USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

2011-2015

USAID EDUCATION STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

This report presents the results achieved to date under the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy.

Table of Contents

Glossary

|				
ACR	All Children Reading		**LEGs**	Local Education Groups
ACR GCD	All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development		**LGL**	Let Girls Learn
BE2	Building Evidence in Education		**NORAD**	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse		**PEPFAR**	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development		**PRIMR**	Primary Mathematics and Reading Initiative
ECCN	Education in Crisis and Conflict Network		**RERA**	Rapid Education Risk Analysis
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment		**SDGs**	Sustainable Development Goals
EiCC	Education in Crisis and Conflict		**STEM**	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
GPE	Global Partnership for Education		**STI**	Science, Technology, Innovation
GRN	Global Reading Network		**STRIDE**	Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development
HED	Higher Education for Development		**UIS**	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
HESN	Higher Education Solutions Network		**USDA**	U.S. Department of Agriculture
HEWFD	Higher Education and Workforce Development			

Executive Summary

In 2011, the USAID Education Strategy set forth an ambitious agenda to help solve one of the most pressing challenges facing developing countries: the lack of access to quality education for children and youth.

Through this strategy, with a focus on measureable outcomes and ambitious targets, USAID transformed the conversation in the sector from counting inputs and activities to measuring results at the beneficiary level and redefined the scale we should be striving for in our collective work. Highly relevant to both global and country-level education challenges, the strategy delivered clarity on USAID priorities in education and helped concentrate our investments and create transformative change at the global and country level.

Our host country partners joined USAID in this effort, marshalling their resources and directing their policy priorities to tackle this challenge together. We also worked with other donors, civil society actors, the private sector and a broad array of education stakeholders to advance the goal of delivering relevant, quality education for all in some of the most challenging development contexts in the world.

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy Progress Report is an opportunity to share what we have accomplished to date under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy and reflect on lessons learned. Because the full results of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy will not be known until 2020, subsequent updates will continue to report on outcomes for programs initiated under this strategy.

From 2011-2015, USAID supported 151 basic education programs in 46 countries, directly benefiting more than 41.6 million children and youth with programs that aligned with strategy objectives.
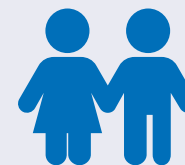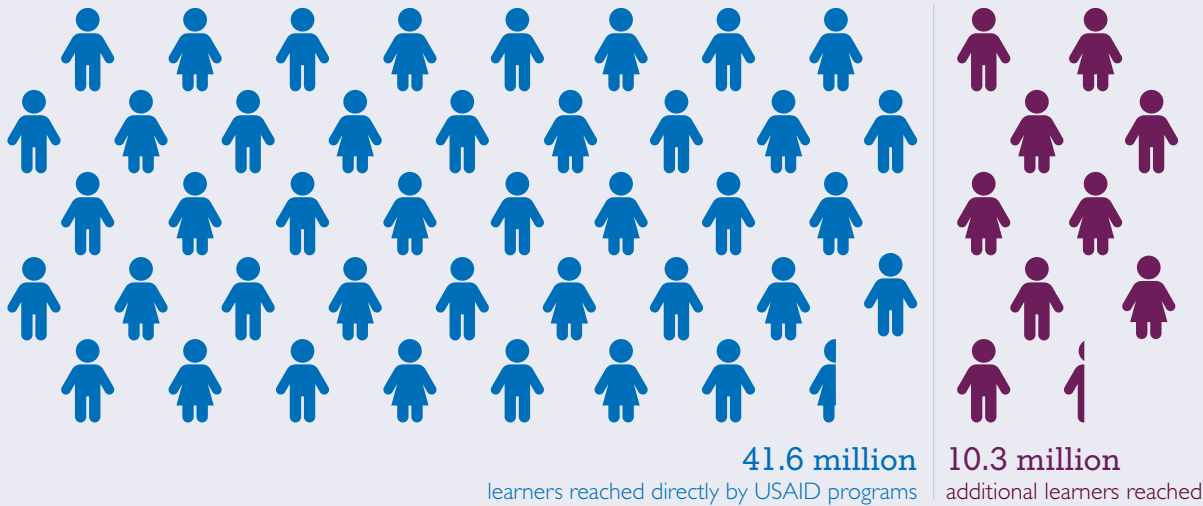
49% Female | 51% Male

Females make up almost half of the children and youth who benefited from USAID basic education programming aligned with strategy objectives (20.2m female, 21.4m male).
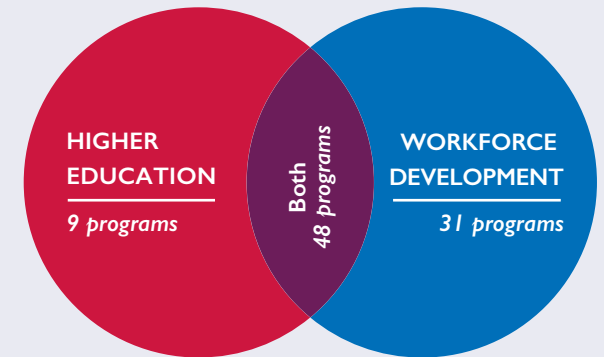
Extended Reach of USAID Programs

USAID-supported basic education programs have directly benefited 41.6 million individual learners. Donor and country partners have extended our approaches to a further 10.3 million, bringing the overall reach of our programming to 51.9 million learners.

41.6 million
learners reached directly by USAID programs

10.3 million
additional learners reached

That is more than the 50.2 million children enrolled in primary school in North America and Western Europe.

Higher Education and Workforce Development

*USAID also supported 88 higher education and workforce development programs, of which 48 programs supported both objectives.*

HIGHER EDUCATION
9 programs

Both
48 programs

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
31 programs

Students Reached, 2011 vs. 2015 (in millions)

The annual reach of basic education programs aligned with strategy objectives has more than tripled.

25.7m students

7.6m students

2011   2015
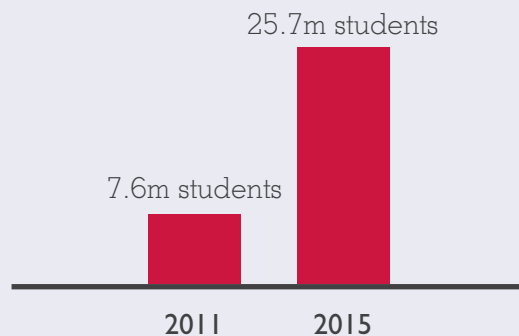
Number of Programs, 2011 vs. 2015
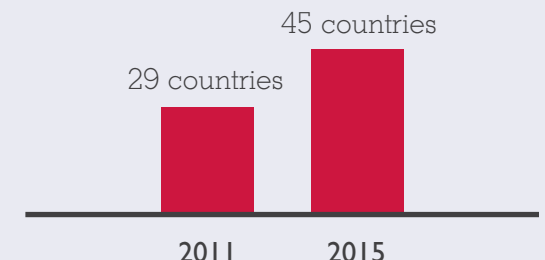
The number of basic education programs aligned with strategy objectives has more than doubled.

123 programs

48 programs
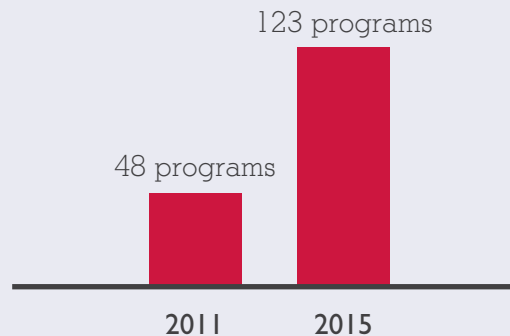
2011   2015

Countries with Aligned Programs, 2011 vs. 2015

The number of partner countries in which we are supporting basic education programming aligned with the strategy has increased by 55 percent.

45 countries

29 countries

2011   2015

Accomplishments and Results Under the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy

USAID accomplishments under the strategy take many forms, including the scale of contributions to education service delivery in our partner countries, the leverage and influence that USAID has developed through strategic and technical engagement, and the critical partnerships and collaborations that have advanced the goals of the strategy.

Over the strategy period, USAID has supported 151 basic education programs[1] in 46 countries, directly benefiting more than 41.6 million children and youth (20.2m females, 21.4m males). The annual reach of basic education programs aligned with the goals of the Education Strategy grew from 7.6 million children and youth (3.8m female, 3.8m male) in 29 countries in 2011, to 25.7 million children and youth (12.4m female, 13.3m male) in 45 countries in 2015. We have supported activities central to achieving the education goals of our partner countries, including improved pedagogy through training for an average of 450,000 teachers annually, increased parental and community engagement through support for an average of 26,000 parent teacher associations or community-based school governance structures annually, and the provision of 146 million essential teaching and learning materials over the course of the strategy.

Our basic education programs advanced our progress toward the two numeric targets of the 2011-2015 Strategy:

- For the All Children Reading target of improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015, we are able to report that of the 10 million learners reached so far for whom we have measured change in reading outcomes (4.9m female, 5.1m male), 1.5 million meet the definition of improved reading we articulate in our education strategy methodology.[2] Of these 1.5 million, 900,000 are girls and 600,000 are boys. At present, we are only able to provide a partial view of results because reading assessment data is available for less than 30 percent (10 million) of the 37.7 million learners (18.4m female, 19.3m male) who have received reading interventions to date.

- For the Education in Crisis and Conflict target of increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015, we have reached a total of 11.8 million individual children and youth (5.6m female, 6.2m male) through programming designed to improve or establish safe, quality education. This number includes increased access to education for 2.4 million who were previously out-of-school (1.1m female, 1.3m male).

As an Agency, USAID has supported 88 programs aligned with the higher education and workforce development objectives of the strategy. This includes 79 workforce development programs in 32 countries, and 57 higher education programs in 20 countries.[3] We have improved the quality and relevance of higher education curricula for more than 161 post-secondary education programs, and sponsored an average of 3,000 individuals each year to participate in education, training or exchanges in the United States.[4]

---

[1] This figure includes 116 programs that were launched under the strategy and 39 programs that pre-dated the strategy and were brought into alignment with it.

[2] For further information on how we estimate the change in reading ability that our programs contribute to, please see Measuring and Communicating Progress Towards Goal One: Methodology for the USAID Education Strategy.

[3] 48 programs support both workforce development and higher education objectives.

[4] Note that training and exchanges are components of programs across nearly every sector in which USAID invests.

Although the 2011-2015 Education Strategy did not establish a numeric target for Higher Education and Workforce Development programming, many programs focused on improving employment outcomes, resulting in new or better employment for approximately 609,000 young people (298,000 female, 311,000 male).

The centrality of partnerships and collaboration to achieving scale and sustainability in our work is clear. In 13 countries, USAID-funded basic education models have been replicated and scaled up by donor and country partners to reach a further 10.3 million learners (5.0m female, 5.3m male). When combined with the 41.6 million learners reached directly by USAID basic education programming, this extends the technical reach of our programming to 51.9 million learners globally.

Many of these models are also being integrated into host country systems, setting the stage for scale and the sustainability of effective policies and practices. In 2015 alone, USAID-supported programs implemented through host country systems in six countries have reached 14.5 million children.

Learning from our Experience

Lessons stemming from the 2011-2015 Education Strategy can be grouped into two categories: lessons on the design of the strategy itself, and lessons on our programming in pursuit of the goals of the strategy.

Lessons on Design

Regarding strategy design, the three goals of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy created unprecedented focus and clarity for USAID investments in education. The ambitious numeric targets for All Children Reading and Education in Crisis and Conflict goals brought forward both opportunities

and challenges. They served as a valuable catalyst, shifting the focus from counting inputs and outputs to measuring student-level outcomes and prioritizing results at scale. At the same time, the targets exceeded what could be achieved by USAID and our partners within the strategy period. The strategy's five-year timeframe drastically underestimated the amount of time required at the Agency level to build evidence of best practices, develop and communicate implementation guidance and, at the Mission-level[5], to pivot portfolios through extensive policy dialogue with host country partners, new procurements or modifications to existing programs. Our work under Higher Education and Workforce Development has not achieved the same level of attention or scale given the modest amount of higher education funding available, the lack of advocacy and guidance about cross-sectoral strategies for funding and the absence of a numeric target.

