

U.S. Agency for International Development Report to Congress on Pre-Primary Education

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is submitting this report pursuant to House Report 114-693, which accompanied H.R. 5912, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017.

The Committee is concerned that USAID has not sufficiently integrated programs for pre-primary education into the basic education strategy. Not later than 90 days after enactment of this Act, the USAID Administrator is directed to submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations on the criteria used to determine where pre-primary education programs are funded. The report should also include a list of countries and funding levels for all current pre-primary education programs.

USAID is aware of the current and emerging research on the benefits of pre-primary education and other forms of early-development priorities (e.g., nutrition, sanitation). In collaboration with other donors and partners, the Agency is compiling a learning agenda around these issues, to stay abreast of the latest research, and to understand the implications for strategy, policy, and practice in global education.

The current *USAID Education Strategy* (last updated in 2015) includes programming to invest in, and provide technical support for, kindergarten as pre-primary education, provided that kindergarten is part of a country's formal basic education system. A few countries have systems to serve students of younger ages, and in these cases USAID supports pre-kindergarten programs. Much more often, however, private providers are the only purveyors of pre-primary education.

EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION ADVANCE U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Strengthening education systems and improving educational opportunities for the world's most vulnerable populations accelerate economic growth, and help address the root causes of national and global instability. Investments in education are a strategic and effective part of U.S. foreign assistance, and remain vital to U.S. national security and economic interests. Education serves as a foundation for, and driver of, the creation of more resilient societies. Literate, skilled populations are needed for a stronger workforce, more innovative economy, and a key component to ensure sustained long-term impact of development investments across all sectors.

Research shows that improving the quality of education in the early years has a defining effect on students' lifelong academic and professional achievement. Students who do not learn to read and do not master basic mathematical and socioemotional skills in the first few years of schooling are more likely to repeat grades, and are significantly more likely to drop out of school.¹

¹ <http://www.rti.org/sites/default/files/brochures/egraresultsflyer.pdf>

EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION IN USAID’S EDUCATION STRATEGY ²

The current *USAID Education Strategy*³ presents three goals that the Agency’s research in international educational development has demonstrated are critical to promoting U.S. and international security, and to accelerating economic growth at home and abroad in a cost-efficient manner.

The strategy provides USAID’s operational units and field Missions with guidance on programming budget allocations for higher and basic education to achieve these goals. Pre-primary education is a strategic approach under two of the three goals: improved reading skills for children in primary grades, and increased equitable access to education for learners in crisis- and conflict-affected environments.

USAID is currently engaged in the preliminary phases of updating its *Education Strategy*, under the guidance of the new Administrator. Agency staff are regular participants in global fora that examine the impact of various approaches to early and pre-primary instruction. USAID will use this research to identify additional, cost-effective investments in these sub-sectors the Agency could include in future strategy decisions.

EARLY AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS: CRITERIA AND REPORTING

USAID applies the following six principles defined in the *Education Strategy* to achieve reading and access goals: a) enhanced selectivity, b) focus, c) country-led programming, d) division of labor, and e) innovation. In accordance with these principles, the Agency aligns its programming and budgeting for early-grade and pre-primary students with each partner country’s sector planning for the expansion of these levels of instruction. As a partner country’s government increases its own financial and pedagogical provisions for kindergarten and pre-primary education, USAID’s approach is to support these efforts through an established, Mission-led strategic-planning process. Throughout this planning process, USAID prioritizes the development and functionality of partner government systems, and identifies activities that will catalyze momentum for development in the early education sub-sector. Programs are designed to ensure that objectives remain achievable and sustainable for the partner country’s institutions during program implementation.

As the following program examples indicate, this process of focused, country-led, strategic planning has strengthened early-learning and pre-primary education programming. This programming adheres to USAID’s strategic principle of division of labor, whereby the partner government, USAID, and other donor partners with extensive pre-primary experience, (*e.g.*, the Global Partnership for Education, the United Nations Children’s Fund, *etc.*) share responsibility for program implementation. *The Education Strategy* summarizes USAID’s approach to determining whether and how to support pre-primary programs, including these references:

- “*Investments in early childhood education (ECE) have also proved to deliver substantial, measurable results. ECE can be a critical reading readiness intervention*”

² USAID’s education strategy is not limited to basic education, but also includes education and workforce development for youth, and the strengthening of higher education.

