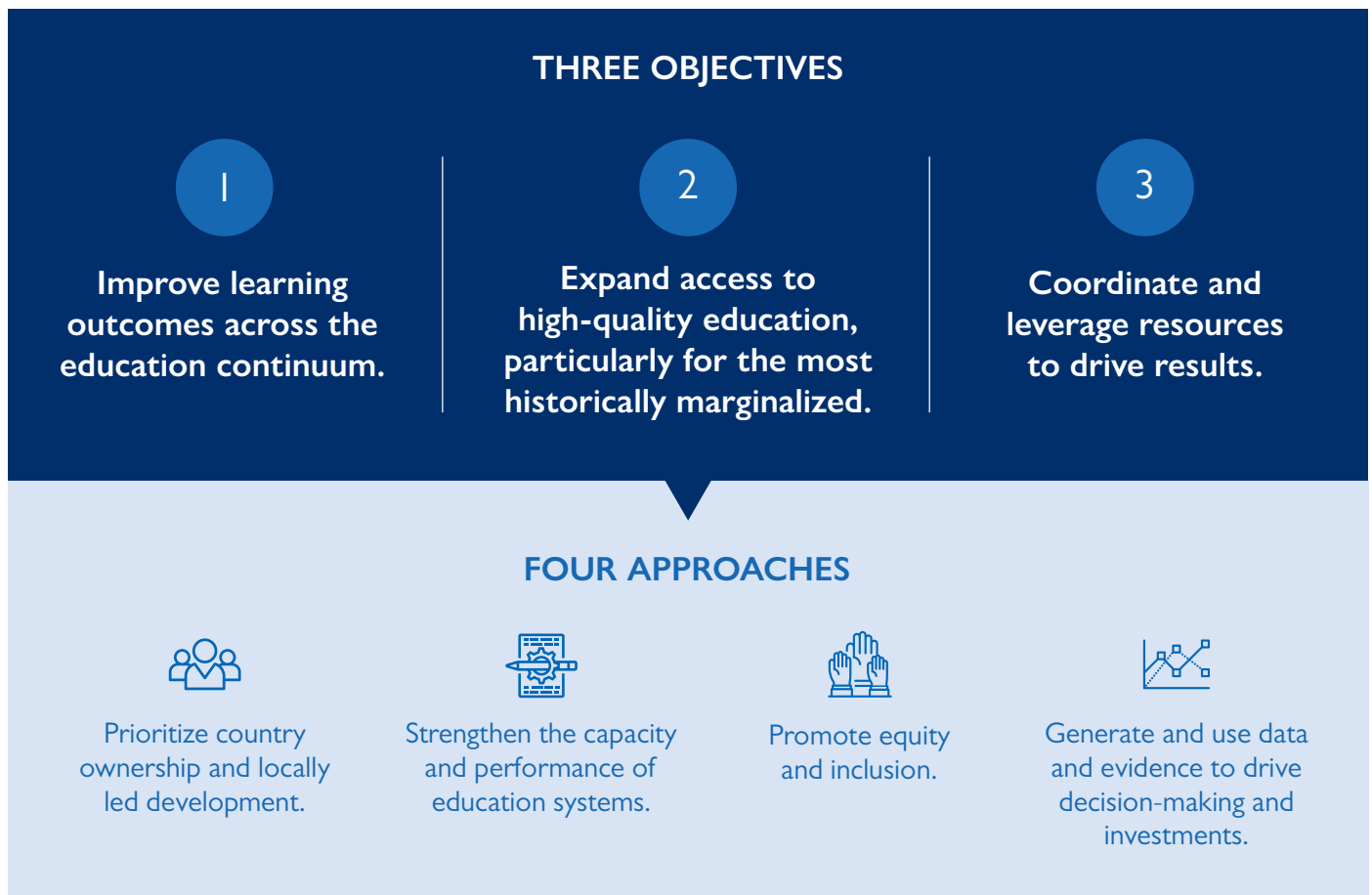
### 3. Coordinate and Leverage Resources to Drive Results

The education sector faces a stark reality: the needs faced by communities around the globe are accelerating faster than governments and traditional development actors can address them. The vision outlined in this Strategy is ambitious and cannot be achieved by the U.S. government alone. No single intervention, policy change, or investment is sufficient to achieve these objectives and those of Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Stakeholders must come together as problem-solvers to leverage expertise, relationships, resources, and policy voices to accelerate reform and catalyze action that elevates education and transforms systems. Evidence-based interventions that improve equity, efficiency, and effectiveness can help demonstrate the case for further funding to be mobilized, and simultaneously enhance transparency and accountability.

To achieve these goals, the U.S. government will: (1) convene to elevate education and drive progress toward collective goals and beneficial policy reform; (2) coordinate programming to maximize impact, including through cross-sectoral collaborations to address the multifaceted and compounding challenges that students and out-of-school youth face; and (3) partner to increase financial resources, leverage innovation, and share information, data, research, tools, and resources.

## MONITORING PROGRESS

The Strategy is an opportunity to contribute to and learn from global evaluations and evidence, identify gaps and areas for action, and chart a clear path forward to increase the U.S. government's collective impact. The U.S. government will monitor the performance and impact of programs, increase data on learning outcomes, use disaggregated data to ensure transparency and accountability for results, grow the evidence base on the components of cost-effective programming, and make course corrections as necessary to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.







*Photo: USAID Haiti*



# INTRODUCTION

After the COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest disruption to education and learning in modern history, the vision for U.S. international basic education assistance remains paramount: to achieve a world where resilient education systems in partner countries enable all individuals to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. While the road to recovering learning lost during the pandemic is long, the global community has come together to address it with a renewed sense of urgency.

The U.S. government is committed to ensuring learners acquire the skills that are critical to future success—from early childhood to primary and secondary education, youth workforce development, and vocational training—in both formal and nonformal settings. To do so, the U.S. government will partner with local stakeholders to reimagine education systems that better serve *all* students, with resourcefulness, resilience, and creativity.

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF EDUCATION

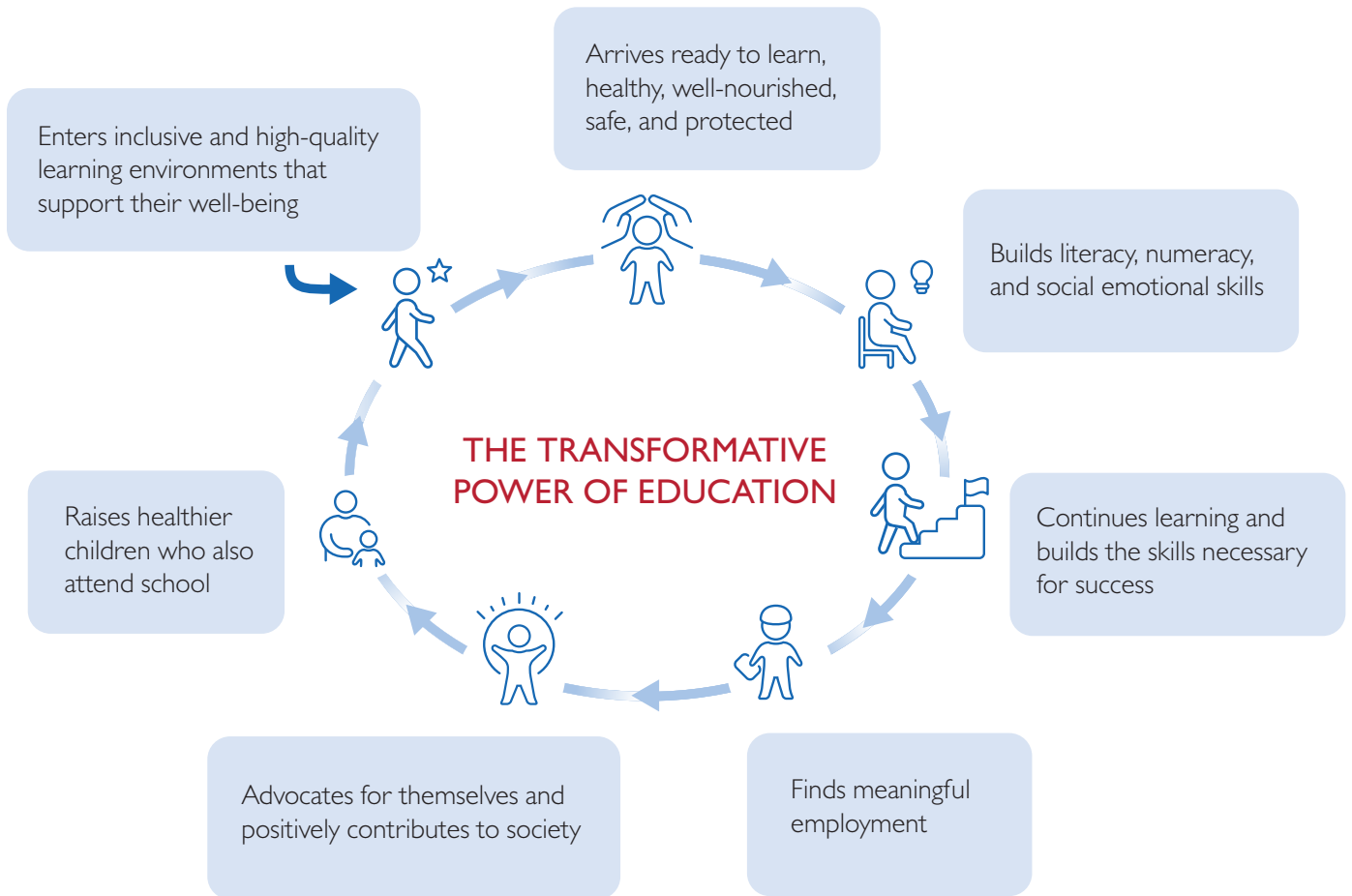
Everyone has the right to education and providing quality education<sup>5</sup> (Sustainable Development Goal 4) for all learners is one of the most important components of achieving sustainable development in partner countries.<sup>6</sup> Quality and inclusive education has the ability to build the skills, capacities, and human capital that individuals and communities need to thrive, which in turn promotes innovation, work opportunities, and the elimination of extreme poverty, while also addressing harmful social norms and societal inequalities.<sup>7</sup> Finally, strengthening education systems advances U.S. foreign policy goals, promotes U.S. and international security, and helps accelerate economic growth at home and abroad.<sup>8</sup>

For this to be successful, all learners and educators must be supported to succeed in safe, equitable, and inclusive education systems. When children arrive at school ready to learn, they can build the literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills that will serve as the foundation for future learning and success. Education builds the capacity of learners to advocate for themselves, gain meaningful employment, become engaged citizens and leaders in their communities, and contribute to the economic growth of their country. Particularly in times of crisis, education is lifesaving and can offer a sense of normalcy, protection, and hope. Education has the power to transform norms and practices, and mitigate harmful stereotypes by addressing root causes of inequality and systems of oppression.

***Education is the key to achieving success across Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for countries to achieve their development objectives:***<sup>9</sup>

- Education drives long-term economic growth. The global poverty rate could be more than halved if all adults completed secondary school.<sup>10</sup>
- The links between education and health are irrefutable—education saves lives. Education is strongly associated with life expectancy, morbidity, and health behaviors.<sup>11</sup> Children born to mothers with 12 years of education are more than 30 percent less likely to die before age five, compared to those born to mothers without an education.<sup>12</sup>

- Education has the potential to increase stability and reduce violent extremism. Through education, students learn to solve and prevent conflict. Each year of education reduces a student’s risk of becoming involved in conflict by 20 percent.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, [research](#) finds that low levels of access to education and high levels of inequality in education can heighten the risk of violence and conflict, creating a vicious cycle of lost educational opportunities, conflict, and displacement.
- In environments affected by crisis or conflict, education can improve well-being by providing a sense of routine, predictability, essential skills, and access to important psychosocial support for people coping with the negative impacts of disaster and conflict.
- Education can build resilience against the impacts of conflict, crisis, and climate change, providing people with the knowledge and tools they need to adapt to the effects of shocks and stresses and encouraging people to change their behaviors and attitudes.<sup>14</sup>
- Strengthening education systems supports good governance and democracy by creating a more informed citizenry, increasing diverse local leadership, elevating local voices, and strengthening accountability systems.<sup>15</sup> For example, meaningful community engagement, including through parent school associations and youth leadership, can develop communities’ capacity to take action and drive responsive governance.<sup>16</sup>



## SUPPORTING U.S. GOVERNMENT FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES

The U.S. government works to strengthen education systems—the people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities whose primary purpose is to improve, expand, and sustain quality education outcomes. Strengthening education systems globally advances U.S. foreign policy goals, promotes U.S. and international security, and helps accelerate economic growth at home and abroad.

As stated in the [Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan \(JSP\) for Fiscal Years \(FY\) 2022–2026](#) under Strategic Objective 3.5, the U.S. government is committed to improving inclusive and equitable education for children and youth, including women and girls and persons with disabilities. This commitment is echoed in the [National Security Strategy \(NSS\)](#), which calls for quality education and training under “Investing in Our People” and reinforces the need to redouble our efforts to expand access to education to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and meet country-level targets.

The [National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality](#) commits the U.S. government to support initiatives that incentivize girls’ and women’s access to learning, including safe learning environments, increased representation of women in educational leadership roles, implementation of strategies to mitigate financial barriers, school-based health and nutritional support, and behavior change communication programs, along with activities to disincentivize child, early, and forced marriage. The [United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence](#) promotes U.S. government action to support countries to develop safer, more equitable education systems that address gender norms, ensure all learners and educators are treated with dignity and respect, and condemn violence and discrimination in any form.







Photo: USAID Zimbabwe

# BACKGROUND

## THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to the global education sector, disrupting education for 1.6 billion learners in 190 countries. Now that schools have reopened and children and youth are eager to continue learning, we must remove barriers to education exacerbated by the pandemic and regain the learning lost to achieve our goals.

Years of underinvestment, learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic, and continued disruption to education from humanitarian crises and natural disasters mean that without a major effort, by 2030 approximately 300 million students will lack the basic literacy and math skills needed to succeed in life—and only one in six countries will achieve the target of universal secondary school completion.<sup>17</sup>

### Using a Systems Approach to Address Learning Loss

Before the pandemic, global learning levels were unacceptably low. In 2019, learning poverty, the share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten, had reached 57 percent in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>18</sup> It is now estimated that **learning poverty has increased by one-third, to 70 percent**, in low- and middle-income countries. In addition, **only 25 percent of youth in low- and lower-middle-income countries are on track to attain the full range of skills needed** to thrive in school, work, and life, compared to 68 percent of youth in high-income countries.<sup>19</sup>

Extended school closures during the pandemic disrupted learning, with the length of interruption varying by region. Schools in high-income countries managed to reopen faster than those in low- and middle-income countries, in which nearly one billion children missed out on at least one full year of in-person schooling.<sup>20</sup>

The effects of the pandemic on learning are occurring on top of existing factors that influence students' abilities to learn and thrive. Children may not be prepared to learn at school due to a lack of nurturing care, including malnutrition, poor health, or a lack of parental or caregiver involvement and safe environments, among other issues. There are chronic shortages of trained and qualified teachers and instructors; often they are simply absent, and countries lack systems to support school and teacher-level accountability.

