USAID/ZAMBIA

EDUCATION

Zambia has made significant gains in increasing access to education, but the education system continues to be plagued by inadequate resources, poor education quality, low progression rates, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A well-educated population is essential to stimulate economic growth, provide effective public services, and reduce poverty.

In collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Zambia and other implementing and cooperating partners, USAID programs aim to increase learners’ performance in the early grades and target foundational literacy skills. USAID programs strengthen the capacity of teachers and school administrators to better deliver education services and provide improved teaching and learning materials. USAID also has provided COVID-19 support through radio programming to provide tips to teachers and folktales to learners.

Strengthening Children’s Ability to Read

By partnering with Zambia’s Ministry of Education (MOE), USAID aims to improve the quality of reading instruction and learning materials, strengthen monitoring and assessment, and harness the engagement of communities to improve childhood literacy rates.

Through the flagship Let’s Read project and in partnership with the MOE, USAID aims to improve reading outcomes for 1.4 million children in pre-primary through Grade 3, reaching
over half of Zambia’s public primary and community schools. Through the Transforming Teacher Education activity, USAID partners with ten Colleges of Education and two universities to prepare primary school teachers for the classroom.

Through partnerships with the private sector, USAID further engages with key leaders and community actors, including local chiefs and traditional leaders, to leverage educational resources and strengthen the quality of reading instruction and support.

USAID has a strong history of collaboration with the MOE to implement Zambia’s primary literacy curriculum, strengthen systems to deliver quality primary literacy instruction, improve performance of both community and public schools, expand equitable opportunities for boys and girls, and strengthen school-level assessments. In particular, USAID has supported the MOE to develop, print, and distribute primary school teachers’ guides and literacy textbooks in English and seven local languages, including teaching and learning materials for children with special needs.

**Expanding Learning Opportunities**

Primary school enrollment in Africa has grown at an unprecedented rate over the last two decades, flooding schools with first-generation learners and resulting in classrooms with deeply heterogeneous learning levels. Compounding this challenge, ministries often pressure teachers to complete dense curricula and prepare students for high-stake exams, leading teachers to teach to the top of the class. Zambia is no exception to this challenge.

In collaboration with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), USAID is supporting the MOE’s Catch-Up program to implement the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in target schools in two provinces. The TaRL model involves assessing and teaching literacy and numeracy according to proficiency level as opposed to grade level. Students then follow a learner-centered program that targets their current learning levels and helps them recover foundational skills in order to “catch up” to grade level.

**Measuring Academic Achievement**

Initiatives to measure progress towards improved early-grade reading are supported by the U.S. Government Strategy on Basic Education and the United States Congress Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act of 2017. To this effect, USAID’s Education Data activity provides distinct assessment, research, and evaluation services to track the progress of USAID’s reading interventions in Zambia.