Lessons on Programming

In terms of our program design and implementation lessons, it is clear that policy, institutional and social constraints must be addressed before our programs can be fully effective. Even the strongest evidence-based design will falter if the policy environment is not supportive and the institutional capacity does not exist to implement with fidelity. We have seen these factors overwhelm our investments when sufficient attention is not given to understanding the contextual limitations that should inform our approach, sequencing of interventions and policy dialogue. Additional discussion of goal-specific lessons is included in the body of this report.

The results and accomplishments shared in this report are only a partial view of progress toward the strategic objectives and numeric targets of the 2011-2015 Strategy. We will continue to update progress toward the numeric targets on an annual basis moving forward.

---

[5]   USAID field offices overseas - commonly called Missions - design and manage the majority of USAID foreign assistance activities in education.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This 2011-2015 Strategy Progress Report presents a partial view of the results achieved to date under the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy.

The results and accomplishments included are only a partial view of progress toward the strategic objectives of the strategy. This is principally due to the reality that many of the programs initiated under the 2011-2015 Strategy extend well beyond 2015. As such, the results of all programs initiated under the strategy will not be fully known until 2020. For example, reading assessment data are currently available for less than 30 percent of the children reached through our early grade reading programs under the Strategy, necessitating an annual update of this results report.

In addition to reporting on the scale of USAID programming and progress toward the numeric targets of the strategy, this report also reflects on major achievements under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy to date and identifies lessons learned about its design.

This report relies on three major sources of information: existing internal sources of USAID performance and program data; comprehensive reviews of program reports and evaluations accessed through the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC); and feedback collected through informational interviews with external and internal sources including Mission and Washington-based USAID staff, implementing partners, multilateral organizations and education stakeholders.

For further discussion, please see A Partial View of Results on page 26.

The 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy: Transforming the Way We Work

In 2011, the USAID Education Strategy set forth an ambitious agenda to help solve one of the most pressing challenges facing developing countries: the lack of access to quality education for children and youth.

A bold departure from previous approaches, the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy emphasized focus, selectivity and the principles of development impact and scale to guide our education programming.

Through this strategy, with a focus on measurable outcomes and ambitious targets, USAID transformed the conversation in the sector from counting inputs and activities to measuring results and redefining the scale we should be striving for in our collective work.

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy put forward three strategic goals to drive USAID's education investments and mobilize the global community:

Goal 1: All Children Reading (ACR) – Improve reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015.

Goal 2: Higher Education and Workforce Development (HEWFD) – Improve the ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce workforces with relevant skills to support country development goals by 2015.

Goal 3: Education in Crisis and Conflict (EiCC) – Increase equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015.

A bold departure from previous approaches, the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy emphasized focus, selectivity and the principles of development impact and scale to guide our education programming. The strategy required USAID education programming to align with one or more

of three goals, concentrating investments in order to create measurable change at scale. The strategy also established criteria for phasing out programming unlikely to demonstrate impact, and established ambitious, time-bound measurable targets against which progress would be evaluated.

Focus and Clarity of Purpose: The strategy delivered clarity on USAID's priorities in the education sector. The distinct goals of the strategy provided a powerful framing structure for the Agency's work in education and established an agenda that reflected the priorities of our partner countries and the broader education community.

Accountability to Measurable Targets: The targets associated with the ACR and EiCC goals of the strategy shifted the focus of the sector from counting inputs to measuring results at the beneficiary level. The focus on specific outcomes has created a sense of accountability for outcomes that extends from local implementation to the USAID Administrator and the U.S. Congress. The ambitious scale of the targets established a tone of urgency and shifted attention to identifying strategies for transformative rather than incremental change.

Building Technical Capacity and Evidence: The focus and selectivity of the strategy positioned USAID to make concentrated investments in organizational capacity, evidence and resources to support the implementation of the strategy goals, and signalled to our partners the importance of doing the same. As a result, a critical mass of specialized tools, resources and evidence has taken shape, complemented by strategic investments in goal-specific research agendas and communities of practice.

Accomplishments and Partial Results Under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy

Through the 2011-2015 Education Strategy, we have substantially increased the number of children and youth accessing education, learning foundational reading skills and obtaining the skills necessary to be successful in life. In doing so, we have established and supported partnerships addressing global challenges that cannot be overcome unilaterally, and we have bolstered country-level partnerships that coordinate and reinforce program design and implementation.
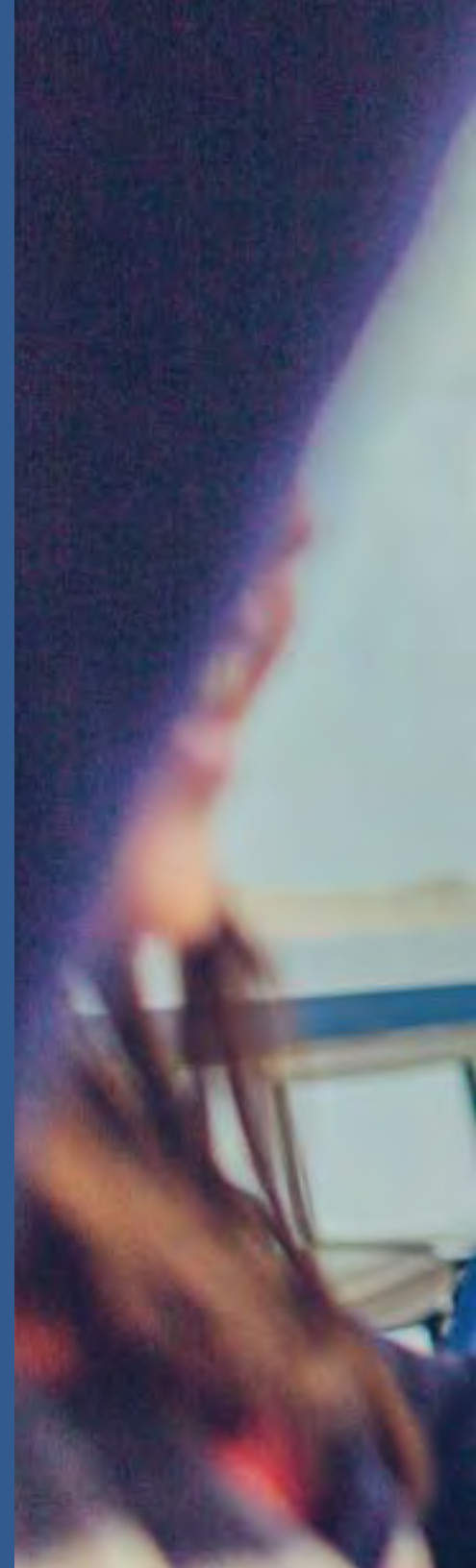
The 2011-2015 Education Strategy focused on partnerships and initiatives with the strongest potential to improve the lives of the children and youth we serve.

The Scale of our Programming and Results

As one of the largest donors in the education sector, the scale of USAID's contribution to host-country education systems and the delivery of education services over the course of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy have been impactful. Over the strategy period, USAID has supported 151 basic education programs to date aligned with ACR and EiCC, benefiting more than 41.6 million children and youth (20.2m females, 21.4m males) in 46 countries.[6] The overall reach of basic education programming aligned with the strategy has expanded substantially from 7.6 million children and youth (3.8m female, 3.8m male) in 29 countries in 2011 to 25.7 million children and youth (12.4m female, 13.3m male) in 45 countries in 2015. A few numbers help tell this story:

- **Training teachers, the key to improving children's learning.** USAID trained an average of 450,000 teachers and educators annually (220,000 female, 230,000 male).

- **Teaching and learning materials, essential for learning.** USAID provided a total of 146 million textbooks and other teaching and learning materials over the course of the strategy.

- **Education management to increase transparency and accountability.** USAID trained an average of 46,000 school administrators and officials annually (14,000 female, 32,000 male).

- **Parent and community engagement to support learning.** USAID supported an average of 26,000 parent teacher associations or community-based school governance structures annually.

- **Infrastructure to increase access to education.** USAID built or repaired a total of 11,000 classrooms over the course of the strategy.

---

[6] Note: Footnote located on page 16.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Students Reached Through ACR and EiCC Programs

USAID's basic education programs reached 41.6 million students: 37.7 million through ACR programs and 11.8 million through EiCC programs. 7.9 million of these students were reached by programs that aligned with both ACR and EiCC objectives.
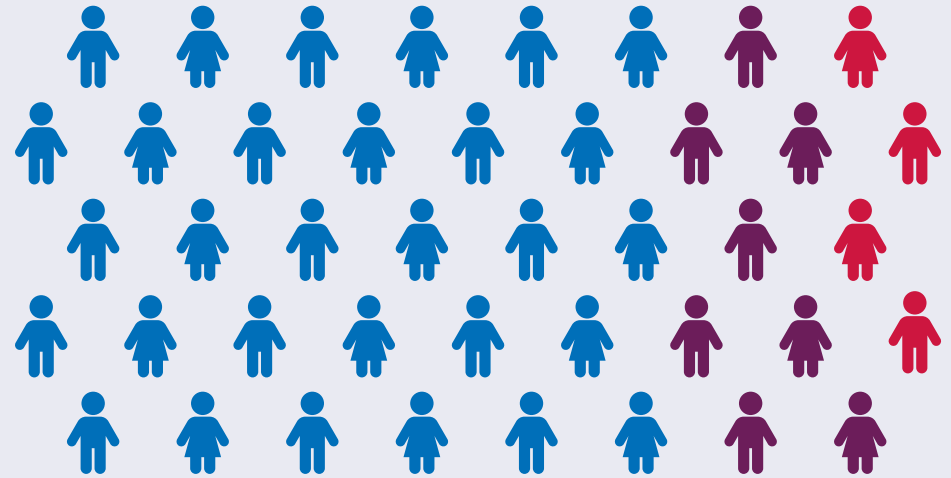
= 1 million students reached by ACR
= 1 million students reached by ACR & EiCC
= 1 million students reached by EiCC

Program Totals, by Goal Area

USAID supported 151 basic education programs aligned with ACR or EiCC objectives; 28 of these overlapped aligning with both goals. USAID also supported 88 programs aligned with HEWFD objectives, of which 13 overlapped and aligned with EiCC objectives.

ACR
88 programs

EiCC
91 programs
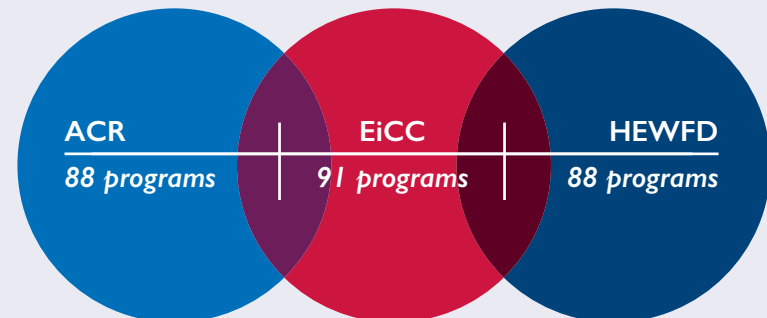
HEWFD
88 programs

51,900,000

Number of children & youth reached through USAID basic education programs and USAID partner programs (25.3m female, 26.6m male)

450,000

Average number of teachers and educators trained annually (220,000 female, 230,000 male)

146,000,000

Number of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials provided over the course of the strategy

161

Number of post-secondary education programs supported for improved curricula

11,000

Number of classrooms built or repaired over the course of the strategy

46,000

Average number of school administrators and officials trained annually (14,000 female, 32,000 male)

26,000

Average number of parent-teacher associations or community-based school governance structures supported annually

72

Number of joint research programs between U.S. and host country institutions supported over the course of the strategy

3,000

Average number of individuals sponsored annually to participate in education, training or exchanges in the United States

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy established the ACR target of *improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015.* Through programs aligned with this goal, we have reached a cumulative 37.7 million individual primary school students (18.4m female, 19.3m male). Of these 37.7 million, we have measured change, through a baseline and midline or endline assessment, in reading for 10 million (4.9m female, 5.1m male). Of these 10 million, 1.5 million meet our definition of improved reading (900,000 females, 600,000 males).[7] As data become available, we will report on the results for the 27.7 million learners who have been reached but not yet measured with a midline or endline assessment.