Students often lack books and other materials entirely or are required to share them extensively with others. Where learners do have books, many are of poor quality, often written in languages that learners and educators do not understand, or presented in formats that are inaccessible to persons with disabilities. Moreover, millions of youths and adults are left unemployed or underemployed, lacking opportunities as well as basic literacy, numeracy, soft, and technical (including digital) skills that the formal labor markets demand.

The U.S. government is a leader in international basic education and recognizes that sustained commitment is key to improving learning outcomes at scale. Working with partner countries to strengthen education systems and improve learning outcomes takes time, commitment, and resources. In addition, programs need the ability to learn, adjust, and build on effective interventions.

**The U.S. government is working with partner countries to strengthen education systems to provide quality education that is accessible, inclusive, equitable, relevant, and adapts to changing circumstances.**

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## Millions Remain Out of School, Magnifying Inequities

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic magnified pre-existing inequities between and within education systems, disproportionately disadvantaging girls and women; persons with disabilities; people living in extreme poverty; conflict-affected, stateless, refugees, and other forcibly displaced populations; and others due to their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation.

Two hundred forty-four million children and youth between ages 6 and 18 remain out-of-school,<sup>21</sup> with many students facing intersectional and compounded marginalization challenges that create additional barriers to accessing quality, inclusive education. Other students have been forced to leave school due to economic hardship, forced migration, the impacts of climate change, and new and ongoing conflicts.

- Of the **240 million children living with disabilities, half are out of school.**<sup>22</sup>
- Globally, **boys are more likely to be enrolled in primary school than girls,**<sup>23</sup> but learning poverty rates are higher for boys than for girls in all regions and almost all countries of the world.<sup>24</sup>
- **In 2023, 224 million children were affected by crises and required additional support**—up from 75 million in 2016.<sup>25</sup> For refugee children, over 50 percent remain out of school and girls living in crisis-affected countries are far less likely to attend school<sup>26</sup> at any level compared to girls in other low- and middle-income countries.<sup>27</sup>
- Of all regions, **Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rates of education exclusion.** Almost 60 percent of youth between ages 15 and 17 are not in school.<sup>28</sup>

To achieve our shared goals, it is critical that all learners have access to quality education. No country can achieve its development objectives if any part of the population is denied access to a quality education.

**The U.S. government is working with partner countries to ensure that education systems are inclusive of diverse learners and educators, all people are safe and supported, and systems are able to respond and adapt to shocks and stressors that can result in learning loss and students dropping out of school.**

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## Partner Country Education Systems are Strained

While partner country governments provide the majority of education funding—approximately 82 percent globally—financial resources fall short of what's needed to achieve SDG 4.<sup>29</sup> Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, real spending on education grew steadily, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>30</sup> Yet, partner countries' education systems face numerous complex challenges that add strain, including growing youth populations, increased needs in the wake of COVID-19, and displacement due to conflict and crisis.

The financing gap to achieve SDG 4 and provide access to quality education continues to grow. The latest research and analysis from UNESCO estimate that without \$97 billion in extra funding, a range of countries will fail to meet their 2030 national education targets.<sup>31</sup> Donors can play a critical role in addressing the financing gap, particularly by making catalytic investments that strengthen education systems, but donors cannot fill this gap alone.

Mobilizing and allocating additional domestic resources of partner countries in a timely manner is key to ensuring that education systems are adequately funded. At the same time, reforms that increase the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of existing spending ensure resources are a productive investment. How existing resources are used is just as important a consideration as the overall level of funding. Evidence-based interventions that improve equity, efficiency, and effectiveness can help demonstrate the case for further funding to be mobilized, and simultaneously enhance transparency and accountability. Finally, governments and the international community can seek additional external resources and support through partnerships with the private sector.

Countries face considerable needs that are accelerating faster than traditional development actors can address them. The vision outlined in this Strategy is ambitious and cannot be achieved by one agency or organization alone.

**The U.S. government is working together with partner country governments toward our common goals, leveraging resources and partnerships while drawing on local capacities and diverse local and global networks.**

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Photo: MCC Guatemala

## Working Together to Increase Impact

The U.S. government's international education work reaches individuals, communities, and partner countries in a variety of different ways and throughout a learner's educational journey. The U.S. Government tailors its programs to the comparative advantages of a department or agency, and the unique conditions in partner countries, including:



## Building on Our Progress: Working Together Across the U.S. Government

Despite challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing conflicts and crises disrupting education, U.S. government programs increased the number of learners who attain minimum proficiency in reading in 15 countries during and after the pandemic emergency. Programs implemented over the course of the 2019–2023 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education reached more than 34 million learners annually. In total, U.S. government programs trained 2.9 million teachers and educators, supplied 174 million textbooks and other teaching and learning materials, and worked to strengthen systems, including by adopting 525 new or reformed laws and policies. In addition, the U.S. government provided 17 million children and youth with school meal services during the first Strategy period, recognizing that children must be healthy when they enter school, so they are ready to learn.

The U.S. government will continue building on these efforts and partner with countries and stakeholders to build capacity and strengthen education systems to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all learners and educators. Each agency and department involved in international basic education brings distinct resources, expertise, capabilities, and experience to address global challenges. These contributions not only further learning for students, but also improve the quality of life more broadly by supporting economic growth, improving health outcomes, reducing violence, and increasing participation in democratic governance. Examples of activities include:

- **Supporting national nutrition and health programs**, recognizing that children must be healthy when they enter school, so they are ready to learn.
- **Providing safe, accessible, and inclusive learning environments** with adequate access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities.
- **Engaging families, caregivers, communities, and local stakeholders** to work inclusively and collectively toward shared learning goals, exercising their unique knowledge and capabilities to support learners.
- **Removing barriers to education** for out-of-school learners by supporting enrollment, attendance, and retention in school, while providing opportunities for catch-up and remedial learning for those who are behind.
- **Protecting children and youth from child labor, forced labor, trafficking, exploitation, neglect, gender-based violence, and recruitment by violent extremist groups** and providing them with educational alternatives.
- **Strengthening systems to be more resilient and nondiscriminatory, improve learning, and increase equal access** by working with partner countries to reform policies, improve curricula, strengthen data systems, train and support teachers, and help ensure students have the books and materials necessary to provide an environment conducive to learning.
- **Building the capacity of youth** by providing individuals with relevant education, training, and skills to prepare them to secure employment, leverage their leadership skills, and develop throughout their lives.
- **Engaging higher education** systems to train teachers, policymakers, and school leaders; conduct research on innovative, evidence-based teaching and learning methods; develop curricula and textbooks that meet the needs of twenty-first-century learning and promote inclusivity; and support learners to gain the skills needed to address local, national, and global challenges.
- **Leveraging cross-sectoral programming** and utilizing education centers as resource hubs for the delivery of services to the community at large—maximizing the impact of other development efforts.





Photo: USAID Egypt

# STRATEGIC APPROACHES

The U.S. vision to achieve a world where education systems in partner countries enable all individuals to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society will be guided by four strategic approaches: (1) prioritize country ownership and locally led development; (2) generate and use data and evidence to drive decision-making and investments; (3) strengthen the capacity and performance of education systems; and (4) promote equity and inclusion.



## I. Prioritize Country Ownership and Locally Led Development

Country ownership and locally led development depend on partner governments at the central, regional, and departmental levels leading efforts to improve their communities and working inclusively with local actors toward shared learning goals. When programming is driven by local actors—and efforts are responsive to local priorities; draw on local capacities, diverse networks, and resources; and are accountable to local communities—contributions to education and learning outcomes are more likely to be sustained by local education systems.<sup>32</sup>

The U.S. government will work with a variety of local actors and stakeholders to determine the most appropriate approaches to respond to country needs and ownership. Beyond working with partner countries and local governments, the U.S. government will increase engagement of parents and caregivers, students and youth, educators and school officials, community leaders, civil society, non-state schools,<sup>33</sup> faith-based organizations, the private sector, academia, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). As part of this effort, programs will work to ensure there is a focus on listening to, distributing power to, and responding to the needs of populations experiencing marginalization including, but not limited to, women and girls; persons with disabilities; youth; children in adversity and their families; older persons; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons; Indigenous Peoples and communities; minority language groups; nondominant religious groups; nondominant racial and ethnic groups; people of castes traditionally considered lower; persons with unmet mental health needs; refugees and other forcibly displaced or stateless persons; migrants; conflict-affected persons; those living in poverty; married children; adolescent parents; child laborers; children associated with armed forces and armed groups; and other historically marginalized groups.<sup>34</sup>

*Incorporating efforts to support country ownership and locally led development can include:*

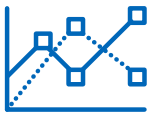
- Adapting policies and guidance to **engage local partners and communities** in setting priorities, designing and implementing programs, forming partnerships, and defining and measuring results.
- Shifting power to local actors, including through an inclusive development lens, to **ensure local voices determine their own paths to sustainable education development** while incorporating U.S. government technical and financial support, relevant data and research, and evidence on cost effectiveness.<sup>35</sup>
- **Co-designing and co-creating programs** in ways that elevate local decision-making, support mutuality, and promote reciprocal trust and accountability.
- Serving as global advocates and thought leaders while using convening power, partnerships, voice, and other tools of development diplomacy for **greater country ownership and local leadership**.<sup>36</sup>

Each U.S. government department and agency will continue to follow its own process for selecting the countries in which it works, while taking into consideration the foreign policy and economic interests of the United States. Considerations will include using disaggregated data and research on where there is the greatest need and opportunity to expand access to basic education and to improve learning outcomes, including for historically marginalized groups or populations affected by conflict or crisis. Consideration will also be given to the level of political commitment to education by partner country governments, and where U.S. government assistance can meaningfully contribute to a substantial, measurable impact on children, youth, and educational systems.



*Photo: USAID Somalia*





## 2. Generate and Use Data and Evidence to Drive Decision-Making and Investments

Robust, context-specific, and timely data and evidence are essential to improve the quality of education at the system level as well as the effectiveness of education assistance at the programmatic level. To achieve education objectives cost-effectively, programs must be targeted, designed, and implemented based on the best available data and evidence—or deliberately designed as pilots to build evidence around cost-effective approaches that meet the needs of the local context and would be sustainable. The U.S. government will work to ensure education investments utilize evidence, collect disaggregated data, and use this information continuously to test, learn, and adapt programming in support of the [Foundations of Evidence-Based Policy Making of 2018](#).

The capacity of stakeholders in partner countries to collect, manage, and use data, particularly on learning outcomes, is also critical to sustainably track progress and address gaps over time. Local education data systems that are accessible to the public are necessary to improve education service delivery sustainably and promote transparency and accountability. The U.S. government works with partner countries to strengthen their capacities to generate, analyze, use, and publicly report on locally relevant data and evidence to inform education reforms, policies, and investments.

*Incorporating decision-making and investments using evidence and data can include:*

- Strengthening the capacity of local education stakeholders to **generate, analyze, use, and share relevant data and evidence** to inform local education programs, reforms, and investments while incorporating the flexibility to learn and make course corrections as necessary. This includes supporting quality evaluations and examining data to determine for whom programs are working and how to ensure the greatest program impact.
- Strengthening the **capacity and engagement of civil society organizations**, especially those representing groups experiencing marginalization, to access and utilize available data to improve the accountability of the education system.
- Working with **local stakeholders, including higher education institutions, to build the evidence base** where relevant global and local research and evidence are lacking and rigorously measure results.
- Collaborating with other donors, multilateral agencies, the private sector, academia, and other stakeholders to **ensure coherence in the generation and use of education data** to improve the accountability, equity, transparency, scaling, and sustainability of education programming.
- Establishing systems and processes for **capturing, measuring, and analyzing the costs and benefits of education interventions**, which increases transparency and allows research and value-for-money analysis across programs and contexts.



### 3. Strengthen the Capacity and Performance of Education Systems

Education systems are made of people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities that jointly contribute to improving, expanding, and sustaining learning and educational outcomes. To strengthen education systems, programs must engage diverse stakeholders and understand the current and potential roles they play, the relationships between them, and the rules and resources that enable or constrain the ability of the education system to achieve sustainable results.

Increasing access to education and sustaining learning and education outcomes for all children depend on local education systems that are aligned toward common learning goals across stakeholders, provide quality education that is equitable and inclusive for all learners, support educators and school officials, adapt to changing circumstances, and are supported by partner countries and local stakeholders with the capacity to maintain the systems.<sup>37</sup>

*Incorporating efforts to strengthen the capacity and performance of education systems can include:*

- Designing programming based on a robust **understanding of the local education system** to best target investment for sustainable change.
- Leveraging the U.S. government's convening capacity to **facilitate the alignment and coherence** of education systems with learning outcomes.
- Supporting the ability of the local education system to deliver and sustain learning and education outcomes over time by working in partnership to address underlying performance drivers such as **policies, norms, capacities, structures and processes, relationships, and incentives**.
- Exploring **innovative and flexible mechanisms to deliver and finance education** to achieve U.S. government objectives, including by improving the adequacy, reliability, and effectiveness of domestic public resources;<sup>38</sup> enhancing the use of technology; and investing private resources in both state and non-state education.<sup>39</sup>
- Strengthening the **governance, accountability, transparency, and resilience capacities** of education systems to plan, manage services, and improve education service delivery.

Photo: USAID Honduras





## 4. Promote Equity and Inclusion

Both in and through education, the U.S. government promotes the rights and inclusion of underrepresented populations and those experiencing marginalization. Holistic and inclusive education focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance, and achievement of all learners and educators, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded from learning opportunities or at risk of being marginalized.

**Inclusive education** is an umbrella term for having one system of education for all students, at all levels (early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary), that provides support to meet the individual needs of students. Inclusive education focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance, and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized. Incorporating and building on diverse knowledge and perspectives into education leads to more inclusive and better-quality education for all.

*Incorporating principles of equity and inclusion can include:*

- Working to ensure **equity and inclusion** are central to and integrated throughout all programs and activities to benefit all learners, particularly those experiencing marginalization.
- Applying an **intersectional lens** to help the U.S. government address context-specific root causes of inequalities in education systems and support equitable access for all, including by identifying specific barriers and designing interventions particular to the needs of historically marginalized groups.<sup>40</sup>
- Utilizing key principles of inclusive development. The first is **the principle of do no harm**, in which measures will be put in place to ensure that no learner or member of a group experiencing marginalization is put at increased risk. Second, the U.S. government will **engage in meaningful consultation and partnership** with stakeholders to ensure that any intervention support is aligned with local priorities.

Photo: MCSIE Nepal







Photo: USAID Morocco

# OBJECTIVES

To achieve the vision of the Strategy, the U.S. government will work toward three common objectives: (1) improve learning outcomes across the education continuum; (2) expand access to quality education, particularly for the most historically marginalized; and (3) coordinate and leverage resources to drive results.

## OBJECTIVE 1:

## IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES ACROSS THE EDUCATION CONTINUUM

The world is experiencing a learning crisis. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of ten-year-old children globally were not able to read and understand a simple sentence. Now, this number is estimated to be 70 percent in low- and middle-income countries and less than half of youth are now on track to attain the full range of skills needed to thrive in school, work, and life. Gains in literacy rates that low- and middle-income countries had recorded since 2000 have been eroded,<sup>41</sup> and recovery remains a challenge as conflict and crisis increase globally.

