



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

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) submits this report pursuant to Section 7019(e) of Division K of Public Law 115-141, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2018, which incorporates by reference the requirements of House Report 115-253.

*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.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Under the current USAID *Education Strategy*, the education programs funded by the Agency support host countries to achieve specific, measurable results by improving reading skills for children; strengthening higher education and workforce-development programs; and expanding access to education in crisis and conflict states. USAID’s education programming focuses on areas that are critical to promoting U.S. foreign policy and international security and accelerating economic growth at home and abroad in a cost-efficient manner.

On September 8, 2017, Congress passed P.L. 115-56, the Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act, which calls for USAID to develop a comprehensive international education strategy in consultation with other relevant U.S. Government Departments and Agencies by September 2019. As part of this process, USAID is examining the role of early childhood and pre-primary education in supporting reading programs.

USAID recognizes that early learning is critical for each student’s personal and academic development. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 to FY 2017, USAID’s pre-primary education budget has ranged from \$4,900,814 in FY 2015 to \$24,160,206 in FY 2013. The most recent budget for FY 2017 in pre-primary education was \$22,626,556. As part of broader programs, USAID invests in improving kindergarten instruction in reading, mathematics, and socio-emotional skills for multiple populations, including children with disabilities. USAID education specialists actively participate in working groups and research endeavors on early-childhood development and consistently promote the linkage of instructional programs to evidence-based early-childhood interventions. USAID produces relevant topical research and guides, such as “First Principles: Designing Effective Education Programs for Early Childhood Development,” intended to guide education-sector stakeholders—including other donor agencies, government officials, and international and national non-governmental organizations—who are working on promoting, developing, and implementing programs in early-childhood development and education.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “First Principles: Designing Effective Education Programs for Early Childhood Development” compendium, available at [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pbaae193.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pbaae193.pdf).

## **EARLY AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS: CRITERIA AND REPORTING**

USAID defines program objectives at the country level in a focused, country-led, strategic-planning process. Missions, in partnership with USAID/Washington, tailor this process to reflect on-the-ground realities, Agency priorities, and budget parameters, with the goal of funding the most effective programming in each context.

Investments in early-childhood education (ECE) deliver substantial, measurable results, and can be critical reading-readiness interventions. In our current *Education Strategy*, USAID encourages partner governments to evaluate the benefits associated with early-childhood-development programming and to pursue ECE interventions when they are critical to achieving measurable improvements in reading outcomes.

USAID's *Update to Reporting Guidance on the Education Strategy*, released in August 2014, directs Missions to count any beneficiaries of pre-primary, early, and kindergarten interventions when reporting on their progress towards the Agency's reading and access goals. These parameters prioritize host-country responsibility, high-quality instruction, and the long-term sustainability of United States investments.

## **CURRENT PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

The following examples illustrate ways in which education programming funded by USAID works at the pre-primary level, and in kindergarten classes.

**People's Republic of Bangladesh:** With more than 19 million primary-school-age children in one of the world's largest education systems, Bangladesh has made great strides in expanding access to school. However, Bangladesh still faces significant gaps in reaching universal completion of primary education, and in improving the quality of education. Bangladesh's 2015 National Student Assessment showed that only 29 percent of Fifth-Grade students can read the national language (Bangla) at the appropriate grade level. In response to these challenges, the Government of Bangladesh Vision 2021 proclamation set the goal of universal access to education up to the secondary level, and committed to provide a strong foundation of literacy skills to primary-school students. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, USAID helped the Government of Bangladesh advocate that vision through continued support for an early-childhood-development program called *Sisimpur* (Bangladesh's version of *Sesame Street*). In FY 2017, 26 episodes of the program reached more than 12 million viewers with pre-reading skill lessons on topics such as letter-recognition and letter sounds. This initial boost will help ensure children are ready to read in first grade.

**Kingdom of Cambodia:** The U.S. Government worked with the Cambodian Ministry of Education in FY 2017 to establish the foundation for a coordinated and harmonized early-reading and writing program—one that is feasible, practical, and scalable—in the last grade of pre-school through the Third Grade. USAID worked with the Ministry to develop a Khmer-language curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks to ensure alignment of the curricula for pre-school and Grades 1-3. In addition, *All Children Read-Cambodia* worked with local partners to increase the number of storybook titles available in the Khmer language for early readers, and paid for the translation of titles to publish as open-source titles available online, and in schools.

**Republic of Ghana:** The Government of Ghana's Ministry of Education acknowledges that improving access, quality, and equity are the leading challenges to transforming basic education in the country into a more-powerful engine for individual achievement, national development, prosperity, and social progress. During FY 2017, USAID finalized two guidance frameworks to improve the quality of classroom instruction and resource materials in kindergarten, and trained 5,285 teachers and teaching assistants on the use of a kindergarten classroom-assessment tool. USAID also collaborated with Ghana's National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Ghanaian linguists, and international reading experts to produce instructional materials for teaching reading in 11 local languages in kindergarten and the first grade. As part of this effort, the Government of Ghana, in partnership with USAID, distributed approximately 751,000 teaching and learning materials to 7,404 primary schools nationwide in FY 2017.