The strategy also established an EiCC target of *increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015.* Through programs aligned with this goal, we have reached a total of 11.8 million individual children and youth (5.6m female, 6.2m male) through programming designed to improve or establish safe, quality education. This number includes increased access to education for 2.4 million who were previously out-of-school (1.1m female, 1.3m male).

As an agency, USAID has supported 88 programs aligned with the higher education or workforce development objectives of the Education Strategy between 2011 and 2015. This figure includes 79 workforce development programs in 32 countries, and 57 higher education programs in 20 countries.[8]

The story of our investment in higher education and workforce development programming is told through the following numbers:

- **Increasing the relevance of higher education.** USAID supported the improvement of curricula for a total of 161 post-secondary education programs based on public and private sector input or market research over the course of the Strategy.

- **Higher education research to advance economic growth and sustainability.** USAID supported 72 joint research programs between U.S. and host country institutions over the course of the Strategy.

- **U.S. training and exchanges to promote growth and cooperation.** Annually, USAID sponsored an average of 3,000 individuals to participate in education, training, or exchanges in the United States focused on areas as diverse as economic growth, health, education, environment, food security, and legislative studies.[9]

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy did not establish a numeric target for the HEWFD objective of *improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals.* Many programs aligned with this goal gauge the success of their work through improved employment outcomes. Through these programs, we supported 609,000 young people (298,000 female, 311,000 male) to gain new or better employment.

---

[6]   The figure of 151 basic education programs includes 88 programs aligned with ACR and 91 programs aligned with EiCC objectives. Of these, 28 programs aligned with both goals. The figure of 41.6 million individual students reached through basic education programs includes 37.7 million reached through ACR programming and 11.8 million reached through EiCC programming. Of these, 7.9 million were reached through programming that aligned with both goals. Of the 41.6 million total individual students reached, 1.2 million are based on projections provided by Missions and may be revised in future reporting. Of the 41.6 million total, sex was not reported for 1.1 million. Throughout this document, where student numbers are reported by sex, they are an extrapolation based on the total number reached and the sex ratio for data for which sex was reported.

[7]   Reference page 34 for explanation of how we measure improved reading.

[8]   48 programs support both workforce development and higher education objectives.

[9]   Note that training and exchanges are components of programs across nearly every sector in which USAID invests.

The Power of Partnership, Collaboration and Leadership

The scale of the challenges facing the education sector requires nothing short of fully committed collaboration at both the country and global level. The 2011-2015 Education Strategy created unparalleled opportunities for USAID to focus its partnership strategy on initiatives with strong potential to improve the lives of the children and youth we serve. Through these global partnerships, USAID has engaged over 35 bilateral and multilateral donors across a number of initiatives, helping to create a more cohesive community to tackle the most complex and intractable education challenges.

Global Partnerships and Initiatives

USAID leadership in partnerships such as the Global Book Alliance, the Mobiles for Education Alliance, the Global Partners' Working Group on School-Related Gender-Based Violence, the LAC Reads Capacity Program and the Building Evidence in Education (BE2) Donor Working Group underscores our accomplishments with respect to expanding the evidence base and utilizing best practice in policy and programming decisions. USAID has also strongly committed to strategic engagement with, and support for, global initiatives that create new opportunities for collective action and funding across the sector. Examples include Education Cannot Wait, the Global Partnership for Education, All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development (ACR GCD), and the Youth Employment Funders Group.

Importantly, these partnerships have resulted in increased funding for critical issues, more effective policy dialogue, and additional investment in and use of high quality evidence and data. To extend the impact of these initiatives, USAID has launched a global community of practice for each of the 2011-2015 Strategy goals, extending the reach of this collective work to thousands of education sector practitioners.

ALL CHILDREN READING: A GRAND CHALLENGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Round 1 of the ACR GCD awarded 32 small innovation grants across 22 countries on 4 continents, resulting in:
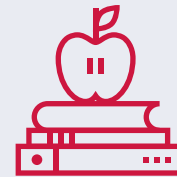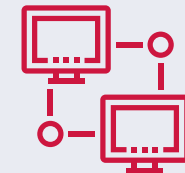

814,000+
Materials delivered

5,200+
Teachers trained

449,000+
Learners receiving reading instruction

3,000+
Schools supported with information communication & technology

The scale of the challenges facing the education sector requires nothing short of fully committed collaboration at both the country and global level.

USAID and its partners including, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), The World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), played an important role to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) included ambitious learning goals, reinforcing the right for every child to have access to a quality education. To support this goal, working with the Department of Education, the State Department and other United States government actors, USAID promoted and helped to shape the design of the learning indicator, emphasizing the importance of measuring learning in the early grades. In addition, with the SDG targets and indicators as global benchmarks, there is new momentum for the world to build upon USAID's work to improve learning, as well as to strengthen capacity for data collection, analysis and evidence-based decision-making in policy and programs.

Bridging Global Initiatives and Country-Level Partnerships

Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

USAID's partnership with GPE is critical to the advancement of our strategy's goals and the broader goals of the sector. Our engagement has included strategic and technical contributions as well as financial support, helping to strengthen national education sector plans and education delivery in more than 60 countries while reinforcing our mutual priorities of country ownership and gender-equitable outcomes. Additionally, in collaboration with other GPE partners, USAID advised on and supported GPE's new strategic plan to improve accountability and operational efficiency. USAID Missions are active participants in Local Education Groups (LEGs) in all countries where both USAID and GPE support education programming. Missions currently serve as the LEG Coordinating Agency in nine countries: Afghanistan, Liberia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. As the coordinating agency, USAID facilitates the work of the LEG and engagement with GPE, further strengthening our country-level cooperation. In 2015 alone, our support to GPE contributed to the construction or rehabilitation of 5,700 classrooms, provision of 12.8 million textbooks and learning materials and training of 147,000 teachers.

Let Girls Learn

Let Girls Learn (LGL), a whole of U.S. government initiative that brings together the Department of State, USAID, the Peace Corps, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and other agencies and programs such as the U.S. President's Fund for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is another important example of uniting global action with country-level results. Launched in 2015 by the President and the First Lady, LGL addresses the range of challenges preventing adolescent girls from completing school and realizing their full potential in life. USAID education programs have provided the foundation for LGL country-level commitments, including a $180 million partnership with DFID that contains alternative learning programs for out-of-school girls and addresses school-related gender based violence issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; a $100 million program in Jordan to build new schools, 70 percent of which are schools for girls; a $27 million commitment to advance education for adolescent girls in Liberia; and a $70 million commitment to empower adolescent girls in Pakistan.

...The real power in these initiatives is the deep collaboration with, and commitment of, our partners. We count these partnerships among our most important accomplishments under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy, laying the foundation for accelerated progress under the next strategy and increasing the impact of our collective work.

USAID and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USAID signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's McGovern-Dole Program to institute school feeding programs in response to the fact that more than 66 million children around the world go to school hungry each day. This collaboration creates social safety nets that provide both education and health benefits to the most vulnerable children by increasing enrollment rates, reducing absenteeism and improving food security at the household level. USDA and USAID work in 16 common countries across Central America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In these countries, USDA's McGovern-Dole Program reaches approximately 4 million direct beneficiaries.

Country-Level Partnerships

Through close collaboration with our in-country partners, we work to coordinate, build upon and mutually learn from the collective efforts of a community of actors supporting improved education outcomes. In addition to numerous intangible benefits, these collaborative efforts can often be linked to specific outcomes.

In more than a dozen countries, USAID-funded models have been replicated and scaled up by country partners or donor partners. At no further cost to

USAID, these partners have extended our technical reach to at least 10.3 million learners (5.0m female, 5.3m male). When combined with the 41.6 million learners reached directly by USAID basic education programming, this extends the technical reach of our programming to 51.9 million learners globally.

Many of our models are integrated directly into host-country systems, setting the stage for scale and sustainability of effective policies and practices. In 2015 alone, USAID-supported programs implemented through host country systems in six countries have reached 14.5 million children.

USAID supported capacity development in higher education institutions through more than 70 partnerships operating in 57 countries[10] over the course of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy period.

USAID has contributed strategically, technically and financially to these initiatives and partnerships, but the real power in these initiatives is the deep collaboration with, and commitment of, our partners. We count these partnerships among our most important accomplishments under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy, laying the foundation for accelerated progress under the next strategy and increasing the impact of our collective work.

---

[10] Note that due to a difference in tracking indicators, this only represented partnerships under the Higher Education for Development (HED) program from FY 2012 to 2015.

What We Have Learned to Date

The 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy presents an opportunity to reflect on the past five years, take stock of lessons learned and identify how we can move forward with stronger programs and better results.

The ambitious numeric targets associated with the strategy were valuable catalysts, shifting the focus of our programming.

Strategy Design

The design of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy has catalyzed numerous positive changes in the way we do our work. At the same time, we recognized some challenges presented by the design and implementation of the strategy that will inform our approach to the next strategy.

Goals

The three goals of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy produced strong focus and clarity in our education programming. Concurrently, branding around the three individual goals of the strategy led to several misinterpretations: that the sequential numbering of the goals indicates prioritization, with early grade reading taking precedence over other goals; that the goals were mutually exclusive and that a program can only address the priorities of a single goal; and that being defined as an EiCC environment suggests lower levels of development, a perception that was problematic for a number of our country partners. Additionally, for HEWFD, there was insufficient clarity about how workforce development and higher education programming were to be coordinated and how cross-sectoral resources should be mobilized.

Targets

The ambitious numeric targets associated with the ACR and EiCC goals of the strategy were valuable catalysts, shifting the focus of our programming from counting inputs to measuring student-level outcomes. At the same time, the ACR target set unrealistic expectations of what could be accomplished over the strategy period. The ACR target was not grounded in realistic expectations because it was established at a time when we did not possess a depth of data on the current state of reading outcomes across countries and the efficacy of reading interventions. For conflict and crisis settings, the data available on out of school children and the evidence about effective interventions was also lacking. The centralized manner in which targets were established limited their utility as tool for results-based management because targets were not driven by Mission projections or connected to realistic program-level expectations.

For HEWFD, modest funding, along with the absence of a topline target, limited the resource mobilization and visibility of the goal. This is reflected in the lower scale of programming and results achieved as compared to the other two goals.

Timeframe

The five-year timeframe of the strategy drastically underestimated the amount of time required to "pivot" portfolio resources in order to effectively support strategy-aligned programming. More than a single year was needed at the Agency level to roll-out the strategy, build evidence of best practices and develop and communicate implementation guidance and, at the Mission-level, to pivot portfolios through extensive policy dialogue with host country partners, new procurements or modifications to existing programs. Additionally, the strategy created an unprecedented demand for technical expertise within USAID and our implementing partners that did not exist at the outset of the strategy. Our implementing partners have noted the challenges they have faced recruiting qualified experts in sufficient numbers to adequately staff USAID programs in a timely manner.

The methodologies and administrative structures needed to measure and report on progress toward the ACR and EiCC targets were not in place at the outset of the strategy, leading to delays in the Agency's and its partners' ability to monitor progress toward the targets.