Achieving and sustaining education and learning for all depend on the commitment and contributions of multiple interconnected actors operating in the local education system toward an agreed upon, shared goal. This encompasses the institutional capacity of the education system to deliver quality education, including engaging communities and caregivers; training and supporting educators and school officials; ensuring quality learning materials that are accessible to all; and maintaining safe and accessible learning facilities, sustainable financing, the availability of data and evidence to inform decision-making, and systems to monitor for accountability.

The U.S. government will redouble its efforts and build on the strong foundation set by years of data and evidence on what works. To support this effort, the U.S. government will work with partner countries and diverse stakeholders to:

1. Provide children with **strong beginnings**;
2. Improve **foundational skills**; and
3. Develop the **capacity of youth** to build the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.

## Provide Children with Strong Beginnings

Early childhood is a time of rapid development—setting the stage for physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development that will shape future learning and growth. This foundation shapes subsequent capabilities and skills essential for learning, schooling, employment, and positive social capital. Despite the potential to substantially improve learning outcomes, access to pre-primary education and healthy, secure learning environments remain extremely limited in most low- and middle-income countries. Only 21 percent of children in low-income countries have access to early childhood care and education<sup>42</sup> and nearly one-third of all children enter primary school without the cognitive, social and emotional, and language skills needed to fulfill their potential.

The U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education will align with U.S. government efforts to advance the development, protection, and care of children in adversity and meet the requirements of [The Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act](#), the [Global Child Thrive Act](#), and the [U.S. Strategy on Global Women's Economic Security](#). Together, humanitarian and development programs can increase their impact by working with communities and quality early childhood care and education service providers to support programs that work across sectors, including education, health, nutrition, and protection.<sup>43</sup>

### THE SCHOOL MEALS COALITION

The U.S. government, through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is a member of the [School Meals Coalition](#), which launched on September 23, 2021, at the United Nations Food Systems Summit. The United States helped to shape the vision and structure of the Coalition and signed a national commitment document reiterating its long-standing, ongoing commitment to integrated school nutrition programs, both domestically and internationally.

## Healthy and Secure Learning Environments:

Ensuring children are healthy, well-nourished, safe, and protected from repeated traumatic stress in their schools, communities, and home environments is critical to increasing access to school and helping children progress toward developmental milestones and early learning. Providing essential nutrition and meals is not only necessary for child development, but school feeding programs can also play a critical role in encouraging the poorest families to send their children to school.<sup>44</sup> It is also essential for children and educators to be in safe environments, free from environmental pollutants that can hinder cognitive development. This is particularly true for young children who are most affected by exposure. For example, recent research has drawn connections between lead exposure and lower cognition, lower learning rates, and lower IQs among children in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>45</sup>

**Pre-Primary Education:** Pre-primary education fits within the larger early childhood development system supported by U.S. government efforts to advance the development, protection, and care of children, which coordinate across sectors including health, nutrition, WASH, social services, rehabilitation services, and child protection, to achieve its goals. Quality early childhood education pays huge dividends later in life in terms of a child's long-term development and learning.<sup>46</sup> Children who receive school readiness skills in pre-primary education have an increased likelihood of achieving grade-level proficiency later in school, have a decreased likelihood of dropping out of school or repeating grades, are more likely to complete primary school, continue to higher levels of education, and attain higher levels of income generation over their lifetimes.<sup>47</sup> Quality pre-primary education programs support strong teacher-child relationships;<sup>48</sup> family, caregiver, and community engagement; play-based learning approaches;<sup>49</sup> individualized and inclusive instruction; and attention to holistic development.<sup>50</sup>





Photo: Eric Hernandez, Luziernaga, for USDA Guatemala

U.S. government programs, where appropriate, will coordinate with partner countries to support child nutrition, health, and pre-primary education programs that foster the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and social and emotional development of young children in state and non-state schools.<sup>51</sup>

*Illustrative outcomes can include:*

- School enrollment and academic performance are increased through school **health and nutrition programs**, including through activities to prevent and mitigate exposure to environmental pollutants, such as lead and air pollution, which affect child development.
- Children's **physical, cognitive, and social and emotional skills** are strengthened in integrated programming alongside support for nutrition, health, well-being, and safety.
- Children in **pre-primary education programs** have the skills needed to succeed in primary school, including emergent literacy and numeracy, social and emotional, and physical skills.
- **Pre-primary delivery systems** support strong beginnings through enabling policies, quality safeguards, sustainable funding and financing, regulation, and oversight for compliance with pre-primary standards.





Photo: USAID Tanzania

## Improve Foundational Skills

Literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills are foundational for all future learning, skills development, and employment. Yet, as noted earlier, 70 percent of ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and understand a simple passage.<sup>52</sup>

A lack of foundational skills leads to lower attendance, increases dropout rates, and results in fewer opportunities for higher educational attainment and employment. Social and emotional skills shape the long-term development of children and youth. Evidence shows links between early childhood social and emotional functioning and positive later life outcomes in education, employment, criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental health. Inequality in foundational learning outcomes is multidimensional and varies across and within countries. For example, in secondary schools, the gender gap disadvantages girls in some regions of the world, and boys in others.<sup>53</sup>

In 2022, USAID joined the World Bank; UNICEF; the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; the Global Partnership for Education; and UNESCO to create a **Coalition on Foundational Learning (FLC)**.

The United States has **endorsed the FLC's Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning** to ensure all children are learning and gaining the skills they need to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves and their families, communities, and countries.

The U.S. government will work with partner countries to ensure all children and youth gain the literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.

*Illustrative outcomes can include:*

- **Learners acquire the literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills needed for future learning and success**, with opportunities to put their newly acquired skills and knowledge into practice.
- **Students have access to quality education and are supported** through student-centered learning in accessible, inclusive, formal and nonformal learning environments that support the effective participation and achievement of all students, especially those who need additional support.
- Educators and school officials deliver **effective and inclusive instruction** and have the requisite knowledge, skills, strategies, mindsets, well-being, and resources to support increased learning outcomes for learners.
- Students and educators use contextually appropriate, accessible, **quality learning materials and textbooks**, while integrating sustainable **technology** as appropriate.
- **Education systems and local stakeholders** are aligned to enable foundational learning. This requires aligned policies, social norms, financing, roles and processes, capacity, relationships between actors, motivation, and information to generate and utilize evidence to identify the interventions that best fit their context.

## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

Technology and innovation provide the opportunity to engage families and communities effectively and efficiently, increase the impact of teacher training, build digital skills, improve transparency and accountability, and streamline teacher pay. Education programming that ensures equitable and inclusive access to technology can reach marginalized populations—including those unable to attend school because of crisis or conflict, children engaged in child labor, people with disabilities, and girls, among others.

Innovative approaches and technology can reduce costs and improve program effectiveness, resulting in expanded access to high-quality education and improved learning outcomes. Where integrating a technology-based component makes sense given country needs, capacity, and context, the USG will work to identify, implement, test, and scale up that solution, ensuring it is safe for learners, low in cost, and sustainable.

The USG will seek new opportunities to leverage technical and financial resources to strengthen the financing and safe delivery of high-quality education, expand the appropriate use of technology, evaluate new approaches for cost effectiveness, and identify system-level solutions that build capacity for improved policymaking, implementation, monitoring, and accountability.



## Develop the Capacity of Youth to Build the Skills They Need to Lead Productive Lives, Gain Employment, and Positively Contribute to Society



Photo: Kate Maloney, USAID Egypt

Across the world, there are approximately 2.4 billion young people under age 30, and their contributions and leadership are critical to every major challenge we face today. From climate change to economic growth, youth engagement and partnership offer a chance to better understand what it is like to grow up in today's rapidly changing world and what the needs of the next generation are. Instead of viewing youth as passive recipients, young people must be seen as partners and agents of their own development.

Advances in neuroscience reveal that the adolescent brain is still a work in progress, offering a crucial second window of opportunity to influence children's development in their second decade of life.<sup>54</sup> Unfortunately, only one-quarter of youth in low- and lower-middle-income countries are on track to attain the full range of skills they need to thrive in school, work, and life.<sup>55</sup> In addition, an estimated one in seven 10- to 19-year-olds experience mental health conditions, yet these remain largely unrecognized and untreated. Adolescents with mental health conditions are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination, stigma, educational difficulties, risk-taking behaviors, physical ill-health, and human rights violations.<sup>56</sup>

The U.S. government understands the importance of engaging diverse groups of young people, particularly adolescent girls and young women, and those with disabilities, in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programming to support authentic youth engagement at all levels and ensure youth have a voice in activities. In line with the [U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls](#), the U.S. government acknowledges that adolescent girls face particularly daunting challenges in pursuing an education, including household responsibilities; child, early, and forced marriage; pregnancy; menstrual health and hygiene management; discriminatory gender stereotypes; and increased rates of gender-based violence in all public spaces, including online and through the use of tech platforms. Investing in girls' education is a critical component of U.S. government efforts to reduce poverty and develop women's economic capacity, including by increasing women's labor force participation and civic participation. In addition, youth programs are an opportunity to support the participation of all youth in job markets that they might traditionally be left out of based on their gender. A supportive enabling environment, including equitable access, training, and work conditions, can help individuals pursue their own chosen career paths and increase economic opportunities.

New job opportunities are being developed by private-sector employers or through entrepreneurship, and individuals need the skills necessary to problem-solve, innovate, and adapt to changing market demands. Advances in technology and growing globalization increasingly demand a higher-skilled and agile workforce. In today's global knowledge economy, employees with relevant skills are critical to a country's productivity and businesses' competitive advantages. Through collaboration with the private sector, partner country governments, local partners, and young people, education programs can prepare young people for jobs that do not yet exist for technologies that have not yet been invented, and to solve unforeseeable problems.



Photo: Joshua Hoover, the Department of Education

The U.S. government will work with partner countries to ensure youth gain the skills needed to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.

*Illustrative outcomes can include:*

- Youth **transition from primary to secondary** education and gain the knowledge and skills needed for successful livelihoods, including soft skills, market-relevant skills, and civic-minded curricula.
- **Systems address barriers** that cause dropout, such as child labor; trafficking; neglect; exploitation; recruitment by extremist groups; gender-based violence including child, early, and forced marriage; and early pregnancy and use **pathways to re-enter the formal school system through alternative or accelerated education** opportunities that allow for second chances to achieve primary or secondary school equivalency.
- **Out-of-school youth acquire a range of skills**—from basic skills they may have missed in formal education, such as literacy and numeracy, to soft skills and technical, vocational, entrepreneurial, leadership, and digital literacy skills—that will either help them re-enter formal schooling or prepare them for the workforce (in safe and age-appropriate work) through workforce development programs and vocational training.
- **Youth systems** enable opportunities for youth to gain leadership skills, be prepared for a productive future, and have access to labor markets. Key aspects of youth systems strengthening may include increased diverse stakeholder collaboration; integration of [positive youth development](#) in programming; capacity strengthening to shift policies, services, and practices; resource flows; and norms and mindsets that affect the availability and quality of youth education.



## OBJECTIVE 2: EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, PARTICULARLY FOR THE MOST HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED

To achieve Objective 1, to improve learning outcomes, it is critical that all learners have access to quality, inclusive education, particularly the most historically marginalized. No country can achieve its development objectives if any part of the population is denied access to a quality education. Education systems must be inclusive of diverse learners and educators, ensure all people are safe and supported, and must respond and adapt to shocks and stressors that can result in learning loss and students dropping out of school.

To reach all learners, education systems must address how aspects of a person's identity can intersect and compound barriers that decrease a person's likelihood of benefiting from education. The U.S. government will work to expand access to quality education, particularly for the most historically marginalized, by working with partner countries and diverse stakeholders to:

1. Strengthen **education systems** to be more inclusive, equitable, safe, and resilient, and increase learning outcomes for all learners;
2. **Address barriers** to learning, particularly in conflict and crisis; and
3. **Prevent and respond to** discrimination and marginalization, including violence, abuse, and exploitation.

*Photo: Ou Banung, All Children Reading—Cambodia*







## Strengthen Education Systems to be More Inclusive, Equitable, and Resilient, and Increase Learning Outcomes for all Learners

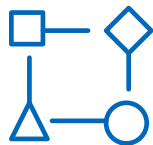
The U.S. government will work to strengthen education systems—the people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities that jointly contribute to improving, expanding, and sustaining learning and educational outcomes. For this to be successful, systems must be resilient to shocks and stressors, accountable, and free of barriers that stand in the way of all learners having access to quality, inclusive education.

### The U.S. government will work with partner country governments to strengthen education systems.

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*Illustrative outcomes can include:*

- Partner countries **develop and institutionalize laws, policies, processes, and accountability mechanisms at the national, local, community, and school levels to support safe access to education**, including those to address gender-based violence, encompassing child, early, and forced marriages and unions; the needs of internally displaced and stateless persons, refugees, migrants, conflict-affected persons, and returnees as part of an inclusive system; disability rights; discriminatory policies; and prohibitions against child and forced labor, trafficking, neglect, and exploitation.
- Education systems at the international, national, and individual institution levels have **diverse leadership and an educator workforce** that reflects the diversity of the population it seeks to serve.
- Partner **countries plan for, mitigate disruptions to, and ensure continuity of** safe educational opportunities in situations of conflict and crisis, work to overcome shocks and stressors on the system, include continuous professional development for educators, offer well-being and psychosocial support for learners and educators, and help prevent development backsliding as a result of compounding crises.
- Challenges are addressed holistically through cross-sectoral partnerships, utilizing **technology as appropriate** to increase equitable access to learning opportunities, support inclusive pedagogy, and reinforce accountability.
- Students, out-of-school youth, parents, and communities are **empowered and engaged** to actively improve educational opportunities, fostering local accountability.
- Education **resources are equitably allocated and distributed** to ensure education is accessible for all learners, especially in fragile contexts. This may include mobilization and effective and equitable management of **public and private finance**;<sup>57</sup> bilateral and multilateral donors; and domestic government funds, to improve learning outcomes.



## Address Barriers to Learning, Particularly in Conflict and Crisis

Children and youth across all contexts face barriers to learning that must be addressed to ensure equitable access to quality learning opportunities. This can include programs that support school meals to increase access, employing technology and distance learning platforms when appropriate, and using disaggregated data and research to ensure learners experiencing marginalization have access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.

Access to quality education is especially challenging in areas affected by crises, which can exacerbate pre-existing inequities between and within education systems, disproportionately disadvantaging girls and women, persons with disabilities, people living in extreme poverty, conflict-affected and displaced populations, and other historically marginalized groups. Of the 224 million crisis-affected children and adolescents in need of urgent educational support, as many as 72 million are out of school.<sup>58</sup> Of these out-of-school children, 38 million are girls, between 12 and 14.5 million have functional difficulties, and 15 million have been forcibly displaced.<sup>59</sup> For refugee children, close to half (48 percent) remain out of school.<sup>60</sup> For the crisis-affected learners who are able to receive a primary or secondary education, only one in ten is achieving proficiency standards.<sup>61</sup>

Shocks and stressors to an education system include conflict, natural disasters and environmental threats exacerbated by changing climates, and health pandemics. It is estimated that the education of more than 40 million children is being disrupted each year by the effects of changing climates and ecosystem degradation.<sup>62</sup> These crises can be compounding and experienced differently depending on various factors, including economic circumstances or location (such as rural versus urban). Crises can cause displacement, forced migration, and destruction of infrastructure, limiting access to safe learning opportunities. Conflict and crisis situations also expose individuals to experiences that can affect their cognitive development and subsequent learning styles. This can result in entire generations of children and youth missing out on an education, limiting a country's ability to recover and build its social, economic, and cultural capacity.