³ http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacq946.pdf

- *“USAID encourages partner governments to evaluate the benefits associated with early childhood development programming”*
- *“USAID should ... pursue ECE-level interventions when they are seen as critical to achieving measurable improvements in reading outcomes.”*

USAID’s *Education Strategy Update to Reporting Guidance*⁴ directs Missions to count any beneficiaries of pre-primary, early, and kindergarten interventions when they report on their progress towards the Agency’s reading and access goals. This ensures that USAID can provide reliable estimates of the numbers of children of pre-primary age who benefit from USAID programs.

PRE-PRIMARY AND KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION: PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Although USAID has not invested in early childhood or pre-primary education through a stand-alone strategic objective, the Agency has integrated instructional interventions for learners at those levels into broader program designs. USAID supports targeted research at the country level, and has produced comprehensive assessments such as “The State of the Ugandan Child: An Analytical Overview.” USAID also has published relevant topical research, including “First Principles: Designing Effective Education Programs for Early Childhood Development.” USAID consistently promotes the use of evidence-based early-childhood interventions.

The following examples illustrate how USAID works at the pre-primary and kindergarten levels:

- Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean: In FY 2016, USAID supported the Early Learners Project (ELP), which improves literacy levels of kindergarten to Grade Three public-school students across the member countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Programming interventions will lead to a reduced number of children who are at-risk of underperforming in reading in the early years.
- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): To improve access and learning for the most vulnerable, USAID/DRC’s ACCELERE! project focuses on school readiness and timely entry into primary education. In FY 2016, USAID support helped open 100 pre-primary classes, and initiated the development of a real-time monitoring system.
- Ghana: USAID/Ghana supported the inclusive education efforts of the Ghana Education Service (GES) by providing for the nationwide printing and distribution of National Kindergarten Standards, Child Development Milestones, teacher self-evaluation tools, and a monitoring/inspection tool for kindergarten and early grade classrooms.
- Guatemala: USAID/Guatemala is finalizing a model to measure children’s growth in reading skills. A preliminary mid-term assessment report will help adjust and target future USAID assistance to design the most-effective programs to ensure children learn to read. To complement the assessment, USAID is assisting educators to create an individual linguistic profile of each pre-school and first grade student.
- Jordan: USAID and the United Nation’s Children Fund (UNICEF) partner to support

⁴ http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pbaab002.pdf

early-childhood development and better parenting. USAID is piloting disability-inclusive activities and pedagogy for children in kindergarten through Grade Three. USAID targets teacher training in these grades to support teaching children to read.

- Macedonia: In FY 2015, USAID/Macedonia and Lions Club International signed a Global Development Alliance to support children with visual impairments (CWVI). The project's goal is to increase the quality and availability of education services for CWVI. The project has provided vision screenings to kindergarten children (ages three to six), and has translated textbooks into braille.
- Nicaragua: In FY 2016, USAID/Nicaragua continued to support training for teachers to master the importance of well-planned transitions in reading instruction, from pre-school to First Grade. The result was that 820 teachers completed certification trainings in essential skills for facilitating that critical transition.
- Philippines: In FY 2015, USAID/Philippines supported the National Department of Education's reading program and initiatives to strengthen service-delivery through capacity-building, governance and community-engagement. Support focused on the government's kindergarten to Grade Three reform efforts, and provided reading interventions for 651,353 early-grade students.
- Rwanda: Throughout FY 2015, the Ministry of Education embarked on a revision to its curriculum for pre-primary through secondary school. As co-chair of the Teacher Professional Development Technical Working Group, USAID/Rwanda is a key partner supporting these policy revisions, and leads certain aspects of the design and implementation of the newly revised curriculum.
- South Africa: USAID's Strengthening Teaching of Early Language and Literacy project improved the language and literacy skills of kindergarten children. Between January and June 2016, all of the nearly 3,000 registered kindergarten practitioners in Western Cape Province received training under the project. These teachers used their improved teaching methods with approximately 75,000 kindergarten learners.
- South Sudan: To help ensure that the current conflict does not prevent South Sudanese children from going to school, USAID is supporting conflict-affected children and communities with temporary learning spaces and psychosocial and trauma care. USAID is also financing the establishment of community-based schools to serve out-of-school children of pre-primary and primary-school age.
- Tanzania: With funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and technical support from USAID, the Government of Tanzania (GOT) initiated the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) program for pre-primary school, and Grades One and Two. USAID/Tanzania helped the GOT develop competency frameworks for each skill area, and initiated a teacher-training program to improve reading instruction.
- West Bank and Gaza: USAID created Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Arab shared communities

at the Hand in Hand (HIH) school network. HIH has grown from two schools with 50 children in kindergarten to six schools with 1,200 students in grade levels K-12.