Program Design and Implementation

All Children Reading

We have learned that reading programs can improve learning outcomes and improve the ability the educational system to sustain those outcomes, but also that the results of our programs vary widely. Major policy, institutional and social constraints must be addressed before our reading programs can be fully effective. In many contexts, this requires extensive policy dialogue around language of instruction and inclusion of reading as a subject in the curriculum.

Insufficient instructional and reading materials in schools and homes, weak teacher and institutional capacity to support instruction and inconsistent student school attendance all pose major barriers that must be overcome before sustained gains in reading outcomes can be achieved.

We have recognized that program designs must be informed by targeted assessments to identify both facilitating and obstructing factors to be addressed as part of our country and program strategies. Equipped with data on outcomes, governments, educators and parents can marshal the political and social capital necessary to change the trajectory of an education system and children's learning outcomes.

Higher Education and Workforce Development

We recognized that our programming must be informed by the demands of the employment market to ensure that our efforts to improve the skills of youth actually translate into new or improved employment. To make this a reality, we learned that our programs must emphasize partnerships with the private sector, strategies to support self-employment where the formal employment sector is limited, and investments in job facilitation and business development services that are youth-friendly. Moving youth into fields that leverage science, technology and innovation is critical to truly advance the prospects of youth and to create sustained economic growth. The opportunities to link our youth workforce development and higher education programs with USAID's activities in other sectors are not fully realized. There is potential to create youth-friendly entry points in value chains supported by Feed the Future – the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, global health and other areas. We need to focus more on cross-sectoral strategies within our Missions and host countries to address the crisis in youth unemployment and weak higher education systems.

We see the need to tailor our programs to the diverse needs of the most marginalized and hard to reach populations. For instance, our programs have incorporated strategies to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills for rural youth without sufficient education, provided supportive services for urban

youth trying to navigate high-crime settings and pressures to participate in gangs, and tailored programming and outreach to ensure equitable outcomes for young women who face both persistent barriers to post-primary education and occupational segregation. Across our youth workforce development and higher education programming, we also recognize the need to improve our cost effectiveness given the scale of the challenges and the limited resources to address those challenges.

Education in Crisis and Conflict

We faced the challenge of designing, implementing and managing programs in highly complex contexts that experience rapid change. Models and implementation approaches that are effective initially require regular feedback loops to inform adjustments, even within the same crisis period. We have also learned that programs in conflict and crisis settings must be multi-faceted, addressing the range of challenges that the education system, and the children and youth it serves, encounter. These challenges extend well beyond increasing initial access, to include provision of a quality education in safe learning spaces, keeping children in school, and providing instruction and materials that are inclusive and conflict-sensitive. These approaches must be fully informed by security, political and economic factors.

We have seen that in crisis and conflict environments alternative pathways to education are critical to address the overwhelming number of out-of-school children and youth with diverse needs. To this end, we have invested in accelerated education, community-based education and technology-enabled delivery of education, but recognize that we need to build evidence about the most effective approaches, especially for displaced populations.

We recognize that our navigation of the continuum between humanitarian relief and development assistance needs to be strengthened, with more flexible responses and more cohesion. We have also observed the inherent challenges in measuring the results of our programs and building evidence in conflict and crisis settings and the need for innovative approaches to dynamically monitor and adapt our programs quickly.

Addressing the Unique Barriers to Gender Equality

The strategy committed to making our education investments gender equitable. Throughout this report, the number of beneficiaries has been sex disaggregated, when data is available. Girls have been targeted and reached at or near the same rate as boys across our programs.

Girls make up 53 percent of the global population of out-of-school children. Under the strategy we have worked to address the unique barriers that girls and young women face to attend school, learn and access employment and higher education opportunities. Factors that negatively impact girls' education include school-related gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy, the high cost of education whether tuition or ancillary fees, distance to schools, and non-inclusive learning environments.

All USAID education programs require a gender analysis to inform programs and better identify, understand, and explain gaps between males and females that exist in households, communities, and countries. Projects integrated gender-sensitive interventions such as: diverse depictions of gender roles in classroom pedagogy and curriculum as well as in learning and teaching materials, separate bathroom facilities for girls and boys, and trainings of staff and education stakeholders on gender sensitivity, gender-based violence and its implications, and gender transformative practices.

Examples of gender-sensitive programming include:

- In Pakistan, USAID supported a Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program that has funded 3,940 full-tuition scholarships and stipends for talented yet economically disadvantaged youth, with a specific focus on young women, to earn a bachelor's or master's degree at any of 31 partner universities across Pakistan.

- In war-torn Liberia, USAID worked to improve girls enrollment, attendance, and retention. More than 20,000 girls' scholarship packages and 27,000 reading books were distributed. Enrollment jumped from 66 percent in 2014 to 72 percent in 2015 in two districts each in Lofa, Bong, and Grand Bassa counties and over 350 of the students went on to enroll in seventh grade.

- In several programs, USAID is working to address the fact that boys underperform in learning to read, compared to girls. In the Philippines, Jordan, Egypt, and Nicaragua, USAID programs incorporate strategies such as mentoring from older students or adult role models, use of reading materials that have been shown to be of interest to young boys, and training to assist teachers in providing support to boys falling behind in reading achievement.

- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, USAID supports a gender empowerment program that has trained 412 school directors and teachers on gender-based violence awareness and prevention. School leaders have returned to their schools to continue the training among their staff.

Kenyan schoolchildren. Photo: Derek Brown.

We have worked to address the unique barriers that girls and young women face to attend school, learn and access employment and higher education opportunities.

A Partial View of Results

This 2011-2015 USAID Strategy Progress Report presents a partial view of the results achieved under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy.
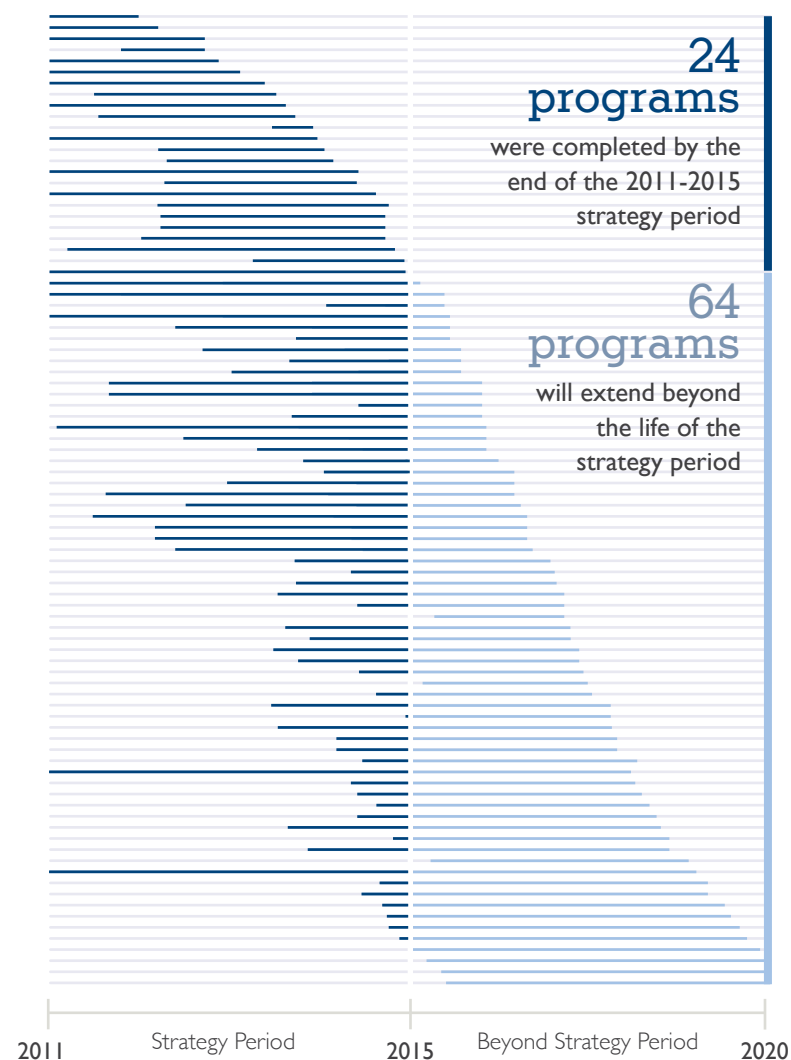
This is a function of the simple fact that many of the programs initiated under the 2011-2015 strategy extend well beyond the 2011-2015 timeframe. As such, the results of those programs will not be fully known until 2020. Subsequent updates will continue to reflect on programs aligned with the 2011-2015 strategy, with reporting for the 105 basic education programs that will continue to contribute to the strategy targets beyond the 2011-2015 period.

Because of the extended lead-time needed to design and procure new programs, very few strategy-aligned programs could begin at the outset of the strategy period – the earliest programs to be aligned with the strategy were pre-existing programs that either happened to already be aligned with strategy goals or had the flexibility to be modified to align with them. The time that was required to design and procure new programs (often extended by the need to engage in background research, design studies and policy dialogue with host country partners) meant that many Mission portfolios would not begin to reach students until several years into the strategy period. This is illustrated by the dramatic increase in the reach of our basic education programs from 48 in 2011 to 123 in 2015. Additionally, we expect to see stronger results for those programs initiated later in the strategy as they benefited from more supportive country policies and stronger evidence-based designs.

Timeline for ACR Count

Sixty-four of the 88 ACR programs initiated under the 2011-2015 Education Strategy will continue to 2016 or later. The image below illustrates the duration of ACR programs over the strategy period, and beyond 2015.
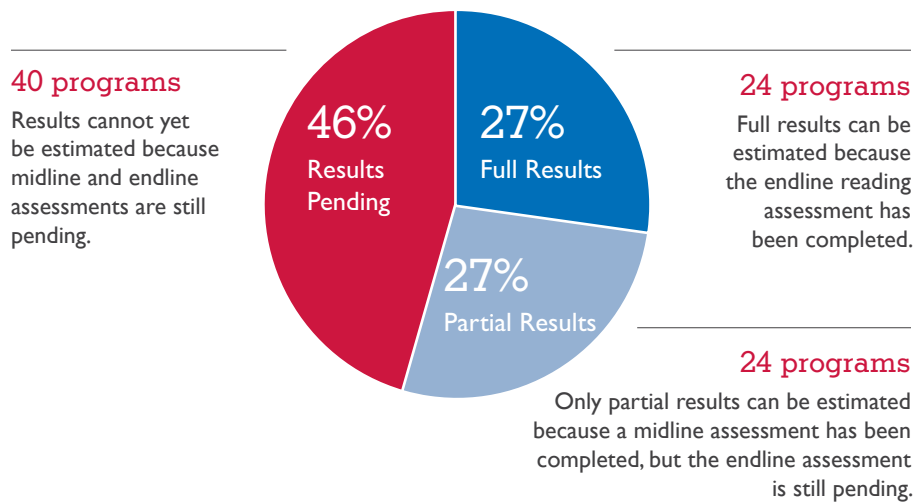
Timeline for ACR Programs