**The U.S. government understands the tremendous stress placed on education during crisis and conflict and works with local institutions and across programs to ensure learners are safe, and an appropriate response is in place for each circumstance.**



Photo: Department of Defense, Djibouti

*Illustrative outcomes can include:*

- Context-specific barriers are addressed using **data and evidence through programs** that promote increased access and the reduction of discrimination and inequality.
- Learners have access to short-term educational programs that **prioritize inclusion in national education systems; utilize technology as appropriate; provide coherent transition to formal, long-term educational programming; facilitate accreditation of prior learning; and offer remedial education** to support learning and retention.
- Learners' needs are met based on **rapid assessments of needs, opportunities, and contextual risks**, such as violence, insecurity, natural hazards, and health pandemics, with the **flexibility to adapt** to rapidly changing environments.
- Out-of-school children and youth have access to recognized **nonformal pathways to re-enter school and/or strengthen foundational skills**, such as accelerated education, alternative learning, or youth workforce development programming.
- Programs help to transform harmful stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices and **reduce barriers and discriminatory practices** that affect access to quality and inclusive education.
- **Teachers and education personnel** have the necessary skills, training, support for well-being, and professional development necessary to address the unique needs of crisis- and conflict-affected children and youth, particularly the most historically marginalized.

## THE GLOBAL EDUCATION HUMANITARIAN DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

The world is witnessing an alarming increase in the number of people affected by armed conflict, forced migration—including large-scale refugee and internal displacement—health and climate-induced disasters, and other crises. In 2022 alone, forced displacement reached a record high of 100 million people, over half of whom are children and youth in need of access to relevant, quality education.<sup>63</sup>

**The U.S. government will strengthen coordination at the intersections of humanitarian, development, and peace efforts by improving coordination structures and joint planning across stakeholders to:**

- 
- Support **access** to safe, accessible, and quality learning environments for learners and educators at the onset of a **humanitarian emergency**, particularly for refugees, migrants, and stateless, displaced, and conflict-affected persons;
  - Ensure that education programs **advance humanitarian-development-peace coherence** so that emergency programs respond to immediate needs but also consider long-term, quality education service delivery, such as by prioritizing inclusion in national systems; and
  - **Lead and support coordination across sectors** to address the intersectional and compounding barriers learners face.





## Prevent and Respond to Discrimination, Marginalization, Violence, Abuse, and Exploitation

Hundreds of millions of people experience discrimination and marginalization and are denied access to a safe, quality education. Multiple aspects of a person's identity, including sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, and age, intersect with social, legal, physical, or financial barriers to decrease the individual's likelihood of benefiting from education.

Individuals with disabilities—both seen and unseen—are among the world's most historically marginalized learners and are disproportionately affected by the global learning crisis.<sup>64</sup> Children with disabilities are 25 percent less likely to attend early childhood education and 49 percent more likely to have never attended school than their peers.<sup>65</sup>

Children and youth experiencing discrimination and marginalization are at greater risk for violence, abuse, trafficking, and exploitation, including child, early, and forced marriage; child and forced labor; and recruitment by extremist groups. In addition, individuals and organizations exploiting children and youth often force them to drop out of school or prohibit them from attending in the first place. Global estimates from the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicate that there are 160 million children between ages 5 and 17 in child labor, and roughly half of them are in hazardous conditions.<sup>66</sup>

The relationships that learners form with peers and educators can be protective, particularly when there are high levels of violence or instability in the community or home. Safe learning environments provide essential services such as school feeding programs and service referrals for survivors of gender-based violence.

Minimum estimates indicate that more than 115 million children and adolescents experience school-related gender-based violence every year.<sup>67</sup> Globally, 42 percent of LGBTQI+ learners report being "ridiculed, teased, insulted or threatened at school" because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, primarily by their peers, and 37 percent report feeling rarely or never safe at school.<sup>68</sup> Children with disabilities are almost four times more likely to experience violence than children without disabilities, and are nearly three times more likely to be subjected to sexual violence.<sup>69</sup>

*Photo: Bobby Neptune for USAID West Bank Gaza*



No child should have to endure violence and abuse, be taken from home and forced to work, or have to choose work over school to meet basic needs. Ensuring children and youth who experience marginalization have access to a quality education is essential to breaking cycles of poverty and violence. A quality education has the potential to foster a sense of individual and communal identity; build skills and resilience to bias, discrimination, and violent extremist narratives; and change attitudes and behaviors toward historically marginalized groups.

**The U.S. government will work to ensure that historically marginalized learners and those most at risk of abuse and exploitation have access to a quality education.**

*Illustrative outcomes include:*

- **Learners are supported** in quality education programs that incorporate **individual learning differences or disabilities** through curricula and teaching approaches in flexible learning environments.
- Learning environments and teaching approaches are **accessible, inclusive, and culturally sensitive**, including delivery **in local languages and disability-accessible formats**, particularly for Indigenous communities, ethnic minorities, refugees, and displaced populations.
- **Accelerated, remedial, and catch-up education support learners with an intersectoral, holistic approach** that integrates elements of community-based learning, child protection, and poverty-alleviation programming to address the educational needs of learners who are at greater academic risk.
- Learners have access to **safe and accessible learning environments** free from violence, with adequate access to WASH facilities.
- Learners and educators of all genders experience **safe school environments and reduced rates of school-related gender-based violence** through implementation of child protection and safeguarding policies.

*Photo: USAID Cambodia*



## OBJECTIVE 3: COORDINATE AND LEVERAGE RESOURCES TO DRIVE RESULTS

The education sector is faced with a stark reality: Community needs around the globe are accelerating faster than traditional development actors can address them. The vision outlined in this Strategy is ambitious and cannot be achieved by the U.S. government alone. No single intervention, policy change, or investment is sufficient to achieve these objectives and those of Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Stakeholders must come together as problem-solvers to leverage expertise, relationships, resources, and policy voices to back reform and catalyze action to elevate education and transform systems. All efforts should seek to support and align with partner countries' education needs and plans while creating opportunities to leverage complementary investments to achieve sustained impact. To do so, the U.S. government will work to:

1. Convene stakeholders to elevate education and drive impact beyond programs;
2. Coordinate programming to maximize results; and
3. Leverage resources to transform systems.

### Convene to Elevate Education and Drive Impact Beyond Programs

Through its convening power, regional and in-country presence, standing in global institutions, linkages to the private sector, and strategic communications channels, the U.S. government has the potential to affect education far beyond the scope of programming. The U.S. government will:

- Leverage its standing in global institutions, including the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, and the World Bank, to bring together the efforts of global and country-level partners to **drive progress toward collective goals and support beneficial policy reforms.**

- Increase access to platforms for those who might not otherwise have the chance to elevate their voices, and enable local stakeholders, including partner governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector **to catalyze innovation and action.**
- Raise **awareness of the critical role of education** at the individual, community, country, and global levels to ensure systems meet community needs; are equitable, inclusive, safe, and sustainably resourced; and are able to respond and adapt to shocks and stressors.

### Coordinate Programming to Maximize Results

The U.S. government will optimize the comparative advantage of each agency and department with external stakeholders to maximize the impact of taxpayer dollars. Efforts will:

- Promote increased communication, **improve the coordination of programs and resources,** establish complementary investments, implement burden-sharing, and encourage the early co-design and co-creation of programs where appropriate.
- Facilitate new relationships that foster productive partnerships, including **cross-sectoral collaboration to address the multifaceted and compounding challenges** that students and out-of-school youth face. By utilizing education centers as resource hubs for the delivery of services to the community at large, partners can maximize the impact of other development efforts, similar to U.S.-based Full Service Community School programs.<sup>70</sup>

### Leverage Resources to Transform Systems

The U.S. government will work to mobilize even greater investment and leverage funds to improve the effectiveness and scale of its investments and transform systems. This includes:

- Supporting domestic resource mobilization and public financial management reforms that maximize public resources; partnering with foundations and the private sector; and other nontraditional approaches to financing



education to both **increase financial resources and leverage the innovation, flexibility, and ingenuity of partners.**

- Encouraging the creation and use of public goods to support stronger and more equitable collaboration, including working with **partners to share information, data, research, tools, and resources to increase learning and education outcomes.** Resources should support the most relevant outcomes to pursue through the Integrated Country Strategy process and other relevant U.S. government-wide strategic planning processes.

## ENGAGING AT THE GLOBAL AND COUNTRY LEVELS

Global and country-level leadership by the U.S. government is essential for helping the world achieve the objectives of the Strategy and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 4 and country-level targets. This includes efforts from a variety of partners at various levels.

**U.S. Government Agencies and Departments:** The U.S. government will work across agencies and departments to build on our collective progress and leverage each department, agency, and official's unique experience and expertise at the global and country levels through existing coordination structures. Through increased sharing of research, data, evidence, and effective practices; cross-agency training; and joint participation in education sector development committees and education sector reviews, we will strengthen programming and increase the impact and effectiveness of taxpayer dollars. Program coordination can include establishing complementary investments, implementing burden-sharing among departments, agencies, and donors, and encouraging the early co-design and co-creation of programs where appropriate. All work at the country level will seek to support and align with the partner country's education needs and plans that allow for focused investments to achieve sustained impact. At the global level, agencies and departments will work together to further U.S. government policies and priorities with multilateral institutions, international organizations, other donors, and in global forums such as the G7 and G20.

### Partner Country Governments and Local

**Partners:** Sustainable development depends on partner country governments and local actors—including youth-led organizations and leaders from historically marginalized communities—leading efforts to improve their communities based on mutual learning goals. The U.S. government is committed to partnerships based on mutual respect and reciprocity and through which local actors from all backgrounds and cultures have their voices heard, exercise their unique capabilities, and lead their country's development. U.S. partnership with country governments and local stakeholders, including local education groups, will build on the existing strengths of local actors and systems, respond to dynamic country and regional contexts, and align to shared U.S. government and local priorities.



*Photo: Heba El Begawi for USAID and courtesy of Zahraa El Sayed*

### **Multilateral Institutions, International Organizations, and Other Donors:**

The U.S. government will leverage its involvement in multilateral institutions, international organizations, and global funds to advance the Strategy's objectives in international education and global progress toward SDG 4. U.S. government engagement with these entities includes, but is not limited to, the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors, and through forums such as the G7 and G20.

**Cross-Sectoral Coordination:** Children and youth often face multifaceted and compounding barriers to quality education. While cross-sectoral projects require more coordination to implement and fund, combined interventions have the potential to lead to greater outcomes than those implemented without coordination. Education centers can be resource hubs for the delivery of services to the community at large—leveraging and maximizing the impact of other development efforts.

To increase impact, build resilience, and produce broader development gains, education programs should work with other sectors, when appropriate, to eliminate barriers—for example, by considering the impact of transportation, infrastructure, lack of early stimulation and nurturing, health programs (including mental health and psychosocial support), nutrition, social norms, vulnerability to exploitation, household income, and climate change. Coordination may take the form of interventions explicitly coordinated across departments, agencies, and sectors toward shared program logic, outputs and outcomes, and targets. Coordination may also take the form of intentional sequencing of programs to help bridge gaps in programming—such as the gap between humanitarian and development assistance—to help ensure programs build on each other and gains are sustained.

**The Private Sector:** The private sector has an inherent interest in working with the U.S. government and partner countries to educate and train learners, so they enter the workforce with demand-driven skills for the twenty-first century, including digital literacy. Beyond a vested interest in an educated population, the private sector brings innovative

approaches and unique solutions to the education challenges partner countries face, including through the operation of schools and providing technology and technical assistance to them.

**Foundations and Philanthropies:** The U.S. government will work with foundations and philanthropies to identify and apply their respective organizational strengths to advance locally led efforts in areas of shared interest. Partnerships will include sharing knowledge, networks, expertise, and innovation in addressing challenges that no single organization can solve on its own.

**Academia:** Academia, including U.S.-based and partner country colleges and universities, is contributing to the evidence base on international basic education and system strengthening through locally led research and innovations. These higher education institutions are also valuable partners in building the capacity and expertise of partner countries, especially through teacher training.

**Implementing Organizations:** Implementing organizations, both international and local, as well as civil society and faith-based groups, play a critical role in carrying out U.S. government programs in partner countries. They partner with the U.S. government as technical experts, conveners, and researchers, among other roles, to help ensure U.S. government assistance is put into action as effectively and efficiently as possible.

**The Diaspora:** With roots around the world, diasporans are uniquely positioned to provide thought leadership and innovation, and to build partnerships. Today, more than 62 million Americans—one-fifth of the population—are first- or second-generation diasporans, making the United States home to more global diaspora members than any other country. As diaspora populations grow, so does their potential for impact.





Photo: USAID Democratic Republic of the Congo





*Photo: Jemez Pueblo for the US Department of Education*

# MEASURING PROGRESS

Publicly available results and data are critical to achieving the objectives of the Strategy. The Strategy is an opportunity to contribute to and learn from global evaluations and evidence, identify gaps, and lay out a clear path forward to increase the U.S. government's collective impact. The U.S. government will monitor the performance and impact of programs and use disaggregated data to ensure transparency and accountability for results, build the evidence base on the components of effective programming, and make course corrections as necessary.

To do so, the U.S. government will build on existing harmonized project-level indicators for reading, math, and youth workforce development and supplement them with existing agency indicators as necessary, informed by global indicators and definitions wherever possible. U.S. government departments and agencies will utilize rigorous monitoring, evaluation, evidence generation, cost analysis, and public reporting, capitalizing on opportunities for coordination when practical and appropriate to demonstrate an impact on learning outcomes. To streamline processes and reporting, the U.S. government will work over the course of the Strategy to harmonize tools and resources, and increase the use of disaggregated data for effective program measurement to support new and emerging areas of focus.

Comparable indicators, norms, and methodologies will help build a common body of evidence that can be used to continuously improve the effectiveness of basic education foreign assistance programs. This effort will be supplemented by increased coordination of U.S. government departments and agencies at the global and country levels to help facilitate the sharing of data, research, findings from impact evaluations, program information, technical expertise, and effective practices.

*Photo: USAID Morocco*







Photo: Kate Maloney, USAID Bangladesh





# United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)



## Commitment to International Education

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program (McGovern-Dole) supports international basic education by providing school meals to pre-school and primary-school-age children, and funding teacher training, school construction and rehabilitation, capacity-building, and related support to help boost the school enrollment and academic performance of pre-school and primary students. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, 52 of USDA's McGovern-Dole school-feeding operations were active in 34 countries and benefited approximately 4.7 million school-age children. The McGovern-Dole program allocated \$220 million in FY 2022 to achieve these efforts.

