


USAID EDUCATION POLICY

November 2018

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Cover: Clockwise from top left: (1) Student and engineer Amani, left, works with a blind student at the Peace Center for the Blind in East Jerusalem. Credit: USAID/West Bank Gaza; (2) Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP) Vocational Faculty Development training with Arizona State University hosts faculty from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Credit: USAID/Vietnam; (3) Students in early grade reading program in Bangladesh. Credit: Kate Maloney/USAID. (4) Teacher instructing children in Nigeria. **Credit:** USAID/Nigeria.

Inside Cover: Inclusive education program in Nyamagabe, Rwanda. **Credit:** Kate Maloney/USAID.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to share with you USAID's Education Policy. This policy puts education as the foundational driver of a country's journey to self-reliance. Investing in high-quality education for all children and youth builds the human capital partner countries need to lead their own development and growth.

This policy is particularly important to me because I started my career as a teacher. My wife, Sue, and I volunteered as high school teachers in rural Kenya and saw first-hand the power that a quality education has on the lives and futures of children and youth. Now, decades later, that experience as a teacher shapes my approach to development each and every day. When we give children the skills they need to succeed and grow, they have the potential to flourish and innovate to transform their lives, their families' lives, and their communities.

As this policy lays out, in many contexts, the most marginalized children and youth still lack the educational opportunities they need and deserve. This is nowhere more acute than in crisis and conflict settings. The families I meet with, particularly those who are displaced or affected by violence, conflict, or natural disasters, say that the most important thing they want for their children is a good education. Today, we risk an entire lost generation of children and youth who are growing up displaced by conflict and crisis without access to that education.

This policy provides the whole Agency with a framework for supporting our partner countries in strengthening their capacity to deliver quality learning opportunities for children and youth. We know we can't do this alone. We will seek out and strengthen partnerships that leverage local, regional, and global knowledge, innovation, and resources to ensure American taxpayer investments lead to sustainable learning outcomes.

Mark Green
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

A student in San Pedro Sula, Honduras participates in a USAID-funded program that prevents violence, provides counseling to students affected by violence, and strengthens communities.
Credit: Anna Roberts/USAID.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our vision is a world where partner country education systems enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. Education is the great equalizer and the great enabler. When children and youth are prepared to go to school, learn, and gain the skills they need for life and work, they are able to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, communities, and countries.

Equal access to quality education is a foundational driver of a country's journey to self-reliance. Quality education leads to greater economic growth, improved health outcomes, sustained democratic governance, and more peaceful and resilient societies. USAID's education investments support partner countries to strengthen their capacity to achieve sustainable, quality learning and education outcomes. In the education sector, self-reliance describes a country's ability to sustainably finance and equitably deliver services that improve learning outcomes and skill acquisition for all children and youth.

This policy applies to education programming across all levels (from pre-primary through higher education), contexts (stable contexts to crisis and conflict-affected environments), settings (formal and non-formal), and providers (state and non-state).

The principles laid out in the policy should drive decision-making on education investments in support of the vision that partner country education systems must enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society:

- Prioritize country-focus and ownership
- Focus and concentrate investments on measurably and sustainably improving learning and educational outcomes
- Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions
- Work in partnership and leverage resources
- Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data
- Promote equity and inclusion

The priority areas laid out in the policy serve as a general framing and orientation for USAID's work in education. Throughout these areas, USAID education investments may cut across education levels, types of institutions, and learning environments. These priorities illustrate key areas that are critical to supporting countries on their journey to self-reliance:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

Students in Bangladesh during a Rapid Education and Risk Analysis conducted by USAID.
Credit: Kate Maloney/USAID.

INTRODUCTION

Our vision is a world in which education systems in our partner countries enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society. Education is the great equalizer and the great enabler. When children and youth are prepared to go to school, learn, and gain the skills they need for life and work, they are able to build more hopeful and prosperous futures for themselves, their families, communities, and countries.

The primary purpose of programming in education by the U.S. Agency International Development (USAID) is to achieve sustained, measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills development. USAID's investments should support country-level partners to measurably improve key learning and educational outcomes, and do so in a way that promotes quality, equity, sustainability, and advances self-reliance. This policy applies to education programming across all levels (from pre-primary through higher education), contexts (stable contexts to crisis and conflict-affected environments), settings (formal and non-formal), and providers (state and non-state).[1]

Education is a foundational driver of development and self-reliance. Equal access to quality education can create pathways for greater economic growth, improved health outcomes, sustained democratic governance, and more peaceful and resilient societies.[2] Countries with an educated and skilled workforce are stronger trade partners for the United States, and the fastest-growing export markets for U.S. goods are in developing countries.[3] A well-educated population is essential for countries to progress along their journey to self-reliance. To achieve this, countries must be able to lead their own development by sustainably financing and delivering services, through both state and non-state providers, that measurably improve learning outcomes and skills for all children and youth from early childhood, primary and secondary education to youth workforce development and higher education–in both formal and non-formal settings. Parents, caregivers, and communities must have the knowledge and support to advocate for, and make informed choices about, their children's education.

Better education supports U.S. national security and foreign policy priorities. By working with partner countries to strengthen the formation of human capital, USAID education programming contributes directly to the U.S. Government's foreign policy objectives outlined in the President's *National Security Strategy (NSS)* and the Department of State and

USAID's *Joint Strategic Plan (JSP)* for Fiscal Year 2018-2022, and relevant regional strategies. The fourth pillar of the NSS–Advance American Influence–prioritizes strengthening countries' capacity to achieve sustainable development outcomes, a goal that depends directly on the strength of the education sector.

The second strategic objective of the JSP is to "promote healthy, educated, and productive populations in partner countries to drive inclusive and sustainable development, open new markets, and support U.S. prosperity and security objectives." USAID's investments across the education continuum operate under these frameworks to ensure children and youth have the skills needed to be productive members of society.

The *U.S. Government Strategy for International Basic Education (FY 2019-2023)* reinforces these foreign policy objectives and serves as a foundation for USAID education investments.[4] This *Strategy* responds to the *Reinforcing Education Accountability in Development (READ) Act*, signed into law by the President in September 2017, which is intended to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the U.S. Government's international basic education programs by increasing coordination and leveraging each Department, Agency, and official's unique expertise at the global and country level. USAID education investments align with and support the objectives of the *Strategy*: 1) improve learning outcomes; and, 2) expand access to quality basic education for all, particularly marginalized and vulnerable populations.

USAID will build on its considerable experience and results in the education sector. Over the last decade, USAID set forth an ambitious agenda to measurably improve learning outcomes. By emphasizing focus and selectivity in our education investments, we were able to measure our impact and build the evidence base for the components of effective programming. From 2011 to 2017, USAID education investments reached 109 million children and youth in more than 50 countries. USAID's programs have improved learning outcomes; strengthened educational institutions so children and youth stay and thrive in school and have better employment opportunities; and enabled and empowered higher education institutions to contribute to research and innovate to solve development challenges. USAID will continue to produce publicly available reports on the results and progress made in the education sector, with a focus on learning and educational outcomes under the priorities of this policy.

This policy builds on lessons learned from these efforts and will ensure USAID's education investments continue to be grounded in evidence-based best practices that are adapted to the local context and aligned with each country's priorities. The policy lays out principles that drive decision-making and investments in education programming. It also lays out priority areas that serve as a general framing and orientation for USAID's work in education. These priorities define the key areas for programming and investment that are critical to supporting countries on their journey to self-reliance.

Principles:

- Prioritize country-focus and ownership
- Focus and concentrate investments on measurably and sustainably improving learning and educational outcomes
- Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions
- Work in partnership and leverage resources
- Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data
- Promote equity and inclusion