24 programs were completed by the end of the 2011-2015 strategy period

64 programs will extend beyond the life of the strategy period

2011 · Strategy Period · 2015 · Beyond Strategy Period · 2020

Reporting on results for ACR programs is further complicated by the fact that program results can only be estimated after a midline (for interim results) or endline (for final results) reading assessment has been completed. Because assessments are not carried out on an annual basis, there is often a lag of one or two years before change in reading outcomes for a program can be calculated. For the 24 programs that have completed an endline reading assessment, it is possible to estimate the full results associated with the program. For the 24 programs that have completed a midline assessment but not yet completed an endline assessment, it is possible to estimate interim results at this time. For the 40 programs that have not yet completed a midline assessment, results cannot yet be estimated.
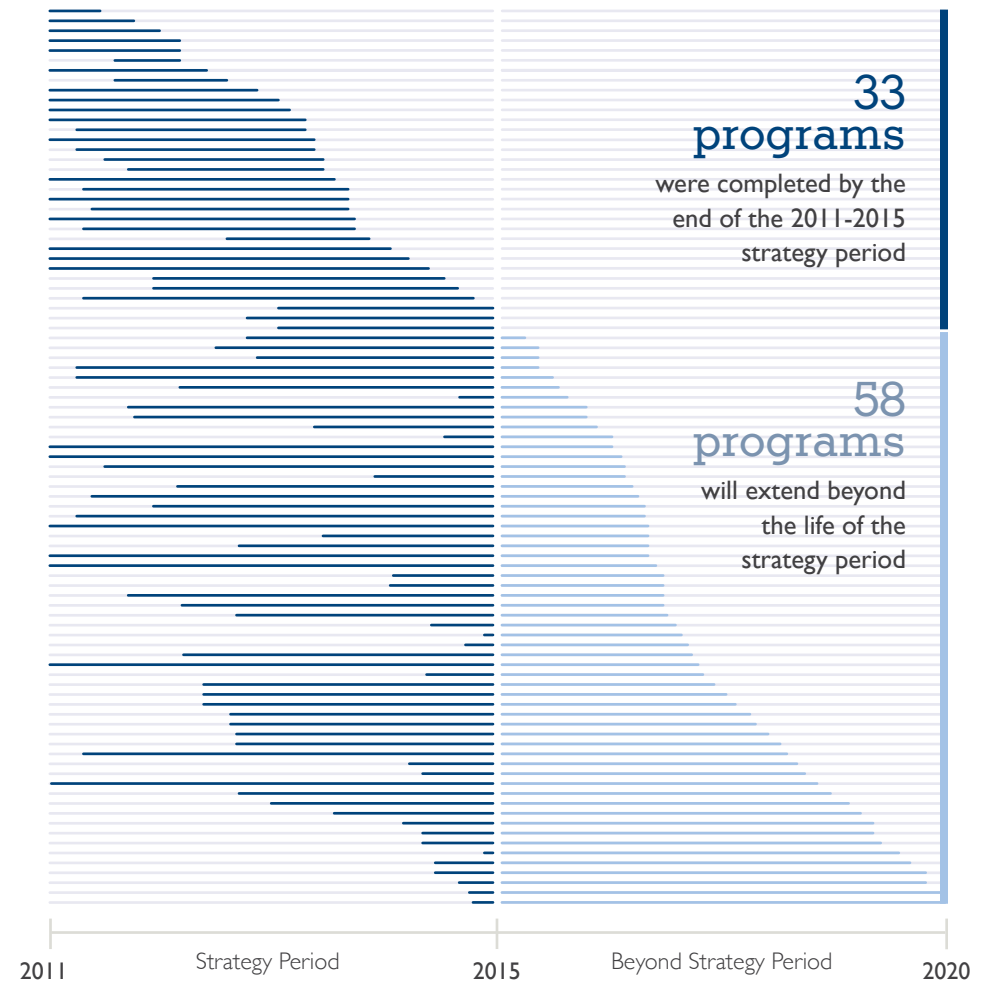
Results for ACR Programs

It is not yet possible to report full results for 73 percent of programs that have reached students because the required data have not yet been collected. As these data become available, we will provide updated reporting on outcomes of these programs.

40 programs
Results cannot yet be estimated because midline and endline assessments are still pending.

24 programs
Full results can be estimated because the endline reading assessment has been completed.

24 programs
Only partial results can be estimated because a midline assessment has been completed, but the endline assessment is still pending.

46% Results Pending
27% Full Results
27% Partial Results

Timeline for EiCC Count

Of the 91 programs contributing to EiCC objectives over the 2011-2015 period, 58 extend beyond the end of the strategy period. The image below illustrates the duration of individual programs contributing to EiCC over the 2011-2015 timeframe and beyond 2015. Because so many of these programs continue well beyond 2015, we will continue to report on their contribution to the EiCC target in years to come.

Timeline for EiCC Programs

33 programs were completed by the end of the 2011-2015 strategy period

58 programs will extend beyond the life of the strategy period

2011   Strategy Period   2015   Beyond Strategy Period   2020

Where We Work

📖 All Children Reading, programs in 41 countries

Bangladesh	Georgia	Kenya	Mozambique	South Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo	Ghana	Kosovo	Nepal	South Sudan
	Guatemala	Kyrgyzstan	Nicaragua	Tajikistan
Djibouti	Haiti	Lebanon	Nigeria	Tanzania
Dominican Republic	Honduras	Liberia	Pakistan	Uganda
	India	Macedonia	Peru	Yemen
Eastern & Southern Caribbean	Indonesia	Malawi	Philippines	Zambia
Egypt	Jamaica	Mali	Rwanda	
Ethiopia	Jordan	Morocco	Senegal	

🔧 Higher Education and Workforce Development, programs in 35 countries

Afghanistan	El Salvador	Kenya	Mexico	South Sudan
Burma	Ethiopia	Kosovo	Morocco	Thailand
Cambodia	Guatemala	Kyrgyzstan	Nicaragua	Uganda
Eastern & Southern Caribbean	Haiti	Laos	Pakistan	Vietnam
	Honduras	Lebanon	Philippines	West Bank and Gaza
Dominican Republic	India	Liberia	Rwanda	
	Indonesia	Macedonia	Senegal	
Egypt	Jordan	Mali	Somalia	

🕊 Education in Crisis and Conflict, programs in 22 countries

Afghanistan	Guatemala	Lebanon	Nigeria	South Sudan
Burma	Haiti	Liberia	Pakistan	West Bank and Gaza
Democratic Republic of Congo	Honduras	Mali	Philippines	
	Jordan	Nepal	Senegal	Yemen
El Salvador	Kenya	Nicaragua	Somalia	

USAID supported programs in 51 countries during the strategy period.

Goal One:
All Children Reading

Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015:

- Improved reading instruction

- Reading delivery systems improved

- Greater engagement, accountability and transparency by communities and the public

With the strong pivot to focus on improved reading, we have dramatically expanded the reach of our reading programming from 7 million children across 19 countries in 2011 to 22.7 million children across 41 countries in 2015.

GOAL ONE

At the launch of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy, approximately 250 million primary school age children lacked basic literacy skills, even after multiple years of school for some.

USAID's 2011-2015 Education Strategy prioritizes addressing this global learning crisis by improving early grade reading. We set an ambitious, sector-wide target of improving reading skills for 100 million children, with a focus on reaching the most marginalized.

Country partners responded to USAID's call for investment in early grade reading by making substantial policy and programmatic changes to initiate or improve reading instruction. The 2011-2015 Education Strategy has supported 88 programs focused on early grade reading across 41 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe & Eurasia, Latin America & the Caribbean and the Middle East & North Africa.

With the strong pivot to focus on improved reading, we have dramatically expanded the reach of our reading programming from 7 million children (3.4m female, 3.6m male) across 19 countries in 2011, to 22.7 million children (11.0m female, 11.7m male) across 41 countries in 2015 alone. Overall, we

have improved literacy instruction for a cumulative 37.7[11] million individual primary school students (18.4m female, 19.3m male), more than one-fifth of whom are in countries affected by crisis and conflict.

Country partners made substantial policy and programmatic changes to initiate or improve reading instruction. In 12 countries, our country and donor partners have institutionalized USAID-developed technical approaches. At no further cost to USAID, these partners have, so far, extended the influence of our technical work to at least 10.2 million additional learners (5.0m female, 5.2m male). When combined with the 37.7 million individual children reached through USAID-supported programming, this expands the overall influence of USAID early grade reading programming to an estimated 47.9 million learners (23.4m female, 24.5m male).

Change in Reading

USAID-supported ACR programs reached 37.7 million students (18.4m female, 19.3m male) between 2011-2015. Of these 37.7 million students, we currently have sufficient midline or endline data to evaluate change in reading for 10 million students (4.9m female, 5.1m male). Of the 10 million students for whom we currently have sufficient information, an estimated 1.5 million meet our criteria for improved reading (900,000 female, 600,000 male). For the 27.7 million children reached through reading programs for whom we are still gathering results, we will measure and report progress in future progress reports.

Our estimate of 1.5 million children with improved reading, out of 10 million for whom data are presently available, represents an overall success rate of 15 percent. This success rate is drawn from 15 of the earliest programs aligned with ACR (nearly half predate the 2011 strategy altogether) and is believed to underestimate the success rate that will be associated with programs that

---

[11] Of these 37.7 million, 1 million were reported by Missions as estimated values that may be adjusted in future reporting cycles.
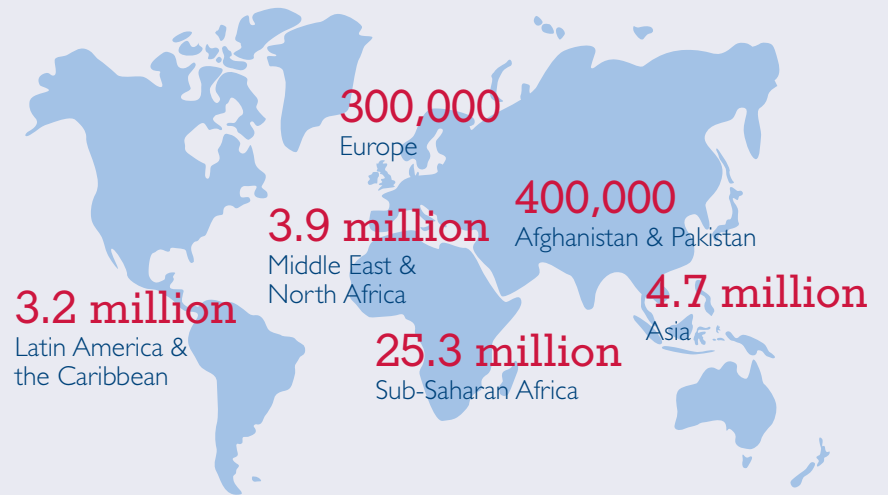
Goal One Key Successes

ACR Performance Outcomes (millions of students)

Out of the 37.7m students reached through ACR programming, USAID has measured learning outcomes for 10m to date. Of those 10m students, 1.5m met the definition of improved reading. Updated data will be provided when available.
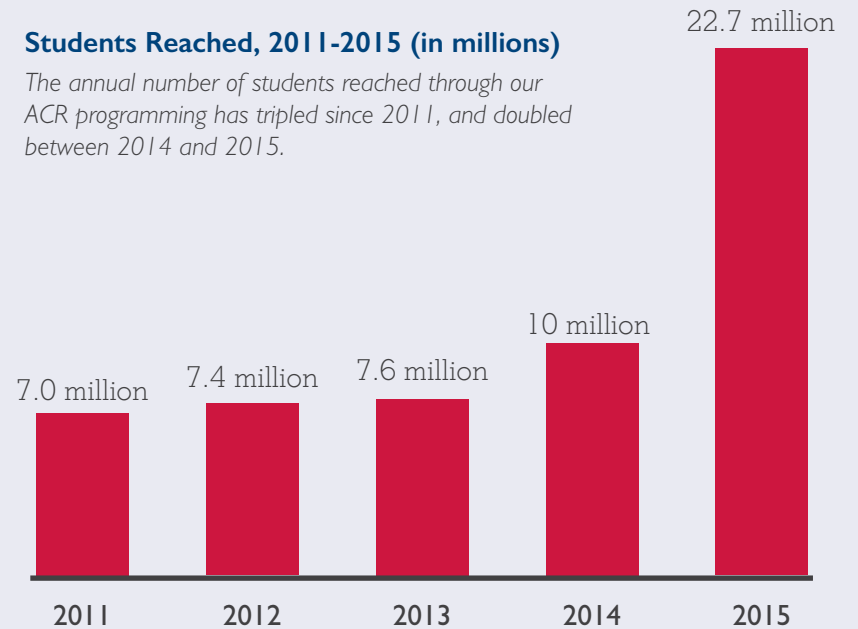
= 1 million children with improved reading

= 1 million children reached and evaluated

= 1 million children reached, but not yet evaluated

49% Female **51%** Male

Of the 37.7 million students reached through ACR programming, 49 percent were female (18.4m female, 19.3m male).