## Contributions to the Strategy

Throughout FY 2023, the McGovern-Dole program contributed to the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education (the Strategy) through alignment, coordination, and co-locating, primarily with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), education programs with an effort to improve measurable learning outcomes and expand access to education. In an effort to avoid duplicating literacy efforts in geographic areas where USAID's education and USDA's McGovern-Dole programs align, USDA encouraged its McGovern-Dole implementing partners to use teacher-training materials and children's learning materials developed by USAID, rather than unnecessarily creating duplicative materials. For example, in Guatemala the USAID education program and McGovern-Dole used the same approach to implementing literacy activities in all primary schools country-wide, including identical textbooks, supplemental reading materials, and teacher-training materials. During FY 2023, the McGovern-Dole program actively coordinated with USAID in approximately eight countries through discussion, the sharing of information, coordination, and collaboration. USDA encouraged the implementers of projects to operate in the same schools as USAID's Early Grade Reading Programs, and, in some cases, expanded educational activities to older grades to avoid the duplication of efforts.

## Impact and Results

The McGovern-Dole program greatly contributes to the education sector of the many countries it serves. From curriculum development to distribution of school supplies and materials, bilingual education, pedagogical development, and national policy development, the McGovern-Dole program is making long-lasting impacts in the education sector around the world. One example of the impact of the McGovern-Dole program is the project in Bangladesh. This McGovern-Dole project is demonstrating a positive and lasting impact in promoting reading habits and improving reading skills for primary students. In 2020, USDA awarded the World Food Programme (WFP) \$19 million to implement a four-year McGovern-Dole project

benefiting more than 49,000 pre-school and primary school students from 170 schools in the Cox's Bazar District. Through the donation of U.S. commodities and funds to locally procure commodities, the McGovern-Dole project provides a fortified, high-energy biscuit to students daily. The project also implements several activities to improve literacy, health, and nutrition outcomes for students, including teacher training and coaching, establishment of classroom libraries, distribution of learning materials and storybooks, parent sensitization meetings, organization of educational events, and capacity-building for national and local education officials. With support from WFP and WFP's partner Room to Read, the project trained student "Book Captains" from each grade level to oversee the classroom libraries and book borrowing system at project schools. Through the McGovern-Dole project, students have not only found a love for reading with the increased access to leveled and culturally appropriate storybooks to read both in and out of school, but are improving their reading outcomes as well. A recent internal study conducted by Room to Read using Early Grade Reading Assessments found that students from project schools performed significantly better than students in non-supported schools in tasks related to reading and writing proficiency.



# Department of Defense



## The Department of Defense's Commitment to International Education

The Department of Defense (DoD) conducts Humanitarian Assistance (HA) projects, including education sector projects, in support of the whole-of-U.S.-Government approach to HA and in support of national security objectives. DoD HA activities are categorized into one of five focus areas: disaster preparedness and risk reduction, health, education, basic infrastructure, and humanitarian mine action. DoD HA provides a valuable resource for Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) to support Theater Campaign Plan strategic objectives, particularly in regions where humanitarian needs are most acute and where there may be a lack of respect for universal human rights.

Closely coordinated with U.S. Embassy Country Teams, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and other U.S. Government interagency partners, DoD HA activities improve DoD's visibility, access, and influence, and foster collaborative relationships with partner nation governments. DoD HA activities help generate long-term positive perceptions of DoD and the U.S. Government within partner nation communities and build the capacity of partner nation civilian and military institutions.

## Contributions to the Strategy

DoD conducts HA education sector projects in support of GCC Theater Campaign Plan strategic objectives, and these activities also complement larger U.S. international basic education assistance efforts. DoD HA projects aid vulnerable populations and build partner nation government capacity to provide universal access to education. In alignment with other U.S. Government programs, DoD HA education projects foster the resilience of the civilian populace by supporting the basic literacy and knowledge necessary for self-reliance. School-based education projects in support of the partner nation Ministry of Education (or relevant government institution) seek to provide equal access to all demographics of the population.

## Impact and Results

From Fiscal Year 2019 through Fiscal Year 2023, DoD executed 588 education projects in 72 countries, totaling approximately \$98.1 million. Project examples include construction, expansion, and improvement of primary and secondary education facilities, as well as the provision of books and school furniture. DoD assistance includes the HA Excess Property Program and the HA Transportation Programs. Efforts under these areas include providing \$230,000 worth of laptops, furniture, instructional media, and other educational supplies to Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Armenia, and Kosovo, and shipping 25 containers of secondary educational books to Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe, totaling over \$361,000 in transportation costs. DoD manages and tracks education sector projects in the Overseas Humanitarian Assistance Shared Information System (OHASIS), which includes details such as project status, location, beneficiaries, and cost.



DoD HA support to basic education also seeks to empower partner nation civilians, especially in conflict-affected countries, by creating conditions that cultivate democratic and civic values. DoD's development of safe and secure school facilities also provides refuge to at-risk youth populations. For example, in collaboration with USAID, the partner nation, and local civil authorities, from 2017 to 2022 DoD supported the Youth Ethnic Integration project in North Macedonia focused on strengthening tolerance, integration, and understanding throughout the education system. As part of the project, DoD renovated 60 primary and secondary schools that are seeking to promote peace and tolerance between ethnic groups by creating safe spaces for youth to have positive interactions.

Ultimately, DoD basic education support contributes to U.S. Government HA efforts to protect lives and reduce endemic deprivation, and builds the legitimacy of partner nation ministry-level and local governments. It also assists U.S. efforts in becoming the partner of choice in the competitive international environment. For instance, in 2022, DoD helped construct a kindergarten in Făgăraș, Romania, which now offers educational and medical services for up to 140 children. The project was coordinated with local municipalities, enhanced the legitimacy of the host nation government, and generated positive perceptions of the U.S. Government and DoD.



# Department of Education



The U.S. Department of Education's (Department's) mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access. The Department's International Strategy (*Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement*) articulates the rationales, goals, and objectives of the agency's international programs, activities, and engagement. Since the Strategy was first established in 2012, it has been used to guide the Department's international activities and engagement based on the following three objectives:

- Increase global and cultural competencies
- Learn from and with other countries
- Engage in education diplomacy

The International Strategy affirms the Department's commitment to preparing today's youth, and our country more broadly, for a globalized world, and to engaging with the international community to improve education. It reflects ongoing work in implementing international education programs, participating in international benchmarking activities, and working closely with other countries and multilateral organizations to engage in strategic dialogue.

The Department's [\*Framework for Developing Global and Cultural Competencies to Advance Equity, Excellence and Economic Competitiveness\*](#) is the product of a working group with representatives from across the Department and discussions with the education community. This work builds on existing research and provides a framework for the development of global and cultural competencies beginning in early childhood through postsecondary education and is based on a foundation of discipline-specific knowledge. It is designed as a guide to consider how these competencies are developed over time and at various stages of education.

The Department supports diplomacy through almost all of its international activities. It does so by building and fostering relationships with government officials, policymakers, researchers, educators, students, and other professionals around the world; by providing leadership on education issues, collaborating with other U.S. government agencies; and by learning from and with other countries. The Department is helping to further global stability and progress, while it works to facilitate a world-class education at home and abroad. This soft diplomacy contributes to our national security, our credibility as a leader among nations, and, ultimately, our national prosperity. The Department addresses this objective by engaging bilaterally with other countries, participating in multilateral organizations, and hosting visitors who come to the United States to learn about U.S. education and share information about their countries.

The Department addresses education-related issues with individual countries on a bilateral basis and with multilateral organizations—such as Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Organization of American States (OAS), and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—and multilateral forums—such as the G20 and the Summit of the Americas. This engagement can range from promoting equity to sharing information on career and technical education. In these activities, the Department works with its counterparts to share best practices and lessons learned to improve education here and abroad.

On July 26, 2021, the Secretaries of Education and State announced the release of a [Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education](#)—the first such public affirmation in over 20 years to emphasize the importance of international education in improving Americans' lives and promoting U.S. global leadership. The Departments of Commerce, Defense, and Homeland Security, and USAID have also been involved and support the principles. Since the Joint Statement was announced, U.S. agencies have increased the frequency and intentionality of their engagement to support international education. Examples of this collaboration include quarterly interagency meetings, joint presentations at major conferences, and increased consultation on draft regulations and policies. Areas of emphasis under the Joint Statement include international students on U.S. campuses, study abroad for Americans, and the internationalization of U.S. schools and campuses.

The Department's International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE) office in the Office of Postsecondary Education provides opportunities for domestic and overseas study and research, international engagement and training to achieve advanced proficiency in modern foreign languages. The portfolio of grant programs authorized under Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 is designed to meet U.S. capacity to respond to current and emerging national needs, global challenges, and crises by strengthening the international education infrastructure and preparing students with the competencies and expertise to meet the demands of a global workforce. Moreover, IFLE's resources, programs, and priorities promote our vision "to lead the nation in preparing future generations to address global challenges by fostering a deeper understanding of languages, cultures, places, and peoples." In Fiscal Year 2024, IFLE expects to award \$85.6 million in grants to institutions, educators, and students to develop the expertise needed in the government, K-12 education, academia, and business sectors.

The wide-ranging but interconnected purposes of the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs are integral to the Department's mission and align well with both the International Strategy and the Joint Statement of Principles in Support of International Education in the following ways:

- Assist U.S. institutions and individuals with building expertise in foreign languages, international studies, and cultural understanding, which are essential for effective global engagement.
- Support research and scholarship that contribute to a deeper understanding of global issues and promote international cooperation.
- Promote cross-cultural interaction and the exchange of ideas through study abroad opportunities, overseas summer seminars for educators, and immersion overseas foreign language programs.
- Provide international business training, research, and experiential opportunities to prepare students and business professionals for careers in a globally competitive workforce.

As part of its efforts under [Raise the Bar: Create Pathways for Global Engagement](#), the Department recently launched the "Being Bilingual is a Superpower" initiative to promote multilingual education and bolster quality language programs and a diverse multilingual educator workforce across the country.



"Being Bilingual is a Superpower" will promote and further the understanding of bilingualism and biliteracy as an educational and economic imperative for student success, global competitiveness, and engagement. The new initiative under the Department's Office of English Language Acquisition seeks to promote research-based bilingual educational opportunities and language instruction in early learning education settings and beyond.

Because the Department focuses on promoting student achievement and ensuring equal access, it is well positioned to provide technical assistance on topics related to identifying, generating, and disseminating best practices, research, and knowledge to support the work of the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education Assistance. In addition to the identification and generation of best practices, research, and knowledge, the Department has long worked to disseminate such information. Through various Department-funded technical assistance centers, it has shared information internally to build staff capacity and externally to grantees to support their reform efforts. For example, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the Department publishes studies and resources to support State Education Agencies and school district staff. The IES practice guides and intervention reports are among the most actionable resources (available [here](#)). These resources describe activities, strategies, and interventions supported by various levels of evidence.

The Department also funds a variety of technical assistance centers that provide direct support to grantees. Specifically, IES funds ten Regional Educational Laboratories that conduct applied research and trainings with a mission of supporting a more evidence-based education system (see [more](#)). The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education funds at least 20 comprehensive technical assistance centers to provide technical assistance to States to benefit school districts and schools, especially those in need of improvement. Through these and other [Department-funded technical assistance centers](#), the Department builds capacity internally in order to support grantees externally and provides direct technical assistance to grantees. These centers have established communities of practices as a way to leverage and share high-quality, evidence-based work identified in States and districts.

Overall, the Department can call upon lessons learned and its history of using best practices, research, and knowledge to inform the work of the Government Strategy on International Basic Education Assistance. The Department's engagement in this important work will be mutually beneficial as the Department continues to serve the students in America most in need of support to be successful in school and their future careers.



# Department of Labor



## The Department of Labor's Commitment to International Education

The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) works to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking around the world through research, technical assistance, trade policy, and labor diplomacy to promote adherence to global labor standards.

DOL/OCFT's work addressing international labor abuses has contributed to the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education by:

- Researching and reporting on the alignment of minimum age to work laws with compulsory education and on the status of free basic education to inform U.S. foreign policy, trade policy, and international cooperation initiatives.
- Piloting innovative technical cooperation strategies and building capacity in over 90 countries to eliminate the most hazardous and exploitative forms of child and forced labor, including by supporting access to basic education and vocational training for vulnerable children, youth, and adults.
- Engaging with governments, civil society, and businesses to promote more effective efforts to curtail labor abuses, particularly those which interfere with children's access to basic education.

Lack of access to basic education is considered a major factor contributing to the vulnerability of children to child labor. Child labor refers to work by children in violation of international labor standards and appropriately aligned national labor laws. It includes work that is harmful to a child's health, physical and mental development, and which interferes with access to schooling. For this reason, DOL promotes basic education as a means to prevent and eliminate child labor, particularly the worst forms of child labor, and help all children develop skills needed to secure better jobs as adults. Such support breaks the cycles of material deprivation that contribute to the prevalence of child labor.

DOL has funded international technical assistance programming to combat child labor and forced labor since 1995, including over 365 projects to combat child labor and forced labor in 99 countries. As of January 30, 2024, DOL is funding 49 ongoing projects in 45 countries, worth approximately \$295 million. Projects funded by DOL raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to expand educational opportunities. They aim to strengthen national institutions and policies to support education and combat child labor, and to promote the long-term sustainability of these efforts, including by supporting decent work opportunities for workers and at-risk communities.

## Contributions to the Strategy

The Department of Labor contributes to the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education through its work to address labor abuses abroad. These efforts proceed along three interrelated tracks:

**1. Conducting annual Congressionally mandated research on the worst forms of child labor, including research on barriers to children’s access to basic education.** DOL’s research and reporting on child labor and forced labor provide specific, actionable information. DOL’s reports inform advocacy efforts and campaigns; promote positive actions by foreign governments to strengthen laws, enforcement, government coordination, policies, and social programs; and inform private sector risk assessments and due diligence.

The annual [Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor Report \(TDA Report\)](#) mandated by the Trade and Development Act (TDA) of 2000, focuses on government efforts of 131 U.S. trade beneficiary countries and territories to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through legislation, enforcement mechanisms, policies and social programs. The Act mandates that the President of the United States submit to the United States Congress the Secretary of Labor’s annual findings with respect to each “beneficiary country’s implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.” ILAB/OCFT carries out this responsibility on behalf of the Secretary by publishing the TDA Report. The report cites the percent of children attending school for each country where data are available, indicates if the country offers free and compulsory education, and provides recommendations to governments on how to improve access to education. The report also details the scope and nature of child labor and provides more than 2,000 specific suggested actions to governments to address child labor, focusing on improvements to legislation, enforcement, government coordination, policies, and social programs.

**2. Providing technical assistance abroad to promote policies and strengthen institutions to address labor violations that limit children’s access to education.** DOL-supported technical assistance initiatives advance principles of equity and inclusion through targeted strategies to address labor exploitation among some of the world’s most economically vulnerable and marginalized groups, which are typically most deprived of access to quality education. In addition to the development, award, and oversight of projects, DOL provides rigorous monitoring and oversight of its ongoing technical assistance portfolio. These projects make a difference in the lives of children and their families, including through research, education and livelihood support, awareness raising, expanding decent work opportunities for youth of legal working age, and by increasing the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to combat child and forced labor. ILAB works with governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations to strengthen laws, enforcement, policies, and social programs to support our goal of ending child labor and forced labor.