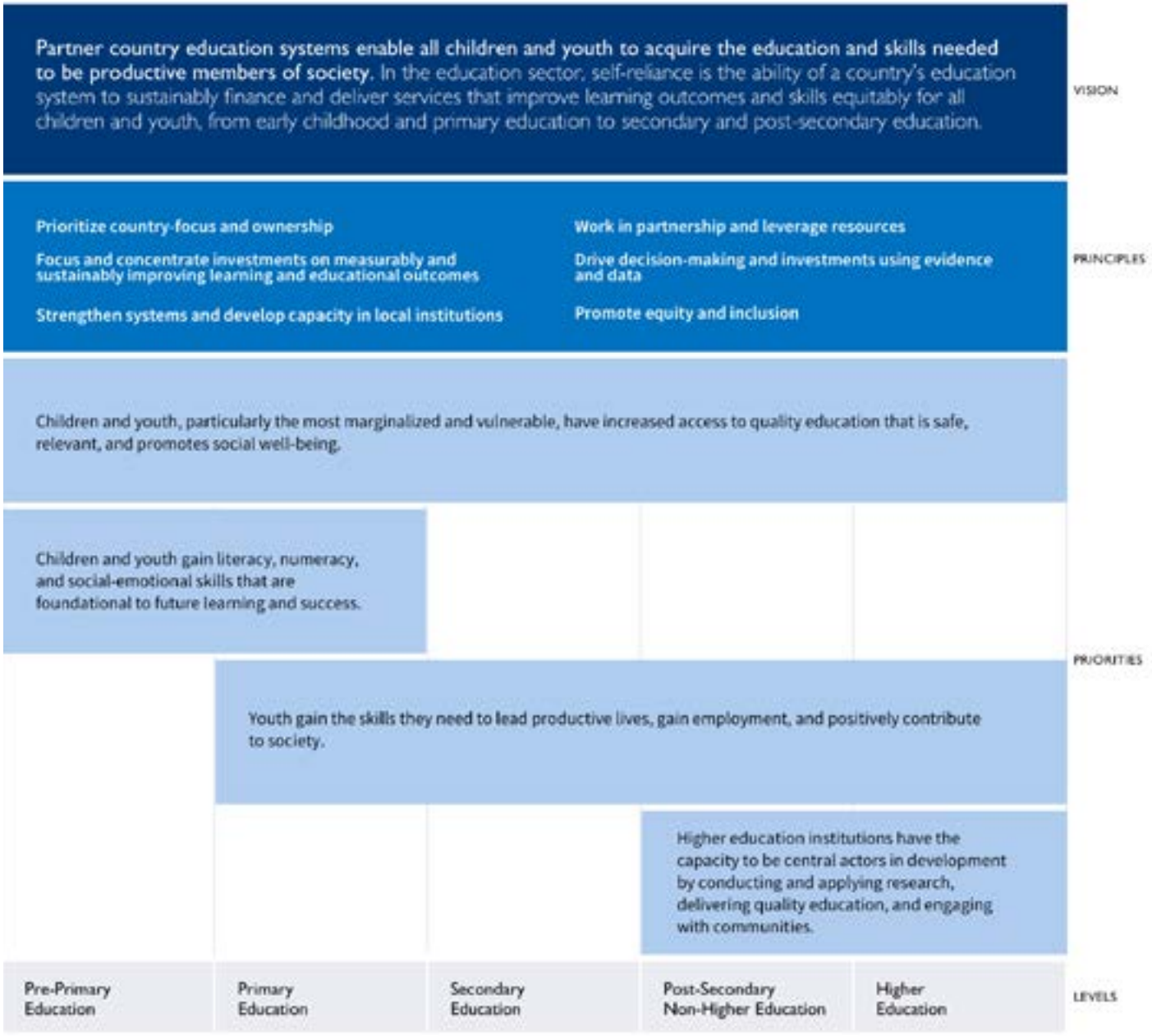
Priorities:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

To support these priority learning and educational outcomes, USAID will place a strong emphasis on a select group of key issues and approaches. These issues are interwoven and highlighted throughout the policy, and they are relevant to each of the priority areas.

- Educating children and youth who are facing adversity, conflict, and crisis, particularly girls and those who are displaced;
- Engaging with non-state actors and the promotion of finance and delivery innovations to expand access to quality education;
- Investing directly in local institutions;
- Strengthening country capacity to generate and use education data to drive transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making; and
- Transforming teacher policies and professional development systems to increase the availability of qualified teachers and improve instruction.

At a Glance: USAID's Education Policy



EDUCATION CONTEXT

Quality education is the greatest investment a country can make in its future and its people. It is the enabler for all other development sectors. Globally, the number of children and youth in pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher education levels has increased. Today, while 91 percent of primary age and 84 percent of lower-secondary age children and youth are enrolled in some form of education, and gross enrollment rates in higher education have increased to nearly 38 percent, great need still remains.[5]

Millions of youth are still not being educated, trained, or employed. Ninety percent of the world's 1.2 billion young people between ages 15 and 24 live in developing countries.[6] When youth are educated, healthy, employed, and civically engaged, they have the power to drive economic growth, democracy, resilience, and prosperity. However, when the needs of youth are not addressed, poverty, violence, and unrest can follow. Countries with large youth populations are statistically at greater risk of conflict and political violence, especially when combined with a lack of employment opportunities.[7] Quality education investments have the power to harness the potential of youth, yet 100 million youth are illiterate.[8] Working-age youth are three times more likely than adults to be unemployed or underemployed, rates that are significantly higher in developing countries than the global average.[9] Young women are particularly excluded–globally, only 37 percent of young women participate in the labor force, compared to 54 percent of young men.[10]

There is a learning crisis. Although school enrollment has risen, some regions and populations continue to lag behind in both access and learning. More than 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary school age worldwide—58 percent of that age group—are not reaching minimum proficiency in reading and math.[11] In many low-income countries, more than half of students in the early grades cannot read a single word, even in their local language.[12] Moreover, children and youth in low-income countries are less likely to receive any education, either formal or informal, particularly marginalized groups including girls and children or youth with disabilities. Though pre-primary education and early stimulation is crucial to prepare children for school, 43 percent of children under five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of poor cognitive development and stunted growth due to extreme poverty and lack of nutritious food, particularly in the first 1,000 days of life.[13] At the other end of the education continuum, higher education enrollment rates in low-income countries are only 10 percent, far below the nearly 70 percent gross enrollment rates in high-income countries.[14]

Teachers are central to learners' success, but often do not have the training and resources needed to be effective. There is a shortage of trained teachers in many countries–69 million new teachers are needed by 2030 to provide every child with primary and secondary education.[15] Across all levels, the quality of instruction must improve. School management must serve as instructional leaders, support teachers with coaching, and hold them to account for attendance and performance. Compounding this, many students either lack books or are required to share them with others. Where there are books, many are of low quality and/or not written in languages the teachers or students use or understand, including local languages.[16] Missing or outdated equipment and a lack of textbooks, lab supplies, and other educational materials create challenges to teaching, learning, and skills development for children and youth across all levels of education.

Conflicts and crises disrupt education. Displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and limited access to learning opportunities from human-made or natural disasters can result in entire generations of children and youth missing out on an education, limiting the ability of a country to recover and build its social, economic, and cultural capacity. More than 75 million children and youth between the ages of three and 18, living in crisis or conflict-affected countries, are in need of educational support.[17] Of these, 17 million are school-age refugees, internally displaced, and other populations of concern. Though children and youth affected by crises have the potential to be the future leaders in rebuilding their home countries, only one percent of students displaced by crisis or conflict enroll in some form of post-secondary education.[18]

Teacher and students in USAID's Reading Enhancement for Advancing Development (READ) project in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. **Credit:** Morgana Wingard/USAID.

EDUCATION IS FUNDAMENTAL TO ACHIEVING SELF-RELIANCE

"Self-reliance" entails a capacity to plan, finance, and implement solutions to local development challenges, and a commitment to see these through effectively, inclusively, and with accountability. If we are to end the need for foreign assistance, USAID must understand how self-reliant each of its partner countries are overall, where a country's strengths and challenges lie, and reorient partnerships accordingly. Ultimately, the programs we implement must support each country's journey to self-reliance.

"At USAID, we believe that if countries are willing to make the tough choices...then we should step forward. We should walk with them on their journey to self-reliance. We should be there to help foster those institutions, which experience has shown us, make all the difference."

-USAID Administrator Mark Green

Self-reliance in the education sector is the ability of a country to sustainably finance and equitably deliver services that measurably improve learning outcomes and skill acquisition for all children and youth, from early childhood and primary education to secondary and higher education. The journey to self-reliance in education depends upon the capacity for, and commitment to, plan, finance, and deliver education and related services effectively, inclusively, and accountably.

A country's **capacity** to measurably produce learning outcomes relies on its ability to ensure the following:

- Children and youth are prepared to learn in a safe environment;
- Teachers, instructors, and faculty members have the skills, motivation, and support to teach effectively;
- Inputs, such as textbooks and instructional materials, reach classrooms at all educational levels and improve learning; and
- Management and governance structures support education quality, whether provided by state or non-state schools and providers.[19]

More than 60 percent of national leaders in low- and middle-income countries named education as a top priority for their countries to tackle.[20]

Countries take action on their **commitment** to education by aligning their laws, policies, actions, and informal governance mechanisms to produce learning results, including through the following:

- Systematically assessing learning;
- Using evidence to set priorities and inform policies;
- Mobilizing and devoting sufficient domestic resources to education so as to end dependence on external funding; and
- Tackling system-level technical and political barriers to change.[21]

Education supports self-reliance across sectors. The sustainability of investments across all sectors requires skilled populations capable of leading and managing their own development. Human capital development through education contributes to addressing poverty reduction, health and nutrition, economic growth, and labor market opportunities, as well as peacebuilding, social cohesion, and the promotion of democratic institutions.[22] An increase in the number of universities is positively associated with faster economic growth.[23] Supporting opportunities for lifelong learning allows countries and societies to prepare for and adapt to changing economies and environments.

Education fosters individual self-reliance. The concept of self-reliance not only applies to countries, systems and institutions, but also, importantly, to the children, youth, and communities who benefit from education. Education provides strong returns in individual earnings and income.[24] Education can provide people with the capability to act independently, advocate for improved government policies, adapt to changing conditions, and make the most of their assets and opportunities.[25] Inclusive education policies and practices help advance learning and skills for all children and youth, particularly individuals with disabilities. In conflict and crisis contexts, particularly those that cause displacement, individuals with education and skills can be more resilient, adaptive to new environments, and better equipped to find new livelihood opportunities.[26]

There are no shortcuts to achieving sustained improvements in education. There are cases of incredible success, documented good practices, and lessons from education systems around the world.[27] The learning outcomes prioritized by partner countries may also be shared across countries and regions. However, the journey to self-reliance is unique to each country context–it will take a globally- informed but locally-rooted approach. Self-reliance requires sustained, collective efforts of the whole education community–including governments, schools, academia, teachers, parents and caregivers, youth, the private sector, community organizations, and donors–to strategically and deliberately address weaknesses and leverage the strengths of a country's education system over time.