60% Female **40%** Male

Of the 1.5 million students with improved reading to date, 60 percent were female (900,000 female, 600,000 male).

Students Reached, by Region (2011-2015)

300,000 Europe

3.9 million Middle East & North Africa

400,000 Afghanistan & Pakistan

3.2 million Latin America & the Caribbean

25.3 million Sub-Saharan Africa

4.7 million Asia

Students Reached, 2011-2015 (in millions)

The annual number of students reached through our ACR programming has tripled since 2011, and doubled between 2014 and 2015.

Year	Students
2011	7.0 million
2012	7.4 million
2013	7.6 million
2014	10 million
2015	22.7 million

How We Measure Improved Reading

Our approach to estimating the number of students with improved reading[12] produces a number *indicative* of the scale of change in reading ability that USAID has contributed to. It is based on a comparison of the reading ability of separate cohorts of grade 2 students before and after the program is implemented. We look at the reading profile of the cohort students in grade 2 the year before the program began, and compare this with the reading profile of the cohort students in grade 2 the year the program ended. If the reading ability of the endline cohort differs from that of the baseline cohort, we multiply the percentage with improved reading by the number of individual students reached through the program to estimate the number of students with improved reading.

---

[12] For further information on how we estimate the change in reading ability that our programs contribute to, please reference <u>Measuring and Communicating Progress Towards Goal One: Methodology for the USAID Education Strategy.</u>

were designed and implemented later in the strategy period. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that we must continue to improve the pace of change associated with reading programs in order to address the global reading crisis in a meaningful timeframe.

Reading gains are often greater for girls than for boys

Although boys and girls are equally represented in ACR programming, improvements in reading for girls are disproportionately greater than those for boys. To date, girls represent just under half (49 percent) of the 10 million students for whom we have data, but accounted for 60 percent of those who meet our definition of improved reading. Put differently, an estimated 600,000 boys met our definition of improved reading while, 900,000 girls did so. Although change in oral reading fluency for girls equaled or exceeded that of boys in many contexts, this was not universally true. There remain contexts where gains for boys exceed gains for girls by a wide margin. In every case, attention to variation in the outcomes of USAID-supported programs by sex remains crucial.

Even when our programs are successful, not all students benefit equally

Across the majority of the programs for which data have been reviewed, the bottom 10-30 percent of the cohort remain unable to read a single word, even after program implementation. Among those who do learn to read, unequal reading gains often contribute to a widening gap between the highest and lowest performers within a cohort. Inconsistent school attendance is likely a reason for low performance in students in many contexts, however, factors such as existing systemic inequalities, language barriers, learning disabilities and other unaddressed student needs are concerns that also affect student performance and must be understood and addressed on a case-by-case basis. When unequal reading gains align with existing socio-cultural fault lines, they must be remedied quickly to avoid exacerbating inequities.

Foundational Achievements

Our numeric achievements do not fully reflect the substantial shift in country policies to prioritize effective ACR programming due to USAID support. By working closely with partner governments and stakeholders, engaging in collaborative policy dialogue and investing in country ownership of programming and outcomes, we established a foundation for expanding the reach of our successful programs through host country systems.

Country level policies as the foundation for All Children Reading

Sustained improvements in education quality and children's learning outcomes will only be achieved by working in partnership with host country governments to make early grade reading a national priority. Over the course of the strategy, we worked with 40 host country governments to implement evidence-based, sustainable, gender-sensitive programming in reading instruction. Our partners have integrated or revised early grade reading curricula, developed practical, transformative teacher professional development initiatives and developed standards and benchmarks to measure progress.

We have supported policy reforms that include establishing reading as an academic subject, providing time for reading instruction, shifting to mother tongue instruction for early reading acquisition, developing high quality reading textbooks and supplementary materials and establishing standards and benchmarks for reading.

When host country partners institutionalized proven instructional practices, policies and materials, the sustainability and reach of our programs expanded well beyond what can be achieved with only USAID resources. In 2015 alone, six large-scale USAID-supported programs leveraged national and state institutions to reach more than 14.5 million children, half of whom were girls, in Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Uganda.

USAID ON THE GROUND

Taking Early Grade Reading to Scale

In Kenya, USAID and the government built on prior joint programming to launch the national Tusome initiative, reaching an annual 1.1 million Kenyan children, half of whom are girls, to build basic reading skills across 23,000 public schools. The decision to focus on reading came in 2012 when improving early grade learning was embedded in the National Education Sector Plan (2013-2018), in part based on the successes of the USAID-supported Primary Mathematics and Reading (PRIMR) Initiative, through which 86 percent of children (89 percent of girls and 83 percent of boys) showed substantial reading improvements.[13]

Assessing Learning in Children with Disabilities

With Malawi's Montfort Special Needs Education College, USAID supported training on the use of high and low-technology assistive devices to teachers from resource centers for the blind. These resource centers received copies of USAID-supported Chichewa-language teaching and learning materials transcribed into Braille. USAID—in partnership with the government of Malawi and private sector organizations—hosted the 2015 Braille Cup to raise awareness of and support for special needs learners. Forty students competed in reading comprehension, spelling, reading for speed and accuracy, proofreading and the oral presentation of an essay.

Books in Appropriate Languages

In Ethiopia, USAID and the government provided textbooks and teacher training to benefit more than 2.8 million children, 48 percent of whom were girls, in grades 1-8 in seven mother tongue languages. The shift of focus to reading came after discussing Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) results, which showed poor reading performance across the country in September 2010, especially in rural areas. As a result, the Ministry of Education reformed the national mother-tongue curriculum and procured new textbooks with a stronger focus on reading.

_____

[13] An increase in oral reading fluency of 10 or more correct words per minute.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The Global Reading Network (GRN)

USAID supported the development of the GRN to strengthen the field of reading instruction by disseminating tools and resources like the revised Early Grade Reading Assessment Toolkit and by providing professional development for a network of over 1,800 practitioners.

Assessment

Actually knowing whether children can read, and at what level, is essential to be able to improve reading. To assess reading levels, USAID and the World Bank funded the development of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in 2006.[14] EGRA is an open source assessment tool that has now been used in more than 65 countries and adapted to more than 100 languages. USAID has also developed assessments in Braille. EGRA data has been critical to country-level and global policy dialogue on the role of learning outcomes and related policy and resource allocation decisions, and globally in shaping the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for education and related indicators.

Developing appropriate instructional resources for reading

In 2011, very few USAID partner countries had research-based reading textbooks or supplementary reading books for young students. USAID has supported the design and development of new, high quality, gender and conflict-sensitive teaching and learning materials in every country with USAID-funded reading programming. Many of those resources are now open-licensed so that they can be used by country governments and other partners to sustain programs in the long term.

Our work to provide access to appropriate instructional materials extends to learners with disabilities. In Ghana, through Perkins International, we trained local educators to teach children who are blind or low vision in an inclusive classroom setting and distributed assistive technology literacy kits that included the appropriate combination of Braille writers and low vision devices tailored to the needs of each student.

---

[14] Dubeck, M. M., & Gove, A. (2015). "The early grade reading assessment (EGRA): Its theoretical foundation, purpose, and limitations." *International Journal of Educational Development*, 40, 315–322. For up to date information on countries and languages in which EGRA has been implemented, see EGRA Tracker, 8 Jan 2016, at globalreadingnetwork.net.

Creating partnerships to tackle barriers to learning

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy has sought to catalyze innovation in the sector. The All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development was launched in 2011 as a partnership between USAID, World Vision and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Grand Challenge is a series of competitions and activities that build upon science and technology to improve the literacy skills of children in developing countries. USAID has supported the development of innovative tools such as a software to enable the production of early grade reading materials in multiple languages, and is now piloting software to trace reading materials from point of production to point of use in low-resource, developing country contexts. The first round of Grand Challenge grants extended innovative practices to nearly 450,000 students in more than 3,000 schools in 22 countries, some of which are being taken to scale. For example, an ACR pilot program that delivered reading assessment results in the Philippines via SMS was scaled from 50 to more than 1,200 schools.

In 2011, USAID also launched the Mobiles for Education Alliance, a coalition of donor agencies, foundations and private sector associations working to improve access to low-cost, appropriate and sustainable mobile technologies that can help boost quality learning in formal school settings and non-traditional learning locations in developing countries.

To address the fact that most classrooms in developing countries do not have books, especially in mother-tongue languages, USAID has begun to convene a range of partners to develop the Global Book Alliance. In collaboration with GPE, Save the Children, World Vision, UNICEF, UNESCO and the governments of Norway, Australia, the U.K. and Kenya, USAID commissioned a large-scale feasibility study to determine the best pathways to reform and strengthen the development, procurement and distribution of books for young readers in order to make book production more efficient, of higher quality and relevant to the needs of teachers and learners.

Blind student in Haiti reads in Braille. Photo: Aaron Rossi/USAID.

Goal Two:
Higher Education and Workforce Development

Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce a workforce with relevant skills to support country development goals by 2015:

- Increased access to vocational/technical and tertiary education and training for underserved and disadvantaged groups

- Improved quality of tertiary education and research in support of country development priorities

- Improved relevance and quality of workforce development programs
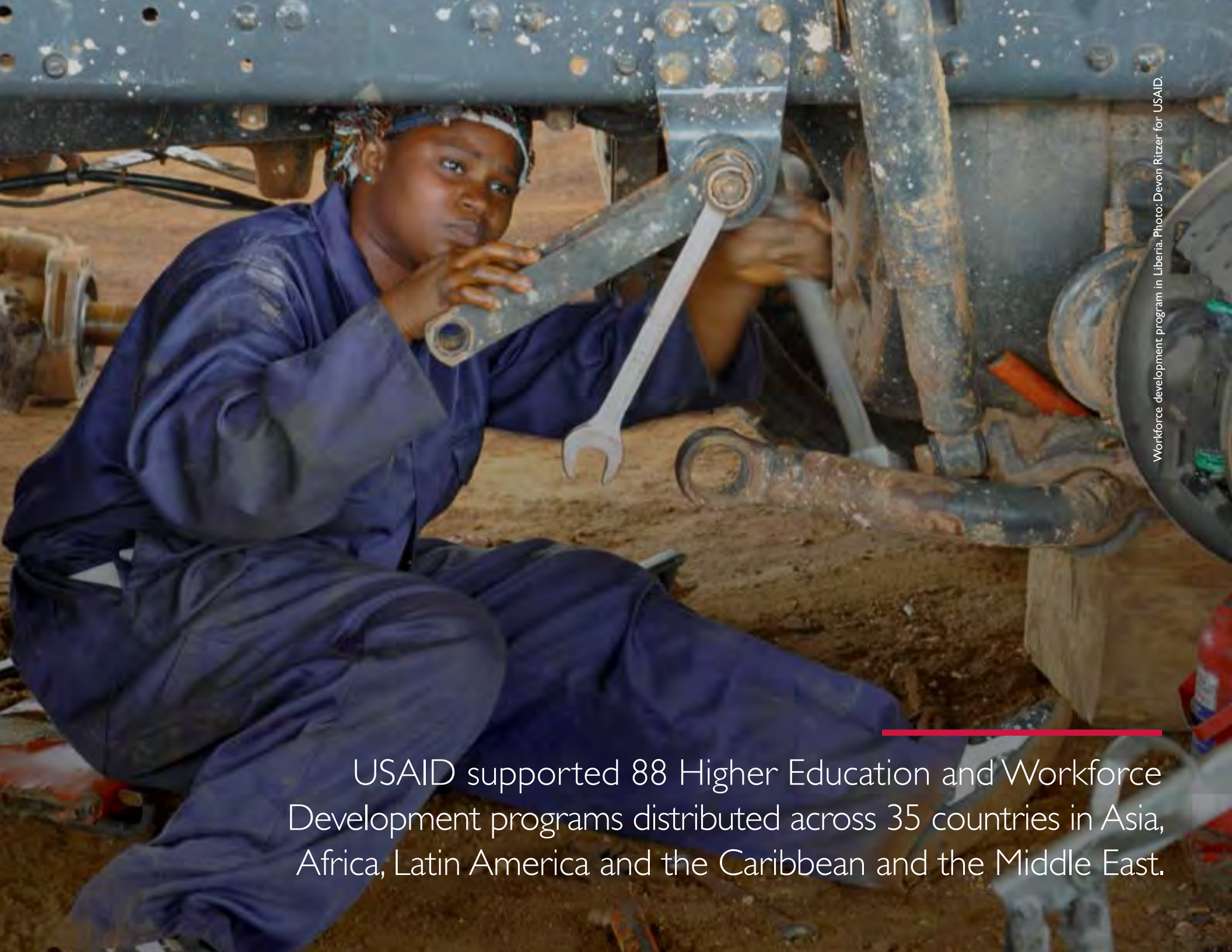
USAID supported 88 Higher Education and Workforce Development programs distributed across 35 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East.