- Worldwide: USAID contributes to the GPE's Fund, which has a focus area of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). USAID contributed \$70 million in FY 2016. Approximately 90 percent of GPE grants with an ECCE component target the performance of pre-primary teachers. GPE has invested about \$180 million in more than 30 partner countries to support ECCE.

PRE-PRIMARY FUNDING IN MISSION OPERATIONAL PLANS (FY 2007-2016)

The table below presents allocations of funding to the Pre-Primary Education program element⁵ in USAID Missions Operational Plans (OP). Information within an OP is a snapshot in time; it might not reflect decisions or funding allocations made after its completion. It is also possible, even likely, that some Missions that support pre-primary education as one component of a broader primary-education activity have coded their pre-primary component as Primary Education (ES 1.2). In such a case, the full level of that Mission's pre-primary investment would not be discernible from its OP.

⁵ The pre-primary program element is one of eight basic education program elements included in the U.S. Department of State's "Standard Program Structure and Definitions," or SPSD. Within the SPSD, the ES.1 Basic Education program area includes: ES.1.1 Pre-Primary Education; ES.1.2 Primary Education; ES.1.3 Lower Secondary Education; ES.1.4 Learning for Out-of-School Youth; ES.1.5 Literacy and Numeracy for Youth and Adults; ES.1.6 Upper Secondary Education; ES.1.7 Education Systems; and ES.1.8: Host-Country Strategic Information Capacity (Basic Ed).

(in \$)	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Pre-Primary Education	21,412,178	18,406,933	15,762,477	18,269,613	23,103,000	16,928,490	24,160,206	11,318,150	4,900,814	22,525,125
Afghanistan	-	310,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,327,400
Bangladesh	2,811,000	4,586,000	4,800,000	4,658,000	3,900,000	4,000,000	850,000	-	-	13,000,000
Burkina Faso	11,797	4,999	113,767	-	-	50,000	-	-	-	-
Burma	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egypt	11,044	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
El Salvador	-	-	-	250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ghana	336,000	2,528,060	639,683	3,135,000	-	2,800,000	2,058,134	950,000	1,620,814	-
Guatemala	9,565	25,000	322,250	456,428	498,000	536,451	323,803	370,000	720,000	-
Haiti	1,500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Honduras	-	-	-	-	-	661,299	1,647,508	-	-	-
India	-	-	-	-	-	-	250,000	450,000	100,000	-
Indonesia	1,970,820	4,000,000	300,000	-	500,000	-	-	-	-	-
Jordan	9,500,000	2,300,000	7,500,000	3,000,000	6,040,000	4,850,000	4,150,000	4,528,150	2,385,000	1,197,725
Kenya	500,000	500,000	850,000	-	400,000	-	-	-	-	-
Lebanon	-	-	168,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Macedonia	45,000	51,000	50,000	80,000	400,000	-	-	-	-	-
Malawi	-	-	-	100,000	350,000	-	-	-	75,000	-
Mali	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,250,000	-	-	-
Mozambique	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,954,111	500,000	-	-
Nepal	1,000,000	-	-	1,395,000	725,000	-	-	-	-	-
Nigeria	50,000	200,000	160,000	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pakistan	374,000	500,000	-	4,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rwanda	-	-	-	-	-	-	10,000	-	-	-
Senegal	316,952	247,000	248,777	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tajikistan	-	-	-	785,185	-	3,950,740	-	-	-	-
Tanzania	375,000	250,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Turkmenistan	96,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Uganda	500,000	486,611	-	200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
West Bank/Gaza	1,995,000	1,942,690	500,000	-	3,290,000	-	-	-	-	-
Zambia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	-
Africa Regional Bureau (AFR)	-	-	100,000	100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
E3 Bureau	-	465,573	-	-	7,000,000	80,000	-	3,520,000	-	-
Innovation and Development Alliances (IDEA)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,666,650	-	-	-