Self-Reliance Metrics

USAID has identified 17 indicators that measure country-level self-reliance in terms of commitment and capacity. The seven commitment indicators describe the extent of political and economic freedom within the country and the extent to which all citizens are treated fairly. The 10 capacity indicators capture facets of a country's progress to peace and prosperity, including inclusive economic growth, effective domestic resource mobilization and service delivery, citizen security, and the social well-being of children. Education is included in two of the metrics on capacity: (1) Government Effectiveness; and (2) Education Quality.

Country Roadmaps

The Country Roadmap is an analytic tool that visualizes each country's overall level of self-reliance and performance on each of the 17 self-reliance metrics. The Roadmaps allow USAID to see where all countries are in their journeys to self-reliance, both individually and relative to the rest of the world. The Roadmaps help USAID develop better country strategies, engage in development policy dialogue, and think about when to consider countries for possible strategic transition conversations.[29]

SUPPORTING THE JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE IN EDUCATION

- Partner country education system sustainably finances and delivers equitable educational and learning outcomes for all children and youth (without donor-funded assistance). Bilateral relationship transitions away from aid and toward policy coordination and sharing good practices.
- Donor approaches shift to focus mainly on key issues such as: policy and regulation; organizational structures and processes; budget allocation and execution; transparency; and accountability. Donors may convene education stakeholders and facilitate dialogue on issues of common concern and/or provide technical assistance to partner country governments for them to finance and deliver large-scale reforms.
- Donor approaches provide complementary support such as: policy development; capacity and organizational development support; training for administrators and officials; testing new approaches and technologies; strengthening governance systems and accountability; and co-financing large-scale reform policies and programs implemented through partner country systems.
- Education services provided and financed by partner country institutions (state or non-state) in partner country facilities with complementary donor-funded activities such as: sector planning support and policy development; conducting learning assessments; capacity and organizational development support; training for teachers, administrators, and officials; printing or distribution of materials; and school construction and rehabilitation.
- Significant donor funding and support for basic inputs to, and functions of, education systems and policy development. Education services may be directly provided by donor-funded providers (e.g. NGOs) in donor-funded facilities or communities, or by private actors with donor-procured teaching and learning materials.

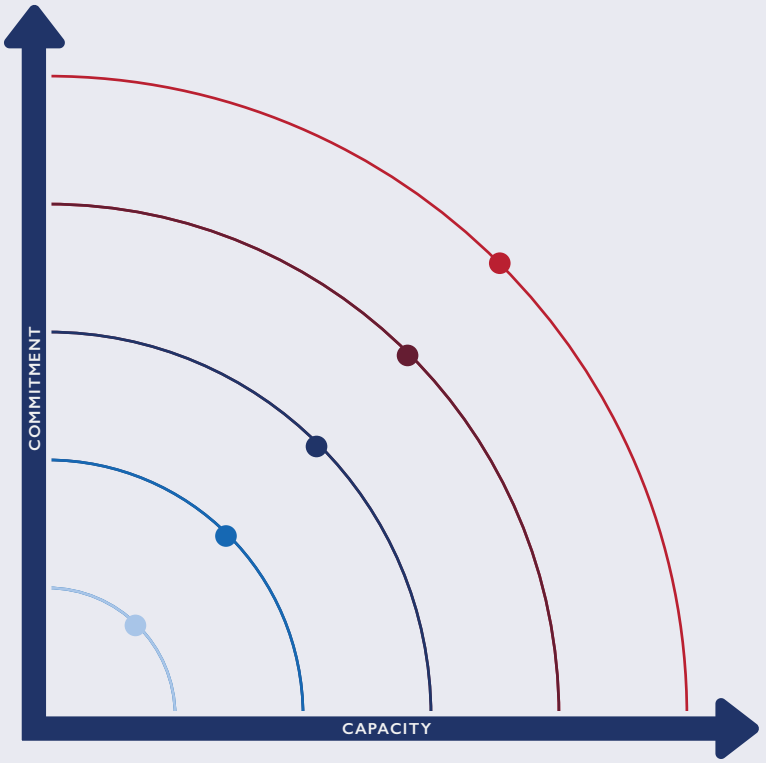


Figure 1. Supporting the Journey to Self-Reliance in Education

USAID will consider a range of approaches and investments to support self-reliance, including working with various stakeholders, the private sector and funders on shared priorities as relevant to the country context. USAID's Self-Reliance Metrics and Country Roadmaps can help inform policy dialogue with governments, civil society, the private sector, and development partners on approaches and strategic directions.[28] Figure 1 provides a continuum of approaches to consider along the spectrum from low capacity and commitment to high capacity and commitment.

While this view shows a general trajectory, and indicates potential shifts along it, the reality is that improvements and change are not guaranteed, predictable, or linear. Capacity and commitment will vary by sub-national and local levels as well as by education level; some provinces may outperform others, effectiveness in the delivery of primary education may far exceed that of the secondary and higher education levels, and crisis and conflict can set back progress in affected areas. The movement toward greater capacity and commitment may need to be supported through multiple, successive country strategies and programs. USAID's programming, investments, and engagement should adapt to promote continual improvement, prevent or mitigate backsliding, and play a strategic and supporting role on the journey to self-reliance.

Children reading in a USAID-funded literacy program in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. **Credit:** Julie Polumbo/USAID.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The principles laid out below should drive USAID's decision-making and investments in education programming in support of the vision that partner country education systems must enable all children and youth to acquire the education and skills needed to be productive members of society:

- Prioritize country-focus and ownership
- Focus investments on measurably and sustainably improving outcomes
- Strengthen systems and develop capacity in local institutions
- Work in partnership and leverage resources
- Drive decision-making and investments using evidence and data
- Promote equity and inclusion

Prioritize Country-Focus and Ownership

Start with an understanding of a country's education system and priorities.

Understanding each country's education priorities and desired outcomes–and how these outcomes relate to its development objectives–helps to better target effective country strategies that can be sustainably implemented. Many countries have national development strategies and education sector plans developed in consultation with multiple stakeholders as a means of setting priorities and promoting reforms. These plans may include key metrics to understand country capacity and commitment, the state of learning outcomes, and disparities and inequalities in education.[30]

Such metrics include the following: proportion of children under five years of age who are developmentally on track; participation in pre-primary education; learning outcomes in early grades, end of primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary; the proportion of youth not in education, employment, or training; and the gross enrollment ratio for higher education. Where this information is available, valid, and reliable, USAID Missions should use it to invest strategically; where it is not available, USAID will work with partner countries to collect, analyze, and leverage new data, methodologies, and technology.

USAID must tailor its investments in education programming to the local context and meet countries where they are in the maturity of their education systems.

Understanding the dynamics of the system requires looking beyond metrics and moving toward engaging with local actors, tapping into the expertise of local staff, and taking into account the range of evidence generated in country. This will help tailor programming to each country's needs, opportunities, and available resources.[31] Well-researched education interventions should be shared across contexts, with the understanding that what works in one context may or may not work in another, given the political economies and social conditions.

The challenge is to determine how to support the introduction and uptake of evidence-based interventions translated into contextualized and locally-owned solutions. Education in partner countries must have the capacity to embed effective approaches to improving learning and education outcomes, to innovate, and to withstand shocks and stresses. Education opportunities and challenges do not exist solely at the national level. Understanding sub-national and local issues can lead to more focused activities and identify disparities and inequalities, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations, including rural and remote populations or indigenous peoples. Similarly, violence, crisis, and conflict may span borders or administrative divisions, and require regionally coordinated or cross-border programs.

The capacity and effectiveness of governments to provide high-quality education varies across countries and contexts. Many children and youth would be denied access to education if not for non-state schools and providers[32] — including private, for-profit, non-profit, community, faith-based, and other non-governmental organizations.

USAID acknowledges that non-state institutions can contribute to the resolution of educational challenges and to improve learning and educational outcomes in alignment with national education sector plans. USAID also recognizes partner countries need to establish an enabling policy and regulatory environment to promote equity in access to services and in learning outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Where possible, USAID will take a forward-leaning position on engagement in this area, recognizing both the role of governments in providing stewardship and the need for innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to education delivery and finance.

Joint planning and identification of shared outcomes establishes a common vision.[33]

Working jointly with partners on shared outcomes–for example, through local education groups that include partner governments, civil society organizations, parents and caregivers, teachers' organizations, the private sector, students and youth, and other donors–is the key to sustaining measurable improvements in learning and educational outcomes. In particular, communities, parents, caregivers, and students themselves should be consulted and included in planning to best inform education priorities. Throughout the entire program cycle, particularly when developing country strategies, USAID Missions should involve local stakeholders in the planning process. This inclusiveness is central to promoting local ownership and financing, and will help align resources from partner country governments, donors, the private sector, and other stakeholders toward common outcomes.

Focus and Concentrate Investments on Measurably and Sustainably Improving Learning and Educational Outcomes

Focus on areas where we can support improvements that local institutions and resources can sustain as part of the journey to self-reliance and commit to long-term engagement.

Our priority learning and educational outcomes must match those of partner countries. Advocacy and policy dialogue efforts are necessary to shape partner country priorities, though our desire for, and commitment to, reforms cannot exceed their own. This does not mean that USAID will support any and all activities. We must identify shared outcomes and ensure that our assistance supports evidence-based programs and reforms in pursuit of measurably improved outcomes for children and youth.