DOL technical assistance to combat child labor includes specific actions to build the capacity of our partners to ensure that all children are provided safe access to education. Increased capacity means enhanced knowledge and ability of governments, individuals, communities, and organizations to take ownership and lead efforts to effectively achieve goals and develop laws, policies, programs, and systems, and sustain in those achievements. Some illustrative examples of outcomes of strengthened education system capacity include: the adaptation of the legal framework to meet international labor standards; formulation and adoption of specific policies, plans, or programs to combat child labor or forced labor; the inclusion of child labor or forced labor concerns in relevant development, education, anti-poverty, and social policies; and institutionalization of child labor and forced labor research (including evaluation and data collection).

**3. Engaging with governments, civil society, and businesses to promote greater action against labor abuses which reduce broad access to quality education.** DOL’s efforts to engage the private sector, labor unions, and civil society stakeholders extend to numerous sectors around the world, including the production of cobalt, cocoa, and seafood. Engagement with external stakeholders is critical to DOL’s efforts to address labor abuses that impede access to quality education.



## Impact and Results

Collectively since 1995, DOL projects have directly provided educational and vocational opportunities to over 2 million children and youth and supported over 200,000 families to reduce their reliance on child labor. Through capacity-building efforts such as improving legal frameworks and policies and access to services, including those relating to social protection and education, millions more children and families at risk have been indirectly impacted by these projects. In addition, DOL projects have trained over 78,000 teachers on child labor issues and approaches for helping increase access to education in disadvantaged communities. Finally, DOL projects have increased the capacity of over 90,000 labor inspection and law enforcement officials to help keep children out of work and in school. All DOL international child labor projects that provide direct services measure common indicators, as applicable. These include the following:

- Number of children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor provided education or vocational services (Education Indicator 1, EI);
- Number of households receiving livelihood services (Livelihood Indicator 1, LI);
- Number of countries with increased capacity to address child labor or forced labor (Country Capacity Indicator 1, CI);
- Percentage of direct service participant children who regularly attend school; and
- Percentage of direct service participant children engaged in child labor.

DOL's projects capture specific information about a project's work in education, livelihoods, and capacity-building. DOL requires international projects to undergo independent midterm and final performance evaluations to identify lessons learned, emerging practices, areas for performance improvement, course corrections, and to enhance the design of future interventions. DOL also conducts research through multicountry impact evaluations and rigorous, randomized controlled trials to test interventions, including on education.



# Department of State



## The Department of State's Commitment to International Education

The U.S. Department of State advances the interests of the American people, their safety, and economic prosperity, by leading America's foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance.

As outlined in the National Security Strategy, some of the greatest triumphs of American statecraft result from helping partner countries become successful societies. These successes, in turn, create profitable markets for American businesses, allies to help achieve favorable regional balances of power, and coalition partners to share burdens and address a variety of problems around the world. Over time, the United States has helped create a network of states that advance our common interests and values.

Inclusive, safe, and quality education is transformational and a driver for accelerating development in other sectors. Education creates pathways to better health, economic growth, sustainable environments, and more peaceful, equitable, and democratic societies. Improving literacy skills for all children, supporting young people with educational and skills building opportunities, prioritizing educational access including for those affected by conflict, and promoting lifelong learning are important elements of the Department's work.

The Department focuses our investments where we can have the most impact. In order to achieve our education goals globally, we partner with other nations, multilateral agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector. These partnerships are based on shared goals and shared interests to establish the conditions for a more secure and prosperous world.

## Contributions to the Strategy

**Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.** The mission of the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is to provide protection, ease suffering, and resolve the plight of persecuted and uprooted people around the world on behalf of the American people by providing life-sustaining assistance, working through multilateral systems to build global partnerships, promoting best practices in humanitarian response, and ensuring that humanitarian principles are thoroughly integrated into U.S. foreign and national security policy. In a world where conflict and displacement present significant barriers and challenges for children, education is a key component to PRM's mission in providing protection and improving access to durable solutions for refugees, other forcibly displaced, and stateless children. Education provides displaced children and adolescents with a sense of normalcy and stability, while helping them develop essential skills for self-reliance, improving their job prospects and boosting their sense of dignity. PRM contributes to the U.S. Strategy on International Basic Education through humanitarian assistance and diplomacy. Each year PRM supports international organization (IO) partners, such as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Children's Agency (UNICEF), to provide quality and protective education for marginalized children. PRM also supports a range of NGO programs to improve education by investing in teachers, ensuring schools are inclusive and safe, conducting outreach to increase access for girls, and providing alternative programs such as

accelerated learning, catch up or bridge support, and vocational training. Additionally, PRM and other Department of State officials advocate globally and at the country level through our Embassies to encourage host country governments to include refugee children in national education systems.

**The Secretary’s Office of Global Women’s Issues (S/GWI)** will work to promote the rights of all women and girls and build a world in which they are able to live free from gender-based violence (GBV); fully, meaningfully, and equally participate in political and civil life; and contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth and global prosperity. Globally, girls and young women face unique challenges that perpetuate gender inequality, including social norms which commonly prioritize the education of boys over girls or result in girls carrying a disproportionate share of domestic and unpaid labor; GBV, including child, early, and forced marriage, which can prevent girls from attending or staying in school; and higher vulnerability to disease and infections, such as HIV/AIDS among other challenges. Listening to and supporting girls during adolescence is among the most efficient and cost-effective means available to end cycles of poverty, disease, and insecurity. S/GWI will work to ensure the voices, ideas, and solutions of girls and young women are part of U.S. foreign policy, diplomacy, and decision-making. S/GWI will also continue to support programs that aim to change harmful social norms, including GBV prevention, and promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, vocational training, and linkages between education and economic opportunities that result in quality jobs and decent work. Conflict and crises, including climate-related crises that are growing in severity and frequency, continue to threaten women and girls’ access to educational and subsequent livelihood opportunities, and can limit opportunities to unleash their full potential. S/GWI will work to meaningfully include girls’ perspectives and act with and for girls’ rights in crisis situations, including and especially crises and natural disasters induced or exacerbated by the climate crisis. While the programs S/GWI supports may be short-term, through locally informed and led interventions, foreign policy, diplomacy, and the engagement of local stakeholders, they lead to long-term outcomes and help advance the status of women and girls globally.

**The Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO)**, domestically and through its six diplomatic missions in Geneva, Montreal, Nairobi, New York, Rome, and Vienna, and its presences in Embassies London and Paris, develops and implements U.S. policy in the United Nations, its specialized and technical agencies and funds and programs, and certain other international organizations. With regard to international education for development efforts, IO ensures overall coordination of U.S. policy across UN bodies and international organizations, including the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), and UN Women, among others. This includes advocating for priorities that reflect and complement U.S. education policy and monitoring international education programs to ensure they support and are consistent with U.S. policy and priorities.

**The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)** supports exchange programs which help to foster relationships and networks, share expertise, and improve understanding between the people of the United States and the people of countries around the world. ECA’s Fulbright Teacher Exchange Programs provide professional development to international and U.S. K–12 teachers. International teachers are hosted at U.S. university schools of education and complete field experiences in U.S. schools, while U.S. teachers participate in exchanges to share and learn from other countries to internationalize their classrooms and their teaching.



The Bureau for Global Health Diplomacy, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) within the Global Health Security and Diplomacy Bureau, coordinates the U.S. government's landmark international HIV program that has not only saved and improved millions of lives, but also transformed the global HIV/AIDS response. PEPFAR invests heavily in programming to transition and retain adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) in secondary school through the DREAMS partnership in 14 African countries and Haiti. DREAMS aims to reduce new HIV infections among AGYW with a multifaceted core package of interventions that includes educational support such as school fees, uniforms, books, and transportation. According to a study in Botswana, one additional year of education for adolescents can reduce HIV acquisition by one-third, and nearly one-half for young women. For AGYW, school has also shown to be protective against other events that influence HIV acquisition, including early pregnancy and child, early, and forced marriage.

## Impact and Results

The State Department measures the progress of its diplomatic and development efforts against the National Security Strategy, the State Department and USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP), and the Integrated Country Strategies in every partner country around the world. The efforts of the United States also contribute to progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally developed measures and benchmarks.

Specifically, the Department's Managing for Results (MfR) framework links the critical components of strategic planning, budgeting, managing programs, and learning. The purpose of the MfR framework is to help bureaus and missions achieve improved outcomes by conducting policy, resources, and programmatic decision-making that is informed by strategic planning and data gleaned through rigorous monitoring and evaluation practices. The Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) partners with the Bureau of Budget and Planning (BP) to develop and administer the guidance and tools necessary for the Department to implement MfR.

Creating and reinforcing feedback loops between these processes strengthens decision-making about strategic priorities and trade-offs; assesses what's working or not to inform decisions; improves coordination within and outside of the Department; and increases transparency and accountability.



# Department of the Treasury



## The Department of the Treasury's Commitment to International Education

The Department of the Treasury leads the Administration's engagement in the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), which include the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank. Treasury promotes U.S. policy priorities in education in developing countries through our positions at the resident Executive Boards of the MDBs. These Boards provide strategic direction to each institution and approve all key institutional and policy decisions and projects through voting on strategies and individual projects. The United States is represented at each of the MDBs by a presidentially appointed, Senate-confirmed Executive Director who is supported by advisors that staff the Office of the U.S. Executive Director (OUSED). The OUSEDs are influential in the Board processes, consistent with the United States' position as the largest or one of the largest shareholders at each institution.

Treasury strongly supports education activities through our role on the MDB Boards. Treasury aims to leverage a few key comparative advantages of the MDBs as a critical partner to achieving the following objectives of the Strategy: improving in-country coordination among donors; amplifying the impact of U.S. financial resources; assisting youth in low- and middle-income countries and in fragile and conflict-affected situations; and strengthening evidence-driven decision-making in education programs. Treasury will continue to utilize its leadership role at the MDBs to advance these objectives.

Treasury economists review all individual MDB project proposals. These reviews consider a range of issues including, but not limited to, development impact, sustainability, safeguards compliance, cost-benefit analyses, alignment with U.S. and institutional priorities, and consistency with legislative provisions. Treasury also leads an interagency project review process aimed at harnessing the expertise and experience of all relevant parts of the U.S. Government. Treasury and the OUSEDs work together to try to improve proposed projects and determine U.S. voting positions on the projects that are ultimately considered for Board approval. Treasury economists consider over 1,400 projects per year. Treasury also seeks to monitor a select number of priority (e.g., innovative or high-risk) MDB projects across their life cycle and review project completion reports.

The MDBs collectively finance education programs across a wide range of countries. The countries and types of education programming vary by MDB, in line with each institution's relative strengths, overall financial management priorities, allocation policies, and organizational and country strategies. Institution-specific information on education activities is detailed below.

## African Development Bank (AfDB)

### APPROACH TO EDUCATION

AfDB's priorities in this sector are primarily focused on post-basic education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education. AfDB's focus aligns with the Bank's broader efforts to enhance human capital to contribute to

Africa's economic transformation. In 2022, the Board approved the Skills for Employability and Productivity in Africa Action Plan (SEPA) which seeks to bridge Africa's skills gap, addressing skills mismatch and relevance to the modern economy, climate change and the green economy, and digital transformation in the labor market. With a key focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), SEPA is articulated around two pillars: (1) Strengthening infrastructure in higher education and in TVET to provide demand-driven skills, and (2) Supporting an enabling environment for skills development. Under the Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy (JfYA 2016–2030) which aims at equipping 50 million young people with relevant skills that go beyond technical skills, the Bank is also supporting entrepreneurship education and job creation through micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise and entrepreneurship development.

## EDUCATION INVESTMENT AND RESULTS

Over the period 2019–2023, the Board approved a total of 45 projects related to education and skills development for a total amount of \$610 million. These investments are expected to directly benefit 300,000 students (almost 45 percent female) in terms of scholarships, internship programs, and use of renovated training institutions; 80,000 youth (50 percent female) in terms of business development and entrepreneurship related trainings; and over 10,000 tutors and/or teachers as well as education managers/planners expected to be upskilled and reskilled. To date, about 200 education and training institutions are expected to directly benefit from the Bank's investment. During the period 2012–2022, the Bank committed over \$1 billion for education and skills development. Close to 90 percent of this financing went to strengthening STEM-related infrastructure in over 4,000 tertiary education and training facilities within close to 88,000 trainers (teachers) benefiting in terms of improved quality of teaching. Ultimately, this has led to close to 1.7 million African youth accessing quality STEM-related education.

## Asian Development Bank (ADB)

### APPROACH TO EDUCATION

In July 2018, the ADB Board approved Strategy 2030, a long-term strategy to respond to the changes brought about by a rapidly evolving Asia and the Pacific. As a result of strong U.S. advocacy, the Strategy clearly links education and training as key to poverty reduction, with a focus on vulnerable groups and the poorest. This focus is reflected in the November 2022 Education Sector Directional Guide: Learning for All. This guide details the Bank's agenda in supporting developing member countries (DMCs) with financing, knowledge, and technical assistance to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of ADB's investments in education. The guide adopts a two-pronged strategy to (1) ensure foundational learning and universal skills for all and (2) pursue transformational approaches for higher skills, particularly for girls and marginalized people. The focus on foundational learning for all is aligned with the United States' strong focus on literacy and numeracy and transformational approaches, such as skills for climate resilience. In addition to advocating for education activities at an institutional level, OUSED also engages with the ADB on education issues during the development of country partnership strategies, which the ADB develops for each of its countries of operation every three to five years.

ADB conducts analytical studies, based on DMC needs, to prepare new projects and facilitate policy dialogue that help DMCs formulate policies for better educational outcomes. ADB also convenes education stakeholders biannually at the International Skills Forum to share new ideas and issues in education and skills development. ADB has been cultivating external partnerships to expand its support for education, such as the Bank's collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to explore how the GPE's funding models could support ADB projects in education.

## EDUCATION INVESTMENT AND RESULTS

ADB lending for education spans 23 countries. Lending from 2017 to 2022 totaled \$6.3 billion. ADB project financing is



expected to increase to over \$4.0 billion in 2023–2025. Under ADB operations from 2020 to 2022, more than 2.6 million primary and secondary students were educated, over 9.4 million women and girls completed secondary and tertiary education, and 11,000 teachers were trained. During the same period, the success rate of education projects was 100 percent.

ADB is playing a critical role in sustaining access to education in Afghanistan. ADB's grants enable Afghan children to continue their primary and secondary education. Achievements since 2022 include: (1) providing approximately 22,000 adolescent girls access to secondary education through alternative learning pathways, (2) establishing over 8,000 community-based education classes that are being attended by 260,000 children (64 percent of whom are girls), (3) training over 1,000 females to become accredited primary school teachers, which will increase the number of female teachers in the country, and (4) providing teaching and learning materials to 86,000 grade one students (39 percent of whom are girls) in public schools.

## European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

### APPROACH TO EDUCATION

At this private sector–focused institution, Treasury strongly advocates for market-driven professional training programs and human capital expansion through EBRD's Equality of Opportunity Strategy (EOS), established in November 2021. Broadening access to skills, employment, and sustainable livelihood opportunities among all economic stakeholders in EBRD's countries of operations is a key focus area for the EOS. EBRD leverages its strong private sector engagement in promoting human capital, for example focusing on skills shortages and human capital development through training.