GOAL TWO

At the launch of the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy, 40 percent of the world's unemployed people were youth.

There is growing global recognition of the challenges and disadvantages posed to youth when they do not transition from school to work or higher education. In response to this challenge, a goal of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy was to improve the ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's labor market and development goals.

Over the life of the strategy, USAID has supported 88 workforce development and higher education programs distributed across 35 countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East. This figure includes 57 higher education programs in 20 countries and 79 workforce development programs in 32 countries.[15] Through these programs, USAID contributed to new or improved employment for 609,000 individuals (298,000 female, 311,000 male). USAID also supported capacity development in higher education institutions through more than 70 partnerships operating in 57 countries.

Foundational Achievements

USAID and our partners have improved opportunities for youth through three areas: higher education system strengthening and university-to-university partnerships, youth workforce development in both formal and informal settings, and scholarships and broader efforts to expand access to higher education.

The main focus of this goal was to effect system-level change to achieve impact at scale through improved workforce development and higher education institutions. As a result, more than 160 post-secondary programs have been revised to ensure training and education curricula are grounded in employer input and market research.

USAID assistance focused on improving equity of access to workforce development and tertiary education and improving the quality and relevance of these programs. This required a combination of sustained capacity development and carefully sequenced reforms in order to foster quality tertiary and workforce development systems in cooperation and coordination with donors, key stakeholders and the host countries.

Developing a workforce with relevant, marketable skills

Workforce development programs must be linked to actual labor market needs in order to generate tangible employment outcomes. USAID has invested in the development and use of labor market assessment tools to strengthen the delivery of workforce development programs based on relevant market contexts that integrate labor market needs into workforce development programs to ensure youth are optimally prepared for work.

Our programs under this goal area prioritized systems-level efforts to bolster the capacity of tertiary and workforce development systems to produce a workforce with relevant skills. This was done by addressing institutional systems and incentive structures to improve the relevance and quality of

---

[15] 48 programs support both workforce development and higher education objectives.

Workforce Connections

USAID supported the establishment of Workforce Connections, a community of practice that brings together thought leaders focused on the intersection of education, economic growth and positive youth development. Creating an open space for dialogue, debate and consensus building, the community strives to develop and curate high quality evidence on workforce development programming and build the capacity of practitioners engaged in workforce development programming.

Goal Two Key Successes

HEWFD Programs, by Category

USAID supported 88 programs: 57 higher education programs and 79 workforce development programs, of which 48 programs were aligned with both higher education and workfoce development objectives.
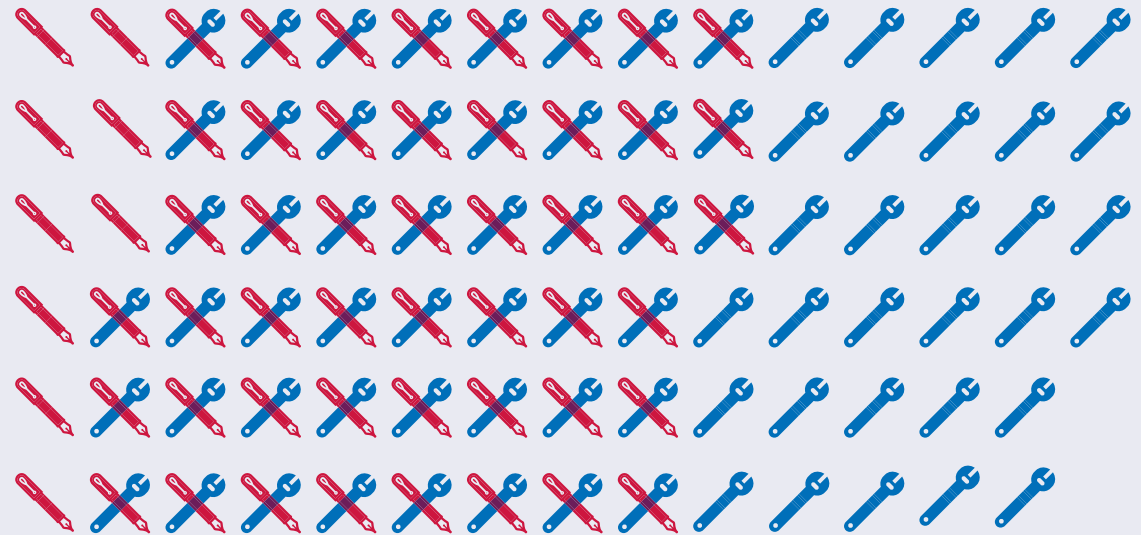
= Higher Education Program   = Workforce Development Program

161
Number of post-secondary education programs supported for improved curricula

35
Number of countries with higher education and workforce development programs

609,000
Number of individuals who benefited from new or improved employment

70
Number of partnerships resulting in the development of higher education institutions

USAID Youth in Development Policy

USAID issued its first-ever Youth in Development Policy in 2012, complementing the youth workforce development goal of the Education Strategy.

Policy Goal

Improve the capacities and enable the aspirations of youth so that they can contribute to and benefit from more stable, democratic and prosperous communities and nations.

Policy Objectives

- Strengthen youth programming, participation and partnership in support of Agency development objectives.

- Mainstream and integrate youth issues and engage young people across Agency initiatives and operations.

workforce development programs, improving the quality of tertiary education in support of country development priorities and increasing access to workforce development opportunities for underserved populations.

We have pursued public-private partnerships as an essential tool for collaborating with the private sector to integrate labor market considerations into workforce development programs. By leveraging private sector funds to support both development and private sector labor market goals, the public sector is more likely to be responsive to the workforce needs of the private sector and to provide pathways to employment for program graduates. An example of such a public-private partnership is the USAID-McKinsey Generation program in India, Kenya and Mexico to train and employ marginalized youth. The partnership delivers training in high demand skill areas that provide a career path for young people.

Building evidence to help youth find and keep jobs

An ongoing challenge in the field of workforce development is teasing out which skills lead to measurable improvement in employment and wages for youth. Complicating this challenge are the different measurement approaches used across programs and contexts, making it difficult to build a critical mass of evidence to guide policy and programming decisions. In 2013, USAID commissioned the report, "State of the Field Report: Examining Evidence in Youth Workforce Development," which highlighted the importance of knowing what package of workforce development services works best for which populations of youth. It also found that, in order to determine which services to target, strong research methods are needed to measure the achievement of long-term outcomes.

In response, USAID has worked to generate evidence in areas of youth engagement where adequate evidence did not yet exist, including:

- Identifying the most cost-effective components of successful interventions, and differentiating these for specific segments of youth – especially rural and university-educated youth.

- Best practices for measuring livelihoods and resilience when working with extremely poor and most vulnerable populations.

- Identifying and measuring the most important soft skills youth need for employment and entrepreneurship, and being able to measure whether or how these skills result in employment and increased earnings.

- Cost-effective ways to achieve scale and sustainability in youth workforce development.

Investing in Higher Education Systems in Partnership with U.S. Universities and Companies

USAID's investments in higher education reflect both global and country level strategies, but in all instances, partnership is a critical element. At the country level, USAID has instituted partnerships such as its programs in Vietnam, where the USAID Mission is partnering Vietnamese universities with Arizona State University, Harvard Medical School, Pearson, Intel, Oracle, Roche, Johnson & Johnson, GE, Samsung and other corporations to transform Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and medical education. As a result of this co-creation, university staff have been included in private sector competitions focused on innovation and collaborations to design classrooms that have active learning approaches.

USAID-supported higher education partnerships prioritize leveraging science, technology, innovation (STI) as a pathway to developing world-class higher education institutions critical to developing a workforce equipped to meet the demands and challenges of the "knowledge-based economy." USAID assistance in this area works across sectors to help create a sound policy environment for public and private sector investments in STI, strengthen research systems and develop new technologies in partnership with host country and U.S. higher education institutions, and invest in STI-based innovation to accelerate inclusive and resilient growth.

At the global level, since 2012, the USAID Higher Education Solutions Network (HESN) has supported development labs at seven universities that engage students, researchers, faculty and their partners in innovating scientific and technological approaches to the world's most challenging development problems. By evaluating and field-testing approaches in partnership with local institutions, HESN Development Labs identify solutions that are efficient, cost-effective, accessible and sustainable and then strategize how to apply them on a large scale. With funding over five years from USAID and matching investments from the universities, the HESN network has grown into a vibrant collaboration among more than 650 partner institutions in academia, civil society and government in more than 65 countries.

USAID ON THE GROUND

Youth Employment and Empowerment

Yes Youth Can! is one of the largest USAID youth empowerment programs to exist, covering approximately 60 percent of Kenya. The program was created in response to the 2007 post-election violence involving Kenya's youth, with the goal of empowering Kenya's oft-marginalized youth — economically, politically and socially — through the creation, training and support of self-led and managed youth groups. An independent evaluation found that Yes Youth Can! led to improvements in youth self-esteem, improved relations between youth and their communities and some increased political engagement.

Educating Youth for Careers in Science and Technology

Through the Philippines' STRIDE (Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development) program, USAID is bringing together U.S. universities, Philippine academic institutions and industries to produce collaborative, applied research; graduates who are well prepared for careers in science and technology; and stronger government-academia-industry networks to sustain capacity development. As of February 2016, STRIDE had awarded approximately $3 million in collaborative science, technology and innovative research grants to more than 20 universities around the Philippines. It has awarded 31 scholarships to Filipinos to study in U.S. universities, provided advanced technical training to scientists and researchers, brought in 16 U.S. visiting professors and is establishing 10 knowledge and technology transfer offices in select universities in the Philippines.

Goal Three:
Education in Crisis and Conflict

Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015:

- Safe learning opportunities for children and youth provided

- Crisis prevention strengthened

- Institutional capacity to provide services strengthened

Over the strategy period USAID supported
91 EiCC programs in 22 crisis and conflict-affected countries.

GOAL THREE

At the launch of the strategy, we saw increasing global attention to the impact crisis and conflict has on education. Children living in countries affected by violence represented more than half of the then 70 million out-of-school children of primary age.

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy responded to this challenge by establishing a target of increased equitable access to education for 15 million learners. Over the 2011-2015 period, USAID supported 91 programs aligned with these objectives in 22 crisis and conflict-affected countries. Through these programs, we have improved or established quality education in safe learning environments for a total of 11.8 million individual children and youth in crisis and conflict environments (5.6m female, 6.2m male). This number includes access to education for 2.4 million who were previously out-of-school (1.1m female, 1.3m male)[16]. We have created safe learning opportunities for children and youth through formal and non-formal education programming, strengthening efforts to use education as a tool to prevent future crises, and building the capacity of local institutions to deliver education services.