There will undoubtedly be difficult trade-offs, including which outcomes to pursue, which populations to prioritize, and between short-term results and long-term sustained change. Achieving sustainable outcomes takes time and depends on partner country institutions, capacity, and political will.[34] This requires adaptive approaches that respond to the social and political dynamics that can accelerate or block technical solutions.[35] Programming should build on established foundations and carry forward the momentum needed to improve learning outcomes at scale,

particularly in areas where USAID has built considerable capacity and expertise, such as primary grade reading.

Be selective among and within education priorities.

The needs within partner countries will often far exceed USAID's capacity to provide assistance, but measurable and sustainable improvements in students' learning is our primary goal. To inform shared priorities, USAID Missions should use available data (or assist local stakeholders to generate new data) on learning outcomes across education levels, conduct sector analyses, identify leverage points, coordinate with other donors to identify comparative advantages, and engage in policy dialogue with partner country government counterparts, civil society, the private sector, teachers, and parents, particularly around issues of learning and educational outcomes for the most marginalized and vulnerable.[36]

Focusing on reforms in even a single skill area or educational level is challenging, let alone attempting to support multiple reforms across multiple educational levels. Teacher absenteeism, large class sizes, children and youth unprepared to learn, over-ambitious curricula, a lack of materials and books, and/or insufficient support systems within schools and communities can hinder the uptake of reforms across multiple areas. Because improving each skill area usually requires moderate to intensive investment in that area, USAID Missions should carefully sequence interventions, and advocate for implementing reform in the most critical and foundational skills first, followed by efforts to make change in other areas. Missions must determine how and where to focus their resources to make the greatest contribution to improve learning outcomes for all children and youth given the circumstances and conditions of the country.

Play a supporting role to large-scale, country-led efforts to measurably improve learning outcomes.

USAID's investments should support and influence country-led policies and programs to ensure that as many children and youth as possible have improved learning outcomes. Programs should be informed by examples of interventions–supported by evidence–that have been scaled-up to improve outcomes for millions of learners.[37]

The promotion and testing of innovations by USAID-funded programs should focus on generating evidence for and accelerating education reforms that countries can afford and have the capacity to implement. This includes all forms of innovations—from testing new technologies and seeking new partners to experimenting with collaborative forms of activity design and embracing adaptive and flexible implementation mechanisms.[38] Of particular interest are cost-effective service delivery models that can be brought to scale within the current resource envelope of a partner country–this may mean developing new models or supporting promising local efforts. In some instances, such as crisis and conflict-affected contexts, USAID should play a more direct role in financing and ensuring the delivery of services. Even in these cases, the goal of our assistance should be supporting a transition to the post-conflict/crisis stage and toward recovery.[39]

Consider the necessary and sufficient resources to support sustained change.

Consider the necessary and sufficient resources to support sustained change. Small financial investments in education programming should not be undertaken unless there is a compelling case they will result in significant partner country-led policy reforms or the generation of novel evidence from the evaluation of innovative pilot activities. Resource considerations also include human resources–Missions must have sufficient, experienced education specialists and staff to effectively design and manage the overall education portfolio, including engagement with partner country counterparts on policy issues.

Strengthen Systems and Develop Capacity in Local Institutions

Engage stakeholders throughout, and across, education and related systems.

USAID defines an education system as consisting of the people, public and private institutions, resources, and activities whose primary purpose is to improve, expand, and sustain learning and educational outcomes. Stakeholders include national and local governments, schools, teachers, instructors, unions, students, parents and caregivers, NGOs, faith-based and community organizations, universities, and the private sector, including firms that deliver education and training or ancillary services. In addition to Ministries of Education and Higher Education, other Ministries and branches of government–such as Ministries of Labor, Finance, Health, Youth, Agriculture, Water and Sanitation, Social Development, and Women or Gender–and their stakeholders have a valuable role in improving learning and educational outcomes. Advancing a country's education priorities requires taking into account the motivating factors, constraints, capacity, and commitment of these important stakeholders. The various actors and stakeholders in the system must be aligned, in their actions and their incentives, toward improving learning and educational outcomes.

Improve the capacity of a broad range of actors to contribute to achieving and sustaining learning and educational outcomes.

The interactions of the numerous and varied components of the education system are essential to its ability to successfully develop human capital. Good governance and accountability depend on a country's capacity and willingness to effectively regulate and invest domestic public and private financial resources in education. Partner countries must ensure accountability for, and efficient use of, existing resources invested in education. Investment in local leadership development can drive advocacy efforts and improve institutional priority-setting and decision-making; this includes engaging and empowering local communities.

USAID should directly fund local actors that have adequate program and financial management capacity. Where lack of finance is a binding

constraint to the improvement of learning outcomes, USAID should work, whenever possible, with government and other stakeholders to encourage improvements in public financial management and increased mobilization of domestic resources targeted toward efficiently improving learning outcomes. USAID should also encourage greater private investment in education, with a focus on equitably improving learning outcomes and making services more accessible. More broadly, USAID can support global and cross-border knowledge-sharing and learning through consolidating and documenting research and experiences, facilitating learning and trainings, and sharing new ideas and approaches with a range of partners and practitioners.

Capacity development activities should match commitments by stakeholders in partner countries to sustain improvements in their education systems.

This includes commitments to systematically assess outcomes, use evidence to set priorities and inform policies, maintain effective management information systems to track student and teacher outcomes, align pedagogy and training with workforce trends, and devote sufficient financial and human capital resources to education. Technical capacities are necessary for systems to effectively deliver learning outcomes. Yet, when it comes to large-scale reforms, the institutional and political aspects of education systems are equally important.[40]

Work in Partnership and Leverage Resources

Build partnerships with clear commitments from each partner to measurably improve learning and educational outcomes, scale, and sustainability.

USAID education investments are always undertaken in partnership, never alone. Our investments are one part of the bigger picture.[41] A core tenet of all USAID programming is to collaborate and coordinate with local, regional, and international stakeholders to increase efficiency, reduce duplication, and leverage our investments so as to increase self-reliance. These stakeholders include partner country governments, civil society, local partners, the private sector, other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies, teachers and teachers' associations, parents and caregivers, students, bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, academia, and international organizations. Strong collaboration maximizes talent, leverages resources, and reduces fragmentation and duplication. Partnerships should prioritize local institutions and be grounded in country ownership and priorities, including national or sub-national education plans that allow for coordination across development partners.

Leverage engagement with other donors, multilateral institutions, and international organizations.

Fundamental to USAID's value proposition is its ability to convene and leverage assets, resources, and relationships.

Global Book Alliance

A critical challenge to addressing the learning crisis is the children's book gap. In many countries, books are not accessible or available at the right level nor are they in languages children use and understand, including local languages. The Global Book Alliance is a partnership of donor agencies, multilateral institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that are committed to bringing books to every child in the world. The Alliance aims to ensure that the world's children have access to quality books with which they can learn to read, read to learn, and ultimately develop a lifelong love of reading.[48]

USAID will continue to engage with multilateral institutions, international organizations, other donors, and global funds–including the Global Partnership for Education and Education Cannot Wait–to provide leadership, technical expertise, and financing to influence resource allocations and programmatic decisions to ensure multilateral investments are complementary, sustainable, and not duplicative or fragmented. In crisis and conflict contexts, coordination should increase coherence and continuity between humanitarian and development actors to reduce delays in education and support learning outcomes.

Engage and work with the private sector, academia, and implementing organizations.

The private sector, academia, and implementing partners all bring innovative and sustainable approaches to educational challenges, including promoting equity and inclusion. They contribute to knowledge generation, technological innovation, and adaptation, and are valuable partners in developing the capacity and expertise of partner countries. USAID will seek creative and collaborative solutions to educational challenges, including exploring market-based and entrepreneurial approaches. The USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy provides a roadmap for working in partnership with the private sector, partner countries, and other stakeholders to achieve the greatest impact, particularly for reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable children and youth. For example, close partnerships with employers and business associations help ensure demand-driven, market-based skills development, and job placement.

Provide evidence and technical leadership on issues of non-state schools and providers to measurably and equitably improve learning outcomes.

It is a reality that in many countries, government capacity is limited and budgets are constrained. In some instances, non-state schools, universities, and other providers fill gaps where government provision of education is not accessible.[42] In others, parents choose to send their children to non-state schools because they perceive them to be of higher quality. USAID can help partner country governments establish an evidence base and develop their capacity to provide stewardship, oversight, and appropriate safeguards for non-state providers and public-private partnerships in education, while also helping incentivize the

USAID and Major League Baseball work through Baseball Cares to promote literacy and life skills to children in the Dominican Republic. Erison, 15, was one of the winners of a writing contest and has had his story illustrated and published. Credit: Thomas Cristofoletti/USAID.

private sector to contribute to the resolution of educational challenges. It is essential that reforms in this area focus on equitable improvements in learning and educational outcomes for marginalized and vulnerable populations, rather than exacerbating inequalities.[43]

Collaborate and coordinate across sectors for greater impact.

Coordinated, integrated cross-sectoral interventions have the potential to lead to greater outcomes than those implemented in isolation. Programs can improve learning outcomes while also improving key outcomes of importance to other sectors and vice versa. The emphasis should be on increasing coherence, collaboration, and complementarity across a Mission's portfolio, rather than working in programmatic and sectoral silos. Cross-sector collaboration requires new ways of thinking and a deliberate effort to implement and fund programs across sectors. Education investments may be layered with other sectoral interventions or with humanitarian assistance in the same geographic areas or population.