Examples of EBRD's actions include: (1) developing and launching training, work-based learning and lifelong learning programs (including ed-tech solutions) aligned with employers' priority needs; (2) broadening access to skills within crisis-affected areas (e.g., in Ukraine and southern Türkiye) and sunset sectors; and (3) improving national skills standards and skills-matching institutions through policy engagement.

### EDUCATION INVESTMENT AND RESULTS

EBRD's human capital approach is fully integrated into its impact-monitoring processes, including a robust performance monitoring framework for the EOS. EBRD thus tracks human capital output indicators such as investments improving access to employment and skills and client-level policies improved, alongside outcomes including numbers of people improving their skills or accessing employment opportunities, alongside institutional or regulatory improvements.

In the period 2021–2023, the EBRD signed 591 projects focusing on human capital development in line with all EOS objectives, encompassing over EUR 16 billion of EBRD investment. Approximately 50 percent of the 591 projects directly promoted better access to skills, employment, and sustainable livelihood opportunities. The EBRD launched close to 100 technical support projects attached to its investments over the same period, launching 2,244 training programs through a variety of local technical and vocational education and training schools and higher educational partners in line with market-relevant needs among 9,900 (predominantly young) individuals, including around 3,800 women. Moreover, EBRD's gender mainstreaming approach has delivered specialized training on gender-responsive green finance to over 1,000 employees among its partner banks, exposed 2,800 men and women to awareness-raising initiatives, and provided more than 300 women entrepreneurs financial literacy training over the same period. As these programs continue over time, the numbers of beneficiaries will grow.

## Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

### APPROACH TO EDUCATION

IDB educational support for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) seeks to promote effective teaching and learning for children and young people. The IDB's efforts in this sector are defined in its Education and Early Childhood Development Sector Framework Document (SFD), revised in 2020, which sets forth “five challenges to skills development at five stages of life” based on the lessons learned from educational systems around the world and the IDB's own experience in the sector. The IDB OUSED actively participated in the development of the Education and Early Childhood Development SFD and has supported U.S. policy objectives for international education assistance through its review of country-specific strategies and projects presented to the IDB Board for approval. The SFD describes the IDB's strategic position in the education sector, including continued sectoral and multisectoral technical dialogue as well as the presence of experts who offer technical and operational support.

The five SFD challenges are: (1) develop the cognitive, language, motor, and socioemotional skills that will allow infants and young children to enter school ready to learn; (2) develop the basic cognitive and socioemotional skills in children and preadolescents that will allow them to keep learning; (3) ensure all students graduate from secondary school with the intermediate cognitive, technical, and socioemotional skills that will allow them to keep learning throughout life, access high-quality jobs, and be good citizens; (4) equip all young adults with the advanced cognitive, technical, and socioemotional skills that will allow them to keep learning throughout life and be successful in the labor market; and (5) provide the labor force with the skills needed to access and maintain quality jobs, by ensuring access to quality and relevant lifelong learning opportunities.

The IDB's private sector window, known as the Inter-American Investment Corporation, or IDB Invest, has also implemented a complementary strategy to engage in education programs in the region to improve access to quality education and skills training through private education providers and increased access to university education and vocational training.

### EDUCATION INVESTMENT AND RESULTS

In its portfolio, the Division of Education has 34 active loans for \$2.24 billion, of which 30 percent are for strengthening primary and secondary education; 106 active technical cooperations for \$39.6 million; and five investment grants for \$51.9 million. Between 2022 and 2023, the IDB Board approved projects that will benefit 1.7 million children over a four-year time frame through pedagogical innovation and programs to close learning gaps; this is a significant increase in IDB's outcomes in education. These projects will also provide high-quality teacher training to 100,000 teachers. To address dropout rates that are partly linked to food security, operations approved in 2023 will benefit one million students through school feeding programs in the next five years.

## World Bank

### APPROACH TO EDUCATION

As the largest and only globally focused MDB, the World Bank plays a critical role in primary, secondary, and tertiary education around the world. The World Bank is the largest source of external financing for education in developing countries. The Bank's efforts on education are driven by its Education Strategy 2020. The Strategy focuses on helping countries provide education services that are integrated, universally accessible, and high quality. The Bank's overarching goal is to halve “learning poverty”—that is, the share of ten-year-olds who cannot read and understand simple text—by 2030.

The Bank's key principles in education include: (1) pursuing systemic reforms and political commitment to learning for all children, with an integrated approach to education from preschool to professional; (2) focusing on equity and inclusion with a path to universal access to quality education and a focus on vulnerable groups; (3) ensuring results and evidence are the foundations of achieving strong results; (4) linking spending on education to strong delivery of results; and (5) harnessing technology to support learning objectives.

Through systematic research, analytical work, and impact evaluations, the Bank identifies good practices in education development around the world. The Bank makes its research public through its online publications and policy reports, including system assessments, impact evaluations and policies, in the form of papers and books.

## **EDUCATION INVESTMENT AND RESULTS**

The World Bank's education portfolio is \$24 billion across 94 countries. Operations in low-income and fragile and conflict-affected states comprise 62 percent of the education portfolio. Early childhood education accounts for 14 percent of the portfolio and about 25 percent is in fragile and conflict-affected areas. World Bank projects reach at least 432 million students and 18 million teachers—one-third of students and nearly a quarter of teachers in low- and middle-income countries. The World Bank is the largest implementing agency of the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) grants for low-income countries, managing 69 percent of GPE's portfolio at the country level (\$5.5 billion) since 2002.





# Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)



## Millennium Challenge Corporation's Contributions to the Strategy

MCC's investments in education have made important contributions to the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education since 2018 and continue to do so. By focusing investments largely in improving nationwide education systems, focusing on quality, relevance, access, and equity of secondary and post-secondary education, MCC contributes to preparing youth for the twenty-first century economy. Specifically, MCC contributes to advancing Objectives 1 and 2 of the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education.

First, MCC contributes to Objective 1 through the sub-objectives focused on improving foundational skills and developing the capacity of youth to gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society. With MCC's mission to alleviate poverty through economic growth, many of the programs being implemented in the education sector emphasize the need to better prepare students for effective participation in the labor market and the economy. MCC-funded programs direct resources to improving access to and quality and relevance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and the development of foundational skills such as numeracy, literacy and twenty-first century skills such as critical thinking, digital literacy, problem-solving, teamwork, time management, and communication.

The education projects in Côte d'Ivoire and Kosovo, and the Threshold Program in Kiribati and those under development in Belize and The Gambia all include activities to enhance technical education in key sectors aligned with labor market demand. The Timor-Leste and Côte d'Ivoire compacts, as well as those in development in Belize and The Gambia, also involve activities to improve the quality of lower and upper secondary education to enhance foundational skills that are required across a variety of jobs.

MCC is also contributing to the second objective of the Basic Education Strategy through the sub-objective of strengthening education systems to be more inclusive, equitable, safe, resilient, and increase learning outcomes for all learners. All of MCC's investments comply with the Agency's Gender and Social Inclusion Policy and are designed to ensure that education investments include components that serve the needs of structurally disadvantaged groups. With this in mind, the compacts and threshold programs in implementation and in development include activities such as the introduction of a Gender Policy in Côte d'Ivoire, a government commitment in Timor-Leste to increase the number of women in teaching and leadership positions, and interventions designed to increase the transition rates between primary and secondary school in Belize, by addressing the needs of trauma-impacted students, Indigenous communities, students living in poverty, and immigrant populations.

The sections below provide a brief summary of MCC's current and upcoming education programming. Information about all of MCC's current and past compacts can be found here: <https://www.mcc.gov/where-we-work/>.

**Belize:** The proposed compact in Belize focuses on two sectors: energy and education. The design of the Education Project is currently being finalized. It is estimated that the compact will be signed in July 2024. The Education Project will consist of three activities that are designed to equitably increase the number of post-primary graduates with the competencies relevant to labor market demands. Investments will focus on improving the quality of secondary and TVET education.

**Côte d'Ivoire:** The objectives of the \$157 million Skills for Employability (Education) Project are (1) to increase the number of years of education received and improve the acquisition of quality, in-demand basic skills, including reading, math, and soft skills, for lower secondary students; and (2) to improve the acquisition of quality, in-demand technical skills and increase job placement rates among graduates of Compact-supported TVET centers. To meet this objective the Compact finances two major activities: the Secondary Education Activity and the TVET Activity. The Secondary Education Activity will establish up to 84 new secondary schools and two teacher training campuses, redesign the pre-service teacher training curriculum, develop a national gender policy for the education sector, and support student assessments as well as an integrated Education Management Information System (EMIS). The TVET Activity will establish up to four new TVET centers to be developed and managed through a new model of public-private partnerships with local industries, an accreditation system for TVET centers, and a Tracer system for graduates of TVET centers.

**The Gambia:** Currently being designed, the Education Project in The Gambia will include initiatives to improve the quality and equity of general secondary and technical vocational secondary education to provide Gambian youth with the competencies and skills necessary for their economic advancement.

**Kiribati:** The \$29.1 million Kiribati Threshold Program will work to increase employment opportunities through skill-building and education opportunities as a part of the Mwakuri Aika Nakoraoi Ibulkin Maeuraomi (MANIM) Project. The MANIM Project comprises three activities, two of which emphasize education and skills building: the Ministry of Employment and Human Resource (MEHR) Capability Building Activity and the Youth Skills Camps and Scholarship Activity. The MEHR project aims to improve the Ministry of Employment and Human Resources' administrative capabilities to increase market and sector opportunities for I-Kiribati workers, connect underrepresented groups to access employment, and strengthen the link between skills acquisition and employability. The Youth Skills Camps and Scholarship Activity aims to equip I-Kiribati youth with critical work readiness skills such as oral and written communication, workplace behavior, and English language skills to enhance their preparedness and competitiveness in the international labor market. The Activity seeks to provide three types of specialized study opportunities for I-Kiribati high school students: (1) an intensive three-week English camp in Fiji, (2) an intensive four-week English camp in the United States, and (3) a year-long scholarship at a high school in the United States. Through these MCC-funded programs, students will gain language immersion and cultural enrichment that are vital for building work readiness skills.

**Kosovo:** The Kosovo Compact focuses on supporting the country in its transition toward an energy future that is more sustainable, inclusive, reliable, and affordable. The Compact includes the \$16 million Just and Equitable Transition Acceleration Project (JETA) which will support new technical training programs to provide the skills demanded by employers in the energy sector as Kosovo transitions to a greener energy sector. The JETA project aims to increase female representation in the energy sector by promoting gender-equitable practices within companies, supporting networking, mentoring, and training opportunities for women, strengthening educational pathways, and providing technical assistance and small grants to energy and adjacent sector employers. The JETA Project is designed to address these issues and comprises two Activities: (1) the Energy Skills for the Future Activity and (2) the Inclusive Energy Sector Workforce Activity.

**Timor-Leste:** A newly independent country and young democracy, Timor-Leste is making great strides toward building a healthier and more educated population. The Compact includes the \$40.2 million Teaching and Leading the Next Generation (TALENT) education project. The TALENT project aims to improve student learning outcomes for secondary students

to better prepare them for tertiary education or employment. The TALENT project consists of four activities designed to improve the quality of secondary teaching and school leadership: the development of the first public, autonomous Professional Center of Excellence for teacher training; training all current secondary school teachers in pedagogical approaches to support numeracy, literacy, and the development of other twenty-first-century skills; training all existing secondary school leaders; and putting systems in place to ensure the quality of educator training. Additionally, the project supports a Women's Economic Empowerment in Education sub-activity that will put in place policy and practices to increase the number of women in teaching and leadership positions throughout secondary schools in Timor-Leste.





# Peace Corps



## The Peace Corps' Commitment to International Education

Education is the Peace Corps' largest program area. Volunteers are often placed in rural areas and underserved communities where education opportunities are severely limited. Volunteers— whether they have backgrounds in teaching or begin service as generalists— can be trained to support student learning, engage in professional communities of practice, and promote a culture of life-long learning in the communities they serve. Peace Corps Education projects are tailored to fit national priorities in countries of operation through collaboration and support from national and regional partners.

Broadly stated, the Peace Corps aims to provide children, youth, and adults with sustainable educational opportunities that foster learning and promote the skills they need to develop and thrive. The Peace Corps' Education sector consists of three project areas, which are guided by the development priorities identified by host country governments:

- **Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL):** Volunteers work in primary school, middle school, and high school teaching English. An emphasis on co-teaching and community of practice activities is encouraged. It should be noted that English is the medium of instruction in 24 countries with Peace Corps education projects, and English is seen as essential for participation in the global economy in countries as diverse as Benin, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Georgia, Mongolia, and Panama, where Volunteers partner with local communities to advance English skills.
- **Literacy:** Volunteers generally work in early grades through upper primary grades to conduct literacy interventions in the mother tongue and/or English. They often use a co-teaching model and emphasize activities which engage parents and community members in education.
- **STEM:** Volunteers work in secondary schools in Africa to teach sciences (physics, chemistry, biology) and/or math with methods which address gaps in learners' foundational skills, connect theory to practice, and integrate project-based learning with hands-on opportunities.

## EDUCATION-INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES

General teaching practices that promote inclusion and gender equity optimize the environment for learning in the classroom. Volunteers are given specific training and can report on practices to help them support gender-equitable teaching, accommodate students with special needs, implement culturally responsive teaching, and support the development of social-emotional skills. Regarding students with physical disabilities, in addition to recruiting and placing Volunteers with disabilities, the Peace Corps' approach is to partner with locally based institutions such as Mobility International, the Soros Foundation, and World Vision.

## Contributions to the Strategy

All Peace Corps Education Projects have three main objectives: (1) building counterpart teaching capacity, (2) increasing student achievement, and (3) community engagement.

- 1. Building Teacher Capacity:** Building counterpart teacher capacity is the ultimate goal of all Education Volunteers. Regardless of the Volunteer's contribution to learner success, if the skills of counterpart teachers are not improved, the effect of the Volunteer contribution will less likely be sustained after their departure.

Volunteers focus on developing counterpart capacity-building through teacher communities of practice (COPs), where all members are peers and can contribute to skill-building and understanding according to their abilities and interests, which deepens teacher expertise for all. Evidence indicates that when possible, co-teaching and co-planning are the optimal mechanisms for capacity-building. In fact, co-teaching and co-planning are the ideal Volunteer-counterpart dynamic. This collaboration allows Volunteers and counterparts to work together to create lesson plans, strengthen curricula, and create additional classroom resources.
- 2. Increasing Student Achievement:** In the classroom with other teachers, Volunteers may work in groups or one-on-one with students who need additional time and attention so that they, too, can succeed in school. Volunteers also provide after-school study groups, clubs, and camps which can reinforce classroom learning in ways that are more contextualized, community-centered, and fun. Volunteers also improve classroom assessment by modeling and discussing techniques for formative assessment and test design.
- 3. Community Engagement in School Improvement and Student Learning:** Sustaining educational gains made in the classroom requires support for education in the community and at home. Education projects that work at the community level should encourage community involvement and support for both student learning and school improvement activities. Examples of successful activities include working with parents to help them understand the benefit of their involvement in classrooms, parent-teacher meetings, and in extracurricular activities.

