Zambia continues to be plagued by poor education quality, with reading assessments for early grades consistently showing that over 80 percent of children are unable to read and write at the end of their second year of learning. According to the McKinsey Global Institute (2011), education systems similar to Zambia’s improve when the focus is on basic skills, supervision, and use of learning assessment data.

In collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia’s (GRZ) Ministry of Education (MOE), USAID works on improving learner performance by developing critical foundational reading skills in children in the early grades of primary school. USAID’s Education Data project provides distinct assessment, evaluation, and research services to track progress of the USAID/Zambia Education Office’s reading programs in Zambia.

- **Life of Project:** April 2018 - December 2022
- **Geographic Focus:** Nationwide
- **Implementing Partner:** DevTech Systems, Inc.
- **Total USAID Funding:** $6.8 million
- **USAID Contact:** Yvonne Naluvwi - ynaluvwi@usaid.gov
Basic literacy is the foundation children need to be successful in all other areas of education. To do so, children first need to learn to read so they can read to learn. That is, as children progress through the grade levels, more and more academic content is transmitted to them through text, and their ability to acquire new knowledge and skills depends largely on their ability to read and extract meaning from text.

A low personal literacy level severely limits an individual's ability for lifelong, self-guided learning, which extends beyond the classroom walls into the world of adult responsibilities. Assessing childhood learners early and routinely is critical in determining reading skills and facilitating early dedication of challenges to ensure successful learning.

As the Education Data activity provides ongoing assessment, data management, evaluation, and research services for the USAID Education Office, it specifically tracks the progress of the USAID/Zambia flagship education program, USAID Let's Read. The information gathered enables the MOE, USAID, and USAID Let's Read make better informed, data-based decisions and changes to education programming in the country.

**Expected Results**

In 2018, the USAID Education Data project administered a baseline Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) in its five target provinces and a follow-on midline assessment was conducted in October and November 2021 in all of Zambia’s ten provinces. The two assessments measure the extent to which children in Grade 2 are learning to read at grade level. The findings from the EGRA are used to apply lessons learned and identify trends to better inform decision making. The program will also build the capacity of the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) and MOE to track and collect data to improve learning outcomes in Zambia.