USAID should sequence our investments to achieve sustainable results, especially by creating a continuum between humanitarian aid and development programs. Integrated programs have the potential to deliver results across multiple sectors, including education; democracy and governance; health; agriculture; nutrition; water, sanitation, and hygiene; economic growth; and female empowerment. For example, in early childhood development, there is an opportunity to coordinate investments with health and nutrition with USAID's education investments focused on early learning and education. These efforts often involve multiple USAID offices or even multiple U.S. Government Agencies working within a country, region, or globally and with whom USAID Missions should work closely and coordinate investments.

Drive Decision-Making and Investments Using Evidence and Data

Develop partner country capacity to generate, analyze, and use data and evidence to inform education reforms and investments.

Strong data and evidence are critical to fostering partner countries' self-reliance in education. The capacity of stakeholders in partner countries to collect, manage, and use data, particularly on learning outcomes, is critical to their ability to track progress and identify gaps. Local education data systems that are accessible to the public are necessary to sustainably improve education service delivery and to promote transparency and accountability. USAID will support partner country capacity to measure learning and educational outcomes for all learners at all levels of education, in particular for those who are the most marginalized and vulnerable, and disseminate these data to teachers, parents and caregivers, and the wider community.

Ensure USAID's education investments build on evidence, data, and continuous learning.

Robust, context-specific, and timely data and evidence are essential to improve the effectiveness and value-for-money of education programming. Education investments will improve the use of evidence and data throughout the program cycle by collaborating, learning from, and adapting USAID's approaches.[44] Collaboration with other donors, the private sector, academia, and additional stakeholders ensures coherence in the generation and use of education data to improve accountability, transparency, and sustainability of education programming. When programming in new areas, considering incorporating new innovations in the field, or adapting programming, it is helpful to have evidence on what has worked in other countries with similar contexts or what has systematically worked across contexts to provide a starting place for interventions. USAID will work to expand the evidence base on what works to improve access, quality, and learning outcomes across contexts through multi-country studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and other data syntheses.

Build the evidence base where relevant research and evidence is lacking.

USAID is a leader in measuring student skills and will build on its experience in using data to inform investments in education programming. The Agency will continue to expand and strengthen the evidence base on education programming through research and innovation. Collaborating with partner governments, donors, and other stakeholders is essential to expand the evidence base and ensure research and evidence are relevant to the local context and translate into policy and programmatic decisions.

Rigorously measure results and ensure accountability, transparency, and value for money.

Self-reliance in the education sector is impossible to achieve without a commitment to evidence-based programming, coherence of investments, continuous learning, accountability, and an unwavering focus on measurable, equitable results for all learners. The Agency will continually publish education-related data for use by the teachers, parents and caregivers, the public,

Teacher instructs blind students in braille at USAID-funded program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit: USAID.

researchers, and other partners.[45] USAID will continue to evaluate and improve the value for money of its investments by measuring the cost, impact, and the cost-effectiveness of its programming. These data will establish a strong foundation for scale, sustainability, local stewardship and financing.

Promote Equity and Inclusion

Support reforms in education policies, frameworks, and financing to ensure equity and inclusion.

USAID is committed to inclusion, equity, safety, and quality across all its education investments and priority areas and works actively to identify and support local initiatives and reforms that reach marginalized and vulnerable populations in the local context at all levels of education. Our investments and advocacy should reinforce laws, policies, and procedures that promote equitable access to quality education, the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities, and gender equality in education at the regional, national, and local levels. Analyses of national and local allocation and distribution of education resources are needed to ensure marginalized and vulnerable populations have access to safe learning environments.

Extending services to reach the most marginalized often requires additional resources and specialized expertise, especially in crisis and conflict contexts. Education systems must benefit all children, and creative, non-traditional partnerships and financing mechanisms have the potential to improve results, especially for marginalized populations.

Design education programs that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally and conflict-sensitive.

USAID-funded education programs should employ quantitative and qualitative analyses of obstacles to inclusion and ensure that curriculum and instruction are structured to reduce or eliminate those barriers. This approach requires engaging local actors including parents, guardians and caregivers, youth, gender equality and disabled people's organizations, and other stakeholders to inform inclusive approaches. By not programming intentionally for children and youth with disabilities, we risk excluding a significant share of the population from acquiring the skills needed to live a productive life.[46] The goal of conflict-sensitive programming is to minimize unintended negative outcomes and increase intentional positive ones, while remaining focused on USAID's fundamental development goals and objectives. Programs should "do no harm"-they should be designed and managed with an awareness of how they could affect power dynamics and inter-group relations, particularly in crisis and conflict situations.[47]

Ensure learning environments are safe, violence-free, and inclusive.

Learning environments should lead to improved well-being and increased learning outcomes, rather than be places of danger. Education investments should address, and respond to, violence in learning environments through accountability measures with teachers, instructors, faculty, and administrators, by providing safe modes of transportation to and from education institutions, by addressing and shifting harmful gender and social norms, by ensuring the physical and emotional safety of learners, and by referring victims of violence to support services. Learning environments should be resilient to natural disasters and extreme weather in areas where those are common threats. Education facilities should also follow the highest accessibility standards, particularly for learners with disabilities. In countries that are part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), USAID Missions should closely coordinate their educational investments with PEPFAR programs aimed at combating stigma and discrimination and gender-based violence against adolescent girls and young women.

Student in a USAID early-grade reading program in Morocco, which aims to strengthen children's Arabic reading skills in targeted primary schools." Credit: USAID/Morocco.

Teacher instructs students in USAID-funded early grade reading program in Ghana.
Credit: Kofi Osei/USAID.

PRIORITIES

The priority areas laid out in this policy serve as a general framing and orientation for USAID's work in education. Across these areas, USAID investments in education may cut across education levels (from pre-primary through higher education), types of institutions (state and non-state), and learning environments (formal and non-formal).

These priorities illustrate key areas for programming and investment that are critical to supporting countries on their journey to self-reliance:

- Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.
- Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.
- Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.
- Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

Children and youth, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, have increased access to quality education that is safe, relevant, and promotes social well-being.

Millions of children and youth lack access to quality learning opportunities.

Access to education opportunities remains unfinished.[49] Marginalized children and youth are more likely to not enter or complete education opportunities. These populations vary by context, and frequently include girls, rural populations, individuals marginalized because of their sexual orientation, individuals with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children and youth from poor households.[50] Without access to foundational and technical skills training, marginalized children and youth lack economic opportunities and are at risk of being radicalized or recruited by violent extremist groups. Very few, if any, young people from poor households reach higher education in some countries.[51]

Reaching marginalized and vulnerable populations requires a deliberate focus.

Assessments of equity and inclusion should inform policy making and programming.[52] These analyses are critical to understanding which groups are excluded and why, and in turn must inform the design of programs and infrastructure, practices in and out of school, and the allocation of resources. Many interventions show promise, such as making financing more equitable and accessible to poor families; using technology to expand access to learning in hard-to-reach locations; and providing flexible, second-chance, or alternative learning opportunities to reach children or youth who have dropped out of formal education.[53]

Increasing access to quality education in crisis and conflict contexts is paramount.

The average length of displacement as a result of crises and conflict is now 17 years, and the bulk of humanitarian aid goes to conflict situations and crises that have lasted more than eight years.[54] Given these statistics, children and youth can live in crisis or conflict for the majority of their school-age years. Disruptions can be mitigated through preparedness measures.[55] However, response requires both short-term and longer-term interventions that allow children to gain access to quality education without interruption or delay. Children and youth in these settings require safety and protection, at a minimum, to enable learning. Once a safe learning environment is established, a focus on equity, service delivery, and institutional capacity is critical to achieve learning outcomes.

Disability-inclusive education improves educational outcomes for all learners.

More than one billion people worldwide have a disability, and that number continues to grow. Disability is found in all populations regardless of age, ethnicity, gender identity, language group, location, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or wealth status. Children and youth with disabilities are, on average, more likely to be out of school; less likely to complete primary, secondary, or higher education; less likely to

possess basic literacy skills; and more likely to be unemployed.[56] In low and lower-middle income countries, approximately 40 percent of children with disabilities are out of school at primary level and 55 percent at the lower secondary level.[57] Underlying causes of exclusion include social stigma, poor data collection on the number of children and youth with disabilities, and a lack of knowledge on how to make learning and work environments inclusive and accessible. Universal design principles that look at the design of policies, the allocation of resources, the training and support for teachers, the availability of support services, and the overall accessibility of learning materials, infrastructure, transportation, and assistive technologies should inform a holistic approach to educating students with disabilities and fostering learning outcomes.[58]

Gender disparities differ across regions, contexts, and education levels and require tailored approaches.

In the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, girls of every age group are more likely to be excluded from education than boys, whereas in Latin America, boys, particularly those of primary school-age, are more likely to be out of school. School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) negatively affects educational outcomes for all children; boys are more likely to be absent from school as a result of bullying and girls are more likely to be absent from school as a result of sexual violence.[59] However, girls in low-income countries face greater disadvantages than boys in access to education across all educational levels, including higher education, and disparities are often seen across regions. Each extra year of secondary schooling can increase a girl's future earnings by 10-20 percent.[60] However, targeted approaches are needed to raise awareness on the benefits of secondary education to increase enrollment and prevent dropout.[61]

Gender issues become especially salient during puberty, when norms, culture, and safety issues cause girls' lives and opportunities to narrow, while those of boys keep widening. Gender-related norms and expectations around young women's societal roles and inadequate or inaccessible infrastructure–including poor water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities–combined with social pressures to drop out of school, often prevent girls from continuing their education and limit their access to training and employment.[62]

Effective programming requires understanding the gender-related constraints that prevent access of both boys and girls to quality education. A combined set of interventions that develop and enforce laws, policies, and procedures that promote equitable access and gender equality at primary, secondary, and higher education levels and ensure adequate physical facilities are often needed to address systemic barriers.[63]

Measurable improvements in learning outcomes and skills must accompany efforts to address access issues.