## Impact and Results

Each objective includes a series of project activities, outputs, outcomes, and corresponding indicators that Peace Corps posts use to develop a Logical Project Framework (LPF) (including a Logic Model and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan) based on a reference LPF developed at Peace Corps headquarters. Posts train Volunteers to carry out the activities and measure their progress and results. Data collection tools and indicator reference sheets are provided to assist Volunteers with capturing the progress of their work. The data is collected using reporting tools that allow Peace Corps Volunteers, post staff, and headquarters staff to assess, measure, and respond to trends as necessary to improve programming. Below are stories from Peace Corps posts that highlight the incredible and diverse work being done within the communities we serve.

**Moldova:** The Education Community of Practice brought together 50 teachers from various backgrounds in Moldova, fostering personal and professional connections during an 11-month training series. Participants not only gained knowledge in digital literacy and inclusive teaching but also developed skills to facilitate local trainings. The program exceeded expectations, with over 90% of participants organizing 38 local workshops, 16 online and 39 in-person trainings, reaching more than 1,200 teachers across 21 regions of Moldova.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** English teachers in rural Kyrgyzstan's Moldokeev Asylbek Secondary School aim to enhance students' language skills by creating a digital language lab. The project addresses the need for increased individualized practice, particularly with native speakers, offering a unique opportunity for students in Baizak Village to advance their language learning experience with the support of digital tools that will allow students to practice listening and speaking skills at their own pace.

**Vanuatu:** A team of creative and highly motivated high school students traveled from Vanuatu to Singapore to compete against teams representing 190 other countries in the 2023 FIRST Global Robotics Challenge. Team “SMART Sistas” built and programmed robots without the assistance of adult mentors; they used STEM skills to solve real-world, relevant problems.

**Kenya & Ghana:** To celebrate International Day of Sign Languages, students and teachers from schools for the Deaf in Ghana and Kenya created a YouTube video and shared some of their experiences using sign language. They expressed why sign language is an important means of communication and is essential to their success. Students in a school for the Deaf in Ghana had an opportunity to meet and talk with students who attend a school for the Deaf in Indiana, USA, with their Peace Corps Volunteer acting as an interpreter.





# United States Agency for International Development (USAID)



## Commitment to International Education

The United States Agency International Development (USAID) leads international development and humanitarian efforts to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and drive progress. The Department of State and USAID Joint Strategic Plan FY 2022–2026 states that equitable access to and availability of education, health, food and water, and livelihood support services are critical to alleviating poverty and building stable, inclusive, democratic societies and commits the U.S. government to improve inclusive and equitable health, education, and livelihood services, especially for women, youth, and historically marginalized groups.

USAID's Policy Framework articulates and elevates the Agency's ambition and efforts to confront five pressing generational challenges, including the need to address economic growth headwinds and promote inclusive economic growth. To create an enabling environment to develop human capital and spur sustainable economic growth, the USAID Policy Framework commits the Agency to continuing to invest in quality education, consistent with the USAID Education Policy.

USAID's vision for education is to achieve a world in which education systems in partner countries enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. Education is the great equalizer and the great enabler. When children and youth are prepared to go to school, learn, and gain the skills they need for life and work, they are able to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves and their families, communities, and countries.

## USAID'S Contribution to the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education

### PROGRAMMATIC

The USAID Education Policy provides an Agency-wide vision and direction for supporting partner countries in strengthening their capacities to deliver quality learning opportunities for children and youth. The primary purpose of USAID education programming is to achieve sustained, measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills development. The policy applies to education programming across all levels (from pre-primary through higher education), contexts (from stable contexts to crisis and conflict-affected environments), settings (formal and nonformal), and providers (state and non-state).

The principles laid out in the policy drive decision-making for new education investments supporting the vision that partner country education systems must enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. To do so, USAID will work with partner country governments to use evidence-based approaches to

measurably improve learning and educational outcomes, strengthen systems, scale effective programs, and sustain results for all learners. The principles include:

- Prioritizing country-focus and ownership;
- Focusing and concentrating investments on measurably and sustainably improving learning and educational outcomes;
- Strengthening systems and developing capacity in local institutions;
- Working in partnership and leveraging resources;
- Driving decision-making and investments using evidence and data; and
- Promoting equity and inclusion.

The priority areas laid out in the policy serve as a general framing and orientation for USAID's work in education. These priorities illustrate key areas that are critical for improving learning and educational outcomes:

- Children and youth, particularly the most historically marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social and emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

**Locally Led Solutions and Strengthening Systems:** In alignment with USAID's Local Capacity Strengthening Policy, the Agency recognizes that education systems and evidence-based, locally led solutions are the foundations for achieving sustained, measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills development. USAID defines an education system as the people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities that jointly contribute to improving, expanding, and sustaining learning and educational outcomes. Stakeholders include national and local governments, schools, teachers, instructors, unions, students, parents and caregivers, NGOs, faith-based and community organizations, universities, and the private sector. The Agency will also work to improve engagement with historically marginalized groups, such as disabled persons' organizations, youth-led organizations, and women-led organizations to contribute to Agency-wide targets of 25 percent of direct funding to local actors and 50 percent of USAID programming that places local communities in the lead by 2030.

**Cross-Sectoral Coordination and Partnerships:** USAID Missions and Operating Units will explore collaborations across sectors to maximize learning outcomes, including by leveraging resources from other sectors and stakeholders when possible and appropriate. Evidence has shown that holistic support and wraparound services can lead to greater learning and educational outcomes, especially for historically marginalized populations. USAID's commitment to preventing and mitigating lead exposure is one example of a public health problem that has persistent impact on education outcomes and requires a multi-sectoral response. Integrated programs have the potential to deliver results across multiple sectors, including education; democracy and governance; health; agriculture; nutrition; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); child protection; and economic growth. USAID Missions will work to identify opportunities to develop partnerships, including with partner governments, other donors, and the private sector, that will improve learning and educational outcomes and help scale evidenced-based approaches nationally.

**Inclusive Development:** USAID recognizes that countries cannot meet their education goals if any part of the population is left behind. The Agency will partner with G7 countries to help 40 million more girls attend school by 2026 in low- and lower-middle-income countries and to support 20 million more girls to be able to read by age ten or the end of primary school in low- and lower-middle-income countries by 2026.

USAID is committed to supporting partner countries to have one system of education for all students, at all levels, with the capacity to meet the individual needs of students. To do so, USAID has committed to utilizing the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all new education programs by 2026. UDL is a neuroscience-based framework that captures how people learn and enables the design of more inclusive, accessible, and higher-quality education environments. It increases the quality of education for all learners, while proactively and intentionally removing barriers to learning environments and instruction. In addition, USAID will strengthen disability data and evidence for education programming and increase disability-inclusive initiatives at all levels of education, from pre-primary through higher education programming.

## TECHNICAL

USAID will take a data-driven and evidence-based approach to decision-making with the objective of identifying and supporting effective interventions that can sustainably improve learning and educational outcomes at scale.

**Data-Driven Decision-Making:** Local education data systems that are accessible to the public are necessary to sustainably improve education service delivery and to promote transparency and accountability. USAID will strengthen the capacity of stakeholders in partner countries to collect, manage, and use data, particularly on learning outcomes, to support local education systems to track progress and identify areas for action. To assess the cost-effectiveness of activities, USAID will appropriately monitor and document education activity implementation and adaptation, intervention delivery (duration, intensity, etc.) at the program participant level, activity outcomes, and associated cost data, with the goal of utilizing information on the cost of interventions to ensure programs and results are able to be sustained by partner countries.

**Knowledge Sharing and Learning:** USAID uses a strategic approach to learning to focus research, fill gaps in the evidence base, and improve learning and educational outcomes. USAID will work with key stakeholders to develop learning priorities and update the foundational skills, education in conflict and crisis, and youth workforce development Learning Agendas for the Fiscal Year 2024–2028 strategic period.

**Transparency:** USAID will strengthen and leverage the EduLinks platform over the course of the Fiscal Year 2024–2028 strategic period, including by updating the [USG Support to Basic Education Map](#) to increase transparency and include additional information and data sources. The Agency will also continue to increase the accessibility of its education datasets in the [Development Data Library](#) (DDL), USAID's public repository of Agency-funded data.

## LEADERSHIP

**Global Reach:** USAID is the largest global provider of basic education assistance, contributing \$970 million in Fiscal Year 2023 and reaching 28.7 million learners from pre-primary through tertiary education across 64 countries in Fiscal Year 2022. The Agency's resources and broad presence in partner countries enables the U.S. government to serve as a leader in the effort to improve learning and educational outcomes internationally, especially for historically marginalized learners.



**Coordination:** The Senior Coordinator for International Basic Education Assistance (Senior Coordinator) will lead efforts to coordinate international basic education assistance across the U.S. government. The Senior Coordinator is responsible for facilitating program and policy coordination of international basic education programs and activities across relevant departments, agencies, and officials; partner governments; multilateral institutions; the private sector; and nongovernmental, faith-based, and civil society organizations.

In partner countries where USAID supports education programs, it will build on the progress of the Fiscal Year 2018–2023 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education and seek to further enhance programmatic collaboration across departments and agencies, such as co-locating programs in schools with the USDA's McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program to ensure learners are well nourished and have access to evidence-based learning materials and instructional practices. USAID will also lead the coordination of the Agency Advisory Group, the Interagency International Basic Education Working Group, and annual reporting to Congress on the Fiscal Year 2024–2029 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education.

**Global Engagement:** USAID will continue to engage with bilateral and multilateral institutions and partners, such as the Global Partnership for Education, Education Cannot Wait, and other development partners, to expand the Agency's reach, ensure the representation and promotion of U.S. interests, maximize the efficient use of taxpayer dollars, support beneficial policy reforms, and drive progress toward collective goals based on data and evidence on effective approaches.

## Impact and Results

USAID will annually review and, as needed, update foreign assistance indicators for education and workforce development to ensure that existing standard and supplemental indicators are fit for purpose and align with current U.S. government policy and priorities. Up-to-date information can be found on [EduLinks](#).<sup>71</sup> USAID will continue to collaborate with partners across the U.S. government to report on common indicators where possible.

# Key Terms

## BASIC EDUCATION—

- (i) Measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development that prepare an individual to be an active, productive member of society and the workforce;
- (ii) Workforce development, vocational training, and digital literacy informed by real market needs and opportunities and that result in measurable improvements in employment;
- (iii) Programs and activities designed to demonstrably improve:
  - (a) Early childhood, pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, which can be delivered in formal or nonformal educational settings; and
  - (b) Learning for out-of-school youth and adults; and
- (iv) Capacity-building for teachers, administrators, counselors, and youth workers that results in measurable improvements in student literacy, numeracy, or employment.

**CONFLICT-AFFECTED**—Describes a country, region, or community that has experienced armed conflict and/or recently terminated armed conflict, which is contention over the control of government and/or territory that results in armed force between two parties, at least one being a government of a state. *Conflict-affected* also includes countries, regions, or communities that face the indirect effects of conflict due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity.

**CRISIS-AFFECTED**—Describes a country, region, or community that is experiencing or recently experienced a crisis. This also includes countries, regions, or communities that face the indirect effects of a crisis due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity. Crises include natural hazards, health epidemics, lawlessness, endemic crime and violence, and climate vulnerabilities.

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**—Programs that are typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development and that introduce young children to organized instruction outside of the family context.

**EDUCATION SYSTEMS**—An education system consists of people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities that jointly contribute to improving, expanding, and sustaining learning and educational outcomes.

**EDUCATION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING**—Education systems strengthening comprises strategies, partnerships, and activities to improve the performance of an education system to produce locally valued learning and educational outcomes over time.

**INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**—Having one system of education for all students, at all levels (early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary), with the provision of support to meet the individual needs of students. Inclusive education focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance, and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized.

**LIFE SKILLS**—Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These skills are loosely grouped into three broad categories: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.

**MARGINALIZATION**—The process, whether in practice or in principle, in which individuals or communities with certain identities and/or experiences are typically denied access to social, economic, political, and/or cultural participation in their societies (e.g., exclusion from education, employment, health care, political participation, opportunity to practice cultural and linguistic traditions, express religious identity), or access to programming for historical, cultural, political, or other contextual reasons. Groups who face marginalization often experience discrimination in the application of laws, policies, and social and cultural norms, and may be subject to persecution, harassment, and/or violence.

**MARGINALIZED GROUPS**—These may include, but are not limited to, women and girls, persons with disabilities, youth, children in adversity and their families, older persons, LGBTQI+ persons, Indigenous Peoples and communities, minority language groups, nondominant religious groups, nondominant racial and ethnic groups, people of castes traditionally considered lower, persons with unmet mental health needs, refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless persons, migrants, conflicted-affected persons, those living in poverty, married children, adolescent parents, child laborers, children associated with armed forces and armed groups, and other historically marginalized groups. Marginalized populations can represent intersectional identities and be marginalized in multiple ways.

**NONFORMAL EDUCATION**—Nonformal educational activities do not correspond to the definition of formal education. Nonformal education takes place both within and outside educational institutions and caters to people of all ages. It does not always lead to certification. Nonformal educational programs are characterized by their variety, flexibility, and ability to respond quickly to new educational needs of children or adults. They are often designed for specific groups of learners, such as those who are too old for their grade level, those who do not attend formal school, or adults. Curricula may be based on formal education or on new approaches. Examples include accelerated “catch-up” learning, after-school programs, literacy, and numeracy. Nonformal education may lead to late entry into formal education programs. This is sometimes called “second-chance education.”

**NON-STATE SCHOOLS**—Formal and nonformal education institutions that are owned or operated by non-state entities, such as private citizens, faith-based organizations, or nongovernmental organizations, and that target lower-income or historically marginalized populations. Three criteria are included in this definition: financing, governance structures and regulations, and day-to-day management.

**PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**—Characterized by interaction with peers and educators, through which children improve their use of language and social skills, start to develop logic and reasoning skills, and talk through their thought processes. Children are also introduced to alphabetical and mathematical concepts and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment. Supervised gross motor activities (i.e., physical exercise through games and other activities) and play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy, and school readiness. The Strategy will follow partner countries’ laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

**PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**—Programs typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (i.e., literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge and personal and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education. They focus on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialization. The Strategy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

**LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**—Programs typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from the primary education level. Usually, the aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development upon which education systems may then expand further educational opportunities. Some education systems may already offer vocational education programs at this level to provide individuals with skills relevant to employment. Programs at this level are usually organized around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects. Teachers typically have pedagogical training in specific subjects and, more often than at the primary education level, a class of students may have several teachers with specialized knowledge of the subjects they teach. The Strategy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

**POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**—All education beyond the secondary school level, including that delivered by universities, further education colleges, and community providers. The Strategy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

**UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**—Programs typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programs at this level offer students more varied, specialized, and in-depth instruction than programs at the lower secondary level. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available. Teachers are often highly qualified in the subjects or fields of specialization they teach, particularly in the higher grades. The Strategy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

**SOFT SKILLS**—Cognitive, social and emotional skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that help people to navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. Soft skills are expressed in the form of observable behaviors, generally in the performance of a task.

**SUSTAINABILITY**—Sustainability means that the local education system has the ability to produce learning and educational outcomes over time beyond the project or activity life span or the U.S. government's presence in the country.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (WFD) PROGRAMS**—Programs and policy efforts that support young people and adults in gaining the specific skills and attitudes they need to be productively employed.



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