**Republic of Liberia:** USAID launched an early grade reading program, “Read Liberia”, in 2017 to improve the vocabulary of children in kindergarten, build literacy skills, and improve language fluency and comprehension for students in the First and Second Grades. The program will roll out in 640 schools, and is expected to serve 28,800 students. The program will provide teaching and learning materials, and train teachers and administrators.

**Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:** In FY 2017, USAID advanced its goals to improve the quality of basic education for all children in Jordan and to ensure equitable access to public-school education. USAID’s RAMP (Early Grade Reading and Math) Initiative provides instruction in reading and mathematics to children in kindergarten through the Second Grade. In addition, USAID partners work with more than 126,000 Syrian children and their families in Jordan, by offering early-childhood-development programming for communities affected by the Syrian crisis and seeking to reinforce parental engagement in all levels of the education system.

**Republic of Rwanda:** USAID's *Itegere Gusoma* (Get Ready to Read) activity is piloting a pre-primary literacy program for kindergarten students to better prepare them to learn to read. As a result of these and previous USAID investments, more children in Rwanda are reading with fluency and comprehension. USAID expects current programming to sustain and accelerate these gains, with an increased focus on reaching all Rwandan children with high-quality pre-primary instruction to facilitate their progress in primary school.

**Republic of South Africa:** USAID works with the South African Department of Basic Education (DBE) on interventions the National Government can pilot, rigorously evaluate, and scale up. The *Story-Powered Schools Reading Camp* Program, implemented in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces, seeks to develop a culture of reading for enjoyment in 720 schools over a three-year period. The activity is designed to reach approximately 108,000 children directly, 64,800 children indirectly, and 14,640 adults through direct training. The program includes the production and distribution of 56,000 local-language stories and improved access to local-language books by providing all participating classes from kindergarten through the Fourth Grade in 240 participating schools with a library that contains children's storybooks.

**United Republic of Tanzania:** USAID’s signature early-grade reading and writing activity in Tanzania is *Tusome Pamoja*, “Let’s Read Together”. The activity is a five-year program in four

Regions, plus Zanzibar that aligns with the Government of Tanzania’s education-reform agenda, which focuses on reading, writing, and arithmetic. The program will improve the quality of pre-primary instructions in reading and writing through a comprehensive package of teaching materials, training plans for teachers, and monitoring-and-evaluation tools to track the performance of both teachers and students. *Tusome Pamoja* will conduct an evaluation to investigate the impact of its pre-primary programs.

**Republic of Zambia:** In conjunction with the Zambian Government, USAID is launching *Let’s Read Zambia*, a five-year education project to improve reading outcomes for approximately 1.4 million children from pre-primary through the Third Grade in public and community schools in Zambia. The project will help pre-primary students develop the oral language and literacy skills they need in one of the local official languages to prepare them for a successful transition to the First Grade. *Let’s Read Zambia* will operate in approximately 4,250 public and community primary schools in 56 Districts in Eastern, Muchinga, Southern, Northwestern, and Western Provinces.

**Worldwide:** USAID is a contributor to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which focuses on early-childhood care and education (ECCE). In the past year, worked with governments in developing countries to include ECCE in their education-sector plans, and promote cross-national dialogue on ECCE policies and practices, while investing over \$180 million in more than 30 partner countries.

## **FUNDING ALLOCATED TO PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN USAID OPERATIONAL PLANS (FY 2013-2017)**

The information in the following table represents allocations of funding in USAID Operational Plans (OP) to the Pre-Primary Education program element within the Standard Program Structure and Definitions (SPSD).<sup>2</sup> The planning information within the OP is a snapshot in time that might not necessarily reflect subsequent programmatic and funding decisions and allocations. It is also possible that some investments in pre-primary education do not specifically appear in OPs as such, but are rather coded as ES.1.2 Primary Education if they are components of a broader activity focused on primary education. For example, the entire funding for GPE appears as ES.1.7 Education Systems.

The development of the new *Basic Education Strategy* mandated by the READ Act will likely change these allocations and activities with funds from FY 2018 and beyond.

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<sup>2</sup> The ES.1 Basic Education program area includes eight program elements: 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).

<b>USAID ES.1.1 Pre-Primary Education Budget (in U.S. \$)</b>						
<b>USAID Bureau</b>	<b>Operating Unit</b>	<b>FY 2013</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2015</b>	<b>FY 2016</b>	<b>FY 2017</b>
Africa	Ethiopia					600,000
	Ghana	2,058,134	950,000	1,620,814		11,000,000
	Malawi			75,000		
	Mali	8,250,000				
	Mozambique	4,954,111	500,000			
	Rwanda	10,000				
	South Sudan					5,999,058
	Zambia		1,000,000			337,102
Near East	Jordan	4,150,000	4,528,150	2,385,000	1,197,725	3,406,127
South and Central Asia	Afghanistan				8,327,400	
	Bangladesh	850,000			13,000,000	
	India	250,000	450,000	100,000		
Western Hemisphere	Guatemala	323,803	370,000	720,000		934,269
	Honduras	1,647,508				
	Nicaragua					350,000
Economic Growth, Education, and Environment (E3)	USAID E3 Bureau		3,520,000			
Office of Innovation and Development Alliances (IDEA)	USAID IDEA Office	1,666,650				
<b>Total</b>		<b>24,160,206</b>	<b>11,318,150</b>	<b>4,900,814</b>	<b>22,525,125</b>	<b>22,626,556</b>