Enrollment and attendance in primary, secondary, higher education, or training does not automatically lead to learning. The expansion of schooling and learning opportunities is a necessary first step to education but must be coupled with investments that improve quality. We can only unlock the true potential of education when children and youth gain more skills, capabilities, and competencies.[64]

EDUCATION IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT

Children who are living in the most fragile environments make up about 20 percent of the world's primary school-age population, yet they represent about 50 percent of those not in school. In 2015, 75 million children and youth, ages three-18 years old, were directly affected by conflict or crisis.[65] *For children and youth affected by violence, conflict, natural disasters, and humanitarian crises, access to education is an immense challenge: schools and universities are destroyed; armed groups attack or recruit students, teachers, and faculty; and families are forced to flee violence, ethnic cleansing, poverty, and famine. Education, particularly in these settings, can be used as a tool to reach young people and to address the "push and pull factors" that may drive young people toward violent extremism (including social and economic marginalization; normalization of violence; and access to resources).*[66] *Education is a critical tool to build resilience and reduce radicalization.*[67]

Communities affected by conflict and crisis say education is a top priority. Even in a crisis, parents rank education among their top priorities alongside food, water, health, and employment.[68] These contexts require programming that can provide safe, quality education for children and youth that improves learning outcomes. Education creates a sense of normalcy, routine, and protection and can help reverse or reduce the cognitive, emotional, and social effects of long-term exposure to violence, crisis, and conflict.

As humanitarian crises become more complex, urbanized, and protracted, USAID's investments must respond to sudden onset emergencies and also contribute to longer-term resilience and development. Humanitarian-development coherence is particularly important for the education sector, yet national governments often struggle to cope with the provision of education even before a crisis hits. At the same time, aid is not as effective as it could be because of the disconnect between short-term humanitarian response and longer-term development assistance. Immediate and sustained outcomes in both education and protection are essential. USAID should encourage and incentivize national and local governments to integrate displaced populations into host-community education institutions, target assistance to serve displaced peoples and children and youth affected by violence, and support coordination to increase coherence between humanitarian and development efforts in education.

Violence, conflict, and crisis create and exacerbate inequalities. Inequities perpetuated by education, which can occur if education opportunities are not conflict-sensitive, can exacerbate conflict and cause instability. Children and youth with disabilities are among the most adversely affected by crisis and conflict, facing higher mortality rates and less access to resources and help, especially in refugee camps or after a natural disaster.[69] Girls in conflict-affected countries are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school, and young women are nearly 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in stable countries.[70]

Higher education can play a role in recovery and rebuilding by providing quality teaching and training to key cadres necessary for reconstruction and recovery, such as teachers, engineers, medical professionals, lawyers, and architects. Higher education institutions provide the technical input and insight needed for stabilization policies and laws and can teach students civic values and ideals that support the rebuilding of a peaceful state.[71]

Children and youth gain literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional skills that are foundational to future learning and success.

Greater access to education has failed to translate into improved outcomes in every country. Almost six out of every ten children and youth globally, or 617 million learners, do not meet minimum standards of proficiency in reading and math, even though two-thirds (or 400 million) of them are in school.[72] Gaining foundational reading, math, and social and emotional skills are strong predictors of whether an individual will stay in school, obtain a degree, get and maintain a job–or become involved in a crime.[73]

Pre-primary education supports long-term student learning outcomes.

The foundation for learning is determined in the first years of a child's life. Parents and caregivers play a crucial role in providing early stimulation and learning opportunities for children. When children miss the opportunity to develop the foundation for basic reading, math, social, and emotional skills in pre-primary school, differences in learning outcomes compound over time, and these students are unlikely to catch up with their peers later in life.[74] The most effective approaches to pre-primary education support the holistic development of a broad set of early skills across physical, social-emotional, cognitive, and other domains.[75] Quality pre-primary education must be matched with a clear transition to effective, high-quality primary school with an integrated curriculum that gradually leads children from play-based to more academic work through the early grades. School readiness assessments can help to ensure that children possess the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

Reading and literacy are the foundation for success in school and life.

Reading is the foundational skill necessary for all other academic progress. Partner countries are more likely to prioritize reading and literacy when they have data on current achievement levels. Local champions among parents and caregivers, and community and school leaders are necessary to build the capacity for scaling and sustaining successful literacy programs. Supportive policies are required to teach literacy well at a national scale. Approaches for how to improve reading and literacy outcomes include promoting quality teacher instruction and ensuring sufficient instructional time; producing and distributing high-quality textbooks and supplementary materials; employing a language of instruction that students and their families use and understand, including local languages, based on evidence-based best practices; differentiating instruction to reach children at different levels; and using assessments to support instruction.

Numeracy is an essential skill to succeed in higher levels of education and in the workforce.

Early numeracy competence is a predictor of later academic performance.[76] The most effective numeracy instruction links to children's life experiences and contexts and uses participatory approaches such as problem solving and group

work.[77] Numeracy programs should be tailored to the needs of children, particularly girls, whose participation and achievement in mathematics remains lower than boys. Teacher direction, routine practice, and drills are also important.[78] Teachers need to be prepared with knowledge and appropriate, differentiated instructional approaches for the realities of the contexts in which they teach, rather than an ideal classroom context.[79]

Social and emotional skills shape long-term development of children and youth.

Evidence shows links between early child social-emotional functioning and positive later life outcomes in education, employment, criminal activity, substance abuse, and mental health.[80] Social and emotional skills should be an integrated part of curricula from pre-primary through primary school and beyond to enable students to apply the concepts directly to specific technical subjects or sectors. Activities and classroom routines that promote self-reflection and self-assessment improve students' executive function.[81] Social and emotional learning is important for all children and youth, increasing their ability to study, their resilience, and their contribution to societal development as responsible citizens. It is especially critical for those who experience crisis and conflict. These skills can help children heal from experiences with tragedy and violence, assist them with relationships in and out of school, and increase a sense of social cohesion and stability that can empower individuals to resist violent extremism even in difficult circumstances.

Quality pre-service training in higher education institutions improves education quality.

An estimated 26 million teachers are needed by 2030 to achieve universal primary education. Higher education institutions are critical to preparing the people–the teachers, administrators, and other professionals–and the places–teacher training colleges, colleges of education–that are vital to improving primary and secondary education.[82] Increasing the number of teachers, school management and education professionals, while strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions to train those teachers, will help produce teacher educators capable of using student-centered and proven training methodologies that can improve the quality of instruction. This will result in more and better trained teachers who are capable of delivering high-quality instruction in foundational skills.[83] Additional specialized training is needed for teachers to support children and youth with disabilities.

Leveraging technology can support the measurable improvement of learning outcomes.

Incorporating relevant information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education interventions can enhance the training and coaching of teachers and instructors; enable teachers and instructors to be more effective; aid in reaching marginalized and vulnerable children, including children with disabilities; and improve the collection and use of educational data to strengthen systems and improve policy decision-

making. Technology can support children and youth across the education continuum to access quality instructional materials in local languages, including children with disabilities.

Many ICT interventions require evaluation to demonstrate their effectiveness and, as with other areas, scale and sustainability should be planned from the beginning of programs to ensure the proposed ICT interventions are affordable and the capacity to manage technological interventions long-term exists. Above all, ICT-related interventions must focus on enabling educational change and improving learning outcomes, not on delivering a technology to a classroom.

Cross-Cutting Concept: Preparing and Supporting Teachers.

There are chronic shortages of trained, qualified teachers, instructors, and faculty members. Improving the leadership development, motivation, skills, and capacity of teachers, instructors, faculty members, and school management across all education levels and priority areas is essential to improve learning and educational outcomes. Teachers, instructors, and faculty must have the training, resources, preparation, and ongoing coaching and mentoring to teach effectively.

The quality of teacher incentive structures, school leadership, deployment policies, and the safety of the school environment can also affect teacher performance, absenteeism, and retention. Similarly, class sizes, which should be at levels that allow for individualized attention to students. School management should have the skills and resources to ensure teacher accountability, improve teacher time on task, and evaluate the quality of instruction. This is particularly critical in crisis and conflict contexts where teachers, instructors, and faculty members may be displaced or in danger alongside their students.