Our EiCC programming has supported a diverse array of interventions to address the context-specific challenges for education across the settings where we work. Our programming ranges from creating temporary learning spaces for children whose education was disrupted by natural disaster in Nepal and human-made crisis in Mali, accelerated learning and life-skills programming for out-of-school youth in El Salvador, school enrollment drives in Pakistan and providing safe learning environments with psychosocial support for learners in South Sudan.

Change in School Access

The overarching target outcome for EiCC programming is increased access to education for out-of-school children and youth. A breadth and diversity of needs must be addressed in order to increase access to education. Programming aligned with this goal includes support directly to creating learning opportunities for out-of-school children as well as programs that indirectly support school access by addressing underlying issues such as school safety, quality and relevance of education, community support for education and conflict sensitivity in education delivery. Although all of these efforts ultimately support access to education, it is difficult to draw a measurable link between activities that indirectly address school access and a specific number of children or youth who gain access to education. The figure of 2.4 million out-of-school children and youth who gained access to education through our programming is a conservative number drawn only from the 38 programs that directly target and measure school access. Although the remaining programs undoubtedly support school access as well, we do not attempt to quantify this result.

---

[16] Of these 11.8 million, 0.9 million were reported by USAID Missions as estimated values, which may be adjusted in future reporting cycles.
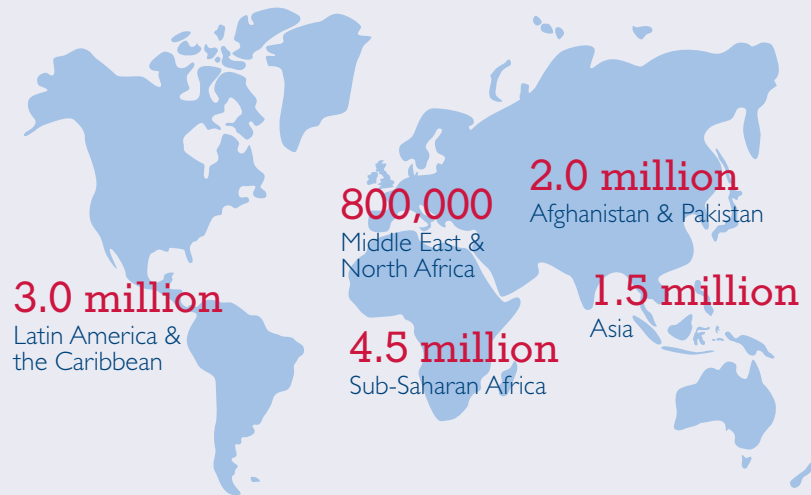
Education in Crisis and Conflict Network (ECCN)

USAID supported the development of the ECCN, which promotes knowledge generation and sharing among a network of more than 500 practitioners, policymakers and researchers. ECCN has emerged as a resource to facilitate engagement and professional development of network members and a nexus for the development, refinement and distribution of an array of guides and tools for the sector.

Goal Three Key Successes

Students Reached, by Region (2011-2015)

3.0 million
Latin America & the Caribbean

800,000
Middle East & North Africa

4.5 million
Sub-Saharan Africa

2.0 million
Afghanistan & Pakistan

1.5 million
Asia

47% Female | **53%** Male

EiCC programs improved or established quality education in safe learning environments for 11.8 million students (5.6m female, 6.2m male).

Students Reached, 2011-2015 (in millions)

3.3 million — 2011
3.4 million — 2012
3.8 million — 2013
4.8 million — 2014
5.7 million — 2015
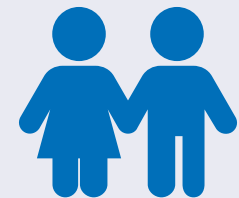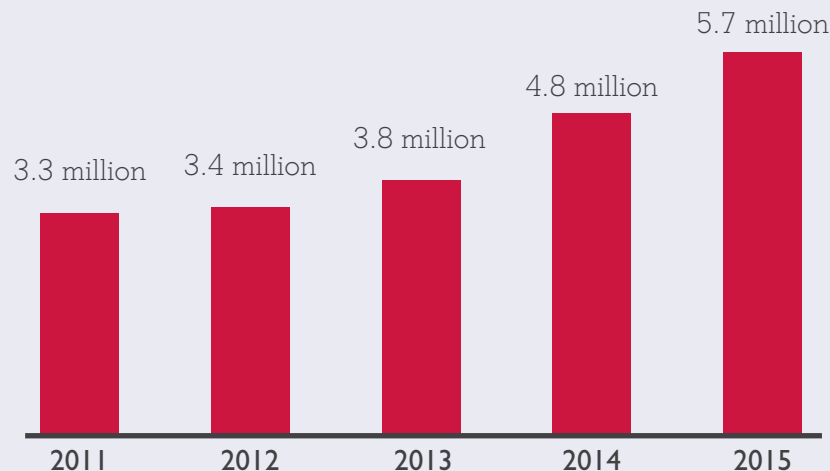
46% Female | **54%** Male

EiCC programs provided access to education for 2.4 million children and youth (1.1m female, 1.3m male) who were previously out of school.

How We Measure Increased Access to Education

Our estimate of the number of children and youth with increased access to education is based on data reported through USAID Missions that is based on reporting by implementing partners. On an annual basis, USAID Missions are asked to report the number of out-of-school children or youth who gain access to primary or secondary school (or the non-formal equivalents of primary or secondary school) through EiCC programming. Reporting is focused on programs that are explicitly designed to create new opportunities targeting out-of-school children. Examples include establishing new Alternative Learning Centers or formal schools that will educate children who are out of school, efforts to create temporary learning spaces for displaced populations, and the reopening of learning spaces that had been rendered unusable through crisis or conflict.

In Burma, Haiti, Honduras and Yemen, our country and donor partners have integrated USAID-developed approaches and technical resources into their own efforts. At no further cost to USAID, these partners have extended our technical reach to at least 1.8 million additional children and youth in crisis and conflict environments (900,000 female, 900,000 male), expanding the overall influence of USAID education in crisis and conflict programming to an estimated 13.6 million learners (6.5m female, 7.1m male).

Because gender disparities are frequently exacerbated in crisis and conflict environments, we worked to provide equitable access to education for girls and young women in challenging circumstances. In Somalia, we substantially increased girls' and young women's access to education with females representing over two-thirds of the children in our programs. In Afghanistan, only 40 percent of primary school students are girls, however our education programs intentionally targeted girls and young women improving access to beyond parity in most cases.

Foundational Achievements

A broad range of contextual issues affect the ability of EiCC programming to deliver equitable access to education in fragile environments. USAID supports education programming in a variety of conflict-affected settings: conflict at a national level, conflict or marginalization within or across national boundaries, areas of high violence (gang-related violence, gender-based violence, areas of violent extremism) and the aftermath of natural disasters. USAID Mission programming in fragile environments is tailored to the unique operating environment and the specific needs of the target population.

Improved convergence on education in humanitarian programming

We have worked in coordination and collaboration with other key actors including DFID, Norway, UNICEF and UNHCR to advance the education in emergencies agenda. Within USAID, we established the expectation that education is a critical component of crisis response, and defined standards for the provision of education services that go beyond the short-term focus of humanitarian responses. We have also steered USAID programming to support education for displaced populations in Nigeria, Jordan and Lebanon.

In addition to the efforts that support student-level outcomes, USAID has been a pivotal actor in global efforts to elevate global practices in crisis and conflict environments. Through the United Nations-led Global Education First Initiative, USAID entered into partnerships designed to get every child into school, improve the quality of education and foster global citizenship. Through our work on this initiative, new activities are being designed in the DRC, Haiti, Liberia and Nigeria with additional tranches of funding to support the initiative. We are also partnering with UNICEF in the DRC, Mali, Pakistan and South Sudan to leverage interventions for increased impact. Designs will incorporate planning for scalability and measurement for the cost effectiveness of interventions.

Established and institutionalized good practices and guiding frameworks for programming in crisis and conflict

USAID supported the development of tools such as the Rapid Education Risk Analysis (RERA) Tool and the Checklist for Conflict Sensitivity in Education Programs. Through the RERA, USAID will systematically ensure that education programming is sensitive to various contextual risks, does not exacerbate conflict dynamics or disaster vulnerabilities and builds social cohesion and resilience. USAID is also developing tools to measure school safety based on lessons learned and best practices.

Provided leadership and direction to the creation of the Education Cannot Wait Fund

In 2015, USAID took a leadership role in partnership with DFID, Norway, UNICEF and UNHCR to better meet the education needs of millions of children and young people affected by crises around the world. USAID provided technical and institutional direction to the development of the Education Cannot Wait platform, launched in May 2016, which prioritizes capacity strengthening at the national level by supporting existing entities and making use of existing tools and frameworks. The U.S. government made an initial financing contribution of $21 million to the fund to support the establishment of its structure and incentivize new donors to invest in education in crisis and conflict.

USAID ON THE GROUND

School Committees to Combat Violence and Discrimination

USAID education programming in El Salvador established committees in schools that promote gender equality and deal with issues such as discrimination, bullying and sexual violence. The program created 410 committees with the participation of 1,385 students (63 percent girls) in 2014. We provided specific support to ensure that children with disabilities are given the opportunity to participate equally in classrooms, and trained around 300 school principals in inclusive education and strategies to increase gender equality and inclusion.

Non-Formal Learning to Continue Education During Conflict

In response to unpredictable violent insurgency in northeastern Nigeria, USAID developed the Education Crisis Response activity, a flexible and responsive program that adjusts to the evolving education needs of internally displaced children and their host communities. By establishing non-formal learning centers, the Education Crisis Response activity helps students gain basic literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills needed to enter or return to education and rebuild their lives. Approximately 400 non-formal learning centers were set up in communities hosting large numbers of displaced families to ease the burden placed on already overcrowded public schools. Of the 14,300 student beneficiaries, 48 percent were girls.

Educating Refugees and Host-Country Students

In Lebanon, we supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's strategy to improve learning in 92 public schools, supplying 13,000 textbooks and other teaching and learning materials and delivering in-service teacher training for 2,900 teachers, educators and teaching assistants. In the 2015/2016 school year, we built on this work by supporting the government to expand access to formal education for over 78,000 vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian children in public schools.

Education During Crisis

In Liberia, when the Ebola outbreak occurred in 2014, USAID quickly mobilized support to ensure education continued by supplying over 300,000 teaching and learning kits to 1,230 schools and using education as a medium to educate communities on sanitation and public health.

A focus on measurable student-level outcomes, pursued through partnership and collaborative, coordinated action, is essential for the achievement of sustainable wide-scale education outcomes.

We will build on the strong foundation set by the 2011-2015 Education Strategy to track impact and results, and strengthen the evidence and investment case for education to support effective programming and partnerships.

The Road Ahead

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 reaffirmed the crucial work under the 2011-2015 USAID Education Strategy to improve access to quality education for children and youth.

SDG 4, "Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning," further bolsters USAID's commitment to partner with governments, other donors, civil society and the private sector to achieve meaningful and lasting improvements in education outcomes for children and youth around the world.

The ambitious targets of the 2011-2015 Education Strategy helped to galvanize USAID's efforts and stimulate a global conversation on the scale of the crises in learning in early grades, workforce development and higher education opportunities for youth, and access to education in conflict and crisis environments. Our efforts and partnerships over the last five years sought to address these crises head on. This report is the first in a series of progress reports that will document the impact of the strategy though 2020 when the full results will be known.

We will build on the strong foundation set by the 2011-2015 Education Strategy to track impact and results, and strengthen the evidence and investment case for education. Through more effective programming and partnerships, we will continue to support governments in their strategies to deliver quality education for all children, preparing them to lead healthy, productive lives.

U.S. Agency for International Development
Ronald Reagan Building
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20523-1000

usaid.gov
officeofeducation@usaid.gov