NON-STATE SCHOOLS AND PROVIDERS

Parents and caregivers want their children and youth to gain skills and to have the best educational opportunities possible. However, these dreams often go unfulfilled because of limited resources to support schools in rural or hard-to-reach areas, effectively manage schools, pay teachers and motivate them to show up to work, or provide education at secondary and higher educational levels. Non-state actors–ranging from community and faith-based schools to affordable private schools–often fill a critical space to address the education needs of the marginalized and vulnerable, not just the emerging middle class. Non-state schools already enroll nearly 14 percent of primary school-age students in low-income countries and 24 percent in lower-middle income countries.[84] *Globally, nearly one in three higher education students were enrolled in a private institution.*[85] *There is a need, and opportunity, to invest in and engage with non-state schools to help ensure all children and youth in developing countries receive a quality education.*

Increasing engagement with non-state actors and promoting innovations in financing and delivery can expand access to quality education. Significant private capital is being invested in non-state schools, and we should seek to leverage and shape these investments through strategic partnerships that help reach the most marginalized. Thoughtful and intentional engagement with non-state actors can create competition, increase accountability, and expand access to quality education. The education sector can benefit from fresh ideas and innovations to improve learning in all settings–from pre-primary through higher education–and to meet the needs of students, parents, and teachers more effectively.[86] The evidence on the ability of public-private partnerships to equitably improve learning outcomes is still emerging,[87] though there are a number of promising approaches.[88]

Governments have an important stewardship role. They should enable the entire education system, whether state and non-state, to improve the quality of education for all. Governments must have the capacity to support all of the schools in their system and promote accountability. National policies and regulatory frameworks can enable access to education for the most marginalized children and youth through non-state provision. Governments must ensure education quality and prevent discrimination regardless of the type of school or provider. USAID investments can help governments experiment with and evaluate different financing and provision models, depending on what is most appropriate for the country context.

Crisis and conflict context further strain limited governmental resources, and non-state schools and providers can help to meet demand. An influx of refugees or internally displaced children and youth places greater strain on public education institutions. In many countries affected by crisis and conflict, the government-run education system is broken or not fully functional. Non-state schools can help meet the demand and need for education in these contexts by providing short-term education opportunities to ensure education or long-term services where education otherwise would not be available.[89]

Youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and positively contribute to society.

Adolescence is a critical stage in a person's life. A young person's brain is still developing and the skills acquired during this period are essential to helping make a successful transition to social and economic independence. A solid foundation of skills, built early in life through education opportunities, is essential for youth to transition to secondary education, higher education, and ultimately employment. The changing world of work demands transferable, foundational, and technical skills rather than sector-specific ones–even for self-employment activities. Youth need to advance to quality secondary, accelerated education, technical, or higher education opportunities to build these skills; however, in low and lower middle-income countries, 202 million children of secondary school age are not in school, compared to 61 million children of primary school age.[90] And approximately 22 percent of youth–34 percent of young women and 10 percent of young men–do not participate in education, employment, or training and, as a result, are at risk of not having the foundational and technical skills they need to succeed.[91] A significant number of youth in developing countries live in rural areas, working in agriculture, for a household business, or for their own small enterprise. In Africa alone, an estimated 440 million youth will enter the rural labor market from now until 2030.[92]

Even in a stagnant economy, foundational and transferable skills are essential since most people are economically active for decades. As part of education and training, youth need to learn about the world of work–what are the opportunities, how are they accessed, and what skills are required to be successful. This should include self-employment, as trends indicate there will not be enough wage jobs.[93] Youth unemployment can negatively affect future earnings and increase the likelihood of later joblessness, lead to social exclusion, and contribute to the deterioration of emotional, mental, or physical health, and youth may be more susceptible to extremist messaging and recruitment to violent groups.[94]

Ensure youth have foundational skills and are building skills for life and work.

Literacy, numeracy, and soft skills[95] are foundational skills children should learn in the primary grades. Yet, an increasing number of youth reach secondary education without them. These youth may be unable to qualify for wage-labor, further education, or training. Moreover, children and youth involved in the worst forms of child labor, young women facing barriers to secondary education and the job market, and youth living in rural areas, crisis and conflict-affected environments, and/or high-crime urban areas are even more likely to lack these foundational skills. Investments should ensure that youth acquire the necessary levels of general education, including literacy, numeracy, and soft skills, in addition to technical skills, such as digital literacy, that prepare them for a lifetime of success.

Secondary student in USAID-funded DREAMS program in Zimbabwe.
Credit: USAID/Zimbabwe.

Second-chance education programs can help youth catch up.

Second-chance education programs, such as accelerated learning opportunities, can help disadvantaged and marginalized, over-age, and out-of-school children and youth gain access to education and build foundational skills. It can also be an important intervention for youth who have had their education interrupted by violence, crisis, or conflict.

Second-chance programs provide learners with equivalent, certified basic education, which uses effective teaching and learning approaches that match the cognitive maturity of youth.[96] Second-chance programs are most effective when they include soft and technical skills training and are structured around flexible schedules, when facilitators are trained local community members, and when governments are engaged and develop their capacity to ultimately adopt the programs.

Secondary education, vocational training, and higher education programs should be relevant to the needs of youth and the labor market.

Many major employers report that job candidates lack the technical and soft skills needed to fill available positions. Secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and higher education should integrate soft skills into the curriculum, provide career guidance and hands-on job training, apprenticeships, or links to internships so youth understand the expectations and conditions of the job market.[97] Youth workforce development, technical and vocational education, and higher education activities should actively engage employers and the private sector to ensure curricula are driven by the local labor market and are relevant to the local economy.[98] Youth workforce development activities, including those at both secondary and post-secondary levels, should include interventions appropriate for self-employment and wage labor,

as well as linkages to markets, positioning youth for productive lives. Education and training opportunities should include interventions to support young women's engagement in education and the economy by addressing norms, policies, and perceptions of employers, youth, and communities.

To increase employment prospects for youth, education and skills-building interventions need to be paired with economic growth efforts.

Employment interventions require economic analysis to ensure that programming is tailored to address the relevant challenges and barriers. Programs that take a comprehensive approach to youth employment, by addressing both skills issues and labor demand challenges, should include both education and economic growth investments. For example, a youth skills development program in parallel with a demand-side program that reforms business regulatory policies can make it easier for small and large firms to expand and potentially hire more workers. This approach requires economic analysis, coordination across different ministries (including education, labor, and youth), close alignment with businesses, and development of training curricula that reflects the skills needed by employers. This in turn requires curricula that can be adapted to changing labor market demands, and private sector engagement. Measuring the cost effectiveness of youth workforce development activities is essential to strengthen the evidence on workforce programming. Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses ensure that interventions are feasible to support at a large scale.

Holistic education and workforce programs that engage youth as partners result in better outcomes.

Programs that take a comprehensive approach by engaging families, community members, and key stakeholders, including policymakers, through social and behavior change communication or family and community engagement, see more successful outcomes. Evidence from domestic and international interventions shows that taking a positive youth development approach makes programming more responsive to youth, better able to reach marginalized youth, and ultimately more sustainable.[99] When education and workforce programs actively engage youth as partners, the interventions are likely to be more relevant to their needs and interests, and programs lead to better, more sustainable outcomes.[100]

Cross-Cutting Concept: Positive Youth Development.

USAID takes a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach to its programming that affects youth across all sectors. PYD engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a way that recognizes, utilizes, and enhances their strengths. PYD promotes positive outcomes for youth by incorporating age-appropriate approaches to build skills and assets, foster positive relationships, provide safe spaces and enabling environments, and encourage opportunities for youth to contribute to their school or community environment.

Higher education institutions have the capacity to be central actors in development by conducting and applying research, delivering quality education, and engaging with communities.

While access and learning outcomes for all students pursuing post-secondary educational opportunities and the role of higher education institutions in helping children and youth in achieving learning and education outcomes are included in the earlier priorities, this policy also highlights the critical and unique role that higher education institutions play in supporting partner countries on their journey to self-reliance. Higher education programming is dispersed across sectors and regions within the Agency. Higher education, depending on the project, can be viewed as a target for capacity development support, a stakeholder in local systems, and/or an implementing partner.

Robust higher education institutions' networks in partner countries are vital for individuals and society as a whole; individuals who achieve higher education can see a 16 percent increase in earnings, more than double that of a person who only completes a secondary education.[101] The societal benefits of higher education include poverty reduction, increased earnings, productivity, economic growth, and fostering beliefs in democratic principles.[102] To achieve these outcomes, higher education institutions must educate youth through quality and relevant instruction, generate and apply new approaches, and develop tools and research to inform investment decisions and improve outcomes across sectors.

Engage higher education institutions as central actors in development.

USAID's higher education investments should be informed by both the capacity of higher education institutions to provide high quality, relevant instruction and how well partner country higher education institutions can address complex development issues. Higher education institutions may include public or private universities, colleges, community colleges, academically affiliated research institutes, and training institutes, including teacher training institutes.

Developing the capacity of higher education institutions strengthens their roles as central actors in local education, research, and policy systems. Supporting capacity development at higher education institutions can be beneficial in opening doors for long-term international dialogue and diplomacy through research collaboration and student exchange. As part of capacity development, higher education institutions must have linkages with industry, government, local communities, and the global academic community. USAID will build the capacity of these institutions informed by the American three-pillar model of learning, research, and service to–and engagement with–local, national, and global communities, while also considering the local context, needs, and conditions of each institution.

The International Development Innovation Network at MIT, part of the Higher Education Solutions Network, helps to build local capacity by training female health workers to track polio immunizations in Pakistan.
Credit: Kendra Sharp/Oregon State.

Higher education institutions should provide quality and relevant education.

The quality of a higher education institution should be viewed from both a student-centered approach, focused on student experiences, and an institutional approach, focused on measures of quality related to faculty, staff, students, and programs.[103] Higher education institutions should provide specialized soft and technical skills to meet key labor market needs through relevant curricula and degree programs, as well as providing students with opportunities to learn about careers, entrepreneurship opportunities, and employer needs through student services such as career centers, intern and externships, and career fairs.

The quality of teaching at the higher education level must focus on higher levels of learning, not just the transfer of knowledge, and be grounded in how young adults and adults learn.[104] Positive Youth Development approaches should also be incorporated into higher education settings, building on the strengths of young people and encouraging their engagement in their school, civil society, and local communities. USAID's investments in higher education, including universities, community colleges, and technical institutes, should equip students to participate in the knowledge-based economy,[105] ensuring they leave education or training with the technical, soft, and entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for a lifetime of work, not just a job.[106]

The skills and knowledge honed by individuals while attending a higher education institution are critical to economic growth, fostering innovation, and creating broad and inclusive advancement.[107] Unequal representation of female faculty, and diverse faculty in general, should also be a consideration for quality higher education programming, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or other traditionally male-dominated fields. Programming focused on faculty development should be designed to promote equity and inclusion.

Harness innovation and encourage entrepreneurship.

Universities and institutes produce research and innovations (both in technology and approaches) that can inform policies and practices in a variety of sectors. Transforming the culture of local institutions to engage in entrepreneurship is also critical to the journey to self-reliance. The global knowledge-based economy requires linkages between higher education institutions, the private sector, and governments in order to create an enabling environment for innovation and partnerships between universities and firms. Enabling environments need to exist to be effective and drive innovation for both university-private sector partnerships and to create opportunities for entrepreneurs. For example, the ability of universities and research institutes to respond to local challenges with research and innovation declines when resources are limited and other specialized equipment is non-existent or outdated. USAID's investments in education and other sectors should engage local and international higher education institutions to leverage their knowledge and strengthen their capacity to be players in the innovation ecosystem. In particular, USAID's programs across sectors in developing countries should be catalytic opportunities for U.S. higher education institutions to assist in building partner country research capacity in fields such as education, food, health, nutrition, rural income, and the environment, as Title 12 of the *Foreign Assistance Act* makes clear.

Structure higher education partnerships and degree training to support capacity development.

USAID's investments should engage higher education institutions, both locally and internationally, as partners. These partnerships, including those that involve U.S.-based institutions, are critical to the U.S. economy and the quality of higher education programming, regardless of sector. However, building these relationships takes time and commitment. This policy embraces a broad vision of higher education partnerships that take a whole-of-institution approach to programming. Investments should build the capacity of higher institutions to improve their management and administration, research capacity and methods, management of facilities, degree programs, curricula, student services, and pedagogy.

Local higher education institutions in particular must be engaged as catalysts of locally-owned and locally-led development. This may require a partnership where U.S. universities or other implementing partners support the local higher education institution as the lead institution, rather than vice versa. The capacity of local higher education institutions can be further extended when institutions are able to work across borders to empower other local universities with the lessons they have learned. Degree training is also a critical component of higher education programming or partnerships and can be conducted in the United States, the partner country, or in a third country. Powerful results, such as electoral reforms, expanding markets for U.S. goods and services, and exporting democratic ideals have come from investing in capacity enhancement of future leaders and technical experts in developing countries and supporting local institutions to train those experts.

AGENCY ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND REQUIREMENTS

This USAID Education Policy applies to all of the Agency's Operating Units. Its implementation will accelerate our mission to support countries on their journey to self-reliance. Effective implementation of this policy is the responsibility of both Missions and Washington.

USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 101, Agency Programs and Functions, outlines the general functions, roles, and responsibilities of Missions, Regional Bureaus, Pillar Bureaus, and other relevant stakeholders. ADS Chapter 201, Program Cycle Operational Policy, provides USAID's operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming. To supplement this general guidance, implementation guidance accompanies the USAID Education Policy to assist staff in integrating it throughout the Program Cycle and leverage existing USAID structures and systems for monitoring and reporting. The implementation guidance includes more details on coordination, accountability, transparency, and the management of USAID's education programming.

Across all education investments, Operating Units should follow the USAID Education Policy alongside other relevant Agency policies and frameworks, including the Transformation, Effective Partnership and Procurement Reform, the Local Systems Framework, Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy, Youth in Development Policy, Disability Policy, and Private Sector Engagement Policy.

In coordination with the operational framework of the U.S. Government International Basic Education Strategy, USAID Missions and Bureaus will identify specific opportunities for collaboration with other U.S. Government Departments and Agencies on education-related investments.

Girl in early grade reading program in Malawi.
Credit: Lawrence Mtimaunenenji.

CONCLUSION

Educated societies are essential to achieving the U.S. Government's development, foreign affairs, and national security goals. When partner countries are able to finance and deliver improved learning outcomes for all children and youth, they will be advancing on their journey to self-reliance. This policy provides the foundation and guidance for USAID's investments in education across all sectors. It challenges USAID to integrate critical principles into education investments, foster sustainable results, and work in partnership with the country governments, private sector, parents and caregivers, communities and other stakeholders. Its successful implementation will support countries to advance in all development sectors with the foundation of a well-educated population.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

BASIC EDUCATION

(i) Measurable improvements in literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development that prepare an individual to be an active, productive member of society and the workforce;
(ii) workforce development, vocational training, and digital literacy informed by real market needs and opportunities and that result in measurable improvements in employment;
(iii) programs and activities designed to demonstrably improve

(I) early childhood, pre-primary education, primary education, and secondary education, which can be delivered in formal or non-formal education settings; and
(II) learning for out-of-school youth and adults; and

(iv) capacity building for teachers, administrators, counselors, and youth workers that results in measurable improvements in student literacy, numeracy, or employment.[108]

CHILD LABOR

Defined by the International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 on the Minimum Age[109] and 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.[110] It includes employment below the minimum age as established in national legislation, hazardous unpaid household services, and the worst forms of child labor: all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale or trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, or forced or compulsory labor including the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic purposes; the use, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities; and work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children.

CHILDREN

A person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger.[111]

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[112]

CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

The ability of an organization to: 1) understand the context in which the organization operates; 2) understand the two-way interaction between its intervention and that context; and 3) act upon this understanding to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on conflict.[113]

CONFLICT-AFFECTED

Describes a country, region, or community that has experienced armed conflict and/or recently terminated armed conflict, which is in contention over the control of government and/or territory that results in armed force between two parties, at least one being a government of a state. Conflict-affected also includes countries, regions, or communities indirectly affected by conflict due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity.

CRISIS-AFFECTED

Describes a country, region, or community that is experiencing or recently experienced a crisis. This also includes countries, regions, or communities indirectly affected by a crisis due to population displacement, reallocation of government resources, or diminished capacity. Crises include natural hazards, health epidemics, lawlessness, endemic crime and violence, and climate vulnerabilities.

DO NO HARM

An approach that helps to identify unintended negative or positive impacts of humanitarian and development interventions in settings where there is conflict or risk of conflict. It can be applied during planning, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the intervention does not worsen the conflict but rather contributes to improving it. "Do No Harm" is considered an essential basis for the work of organizations operating in situations of conflict.[114]

GENDER PARITY IN BASIC EDUCATION

Equal access to quality basic education for boys and girls.[115]

HIGHER EDUCATION

The OECD and the World Bank have adopted "tertiary education" to emphasize the inclusion of a range of both university and non-university institutions (teacher training colleges, community colleges, technical institutes, polytechnics, distance learning programs, and academically-linked research centers) within a diversified post-secondary education system. Higher education does not include youth workforce development activities at the pre-tertiary level.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

A higher education institution is an organization that provides educational opportunities that build on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialized fields. It aims at learning at a high level of complexity and specialization. Higher/tertiary education includes what is commonly understood as academic education but also includes advanced vocational or professional education. This may include public or private universities, colleges, community colleges, academically affiliated research institutes, and training institutes, including teacher training institutes.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Having one system of education for all students, at all levels (early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary), with the provision of supports to meet the individual needs of students. Inclusive education focuses on the full and effective participation, accessibility, attendance, and achievement of all students, especially those who, for different reasons, are excluded or at risk of being marginalized.[116]

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

The large number and diverse nature of participants and resources that are necessary for innovation. These include entrepreneurs, investors, researchers, university faculty, and venture capitalists, as well as business development and other technical service providers such as accountants, designers, contract manufacturers, and providers of skills training and professional development.[117]

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Persons or groups of people who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.[118]

LIFE SKILLS

Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These skills are loosely grouped into three broad categories: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.[119]

MARGINALIZED CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Includes girls, children affected by or emerging from armed conflict or humanitarian crises, children with disabilities, children in remote or rural areas (including those who lack access to safe water and sanitation), religious or ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS, child laborers, married adolescents, and victims of trafficking.[120]

NATIONAL EDUCATION PLAN

A comprehensive national education plan developed by partner country governments in consultation with other stakeholders as a means for wide-scale improvement of the country's education system, including explicit, credible strategies informed by effective practices and standards to achieve quality education.[121]

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal educational activities do not correspond to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education takes place both within and outside educational institutions and caters to people of all ages. It does not always lead to certification. Non-formal education programs are characterized by their variety, flexibility, and ability to respond quickly to new educational needs of children or adults. They are often designed for specific groups of learners such as those who are too old for their grade level, those who do not attend formal school, or adults. Curricula may be based on formal education or on new approaches. Examples include accelerated "catch-up" learning, after-school programs, literacy, and numeracy. Non-formal education may lead to late entry into formal education programs. This is sometimes called "second-chance education."[122]

NON-STATE SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS

Non-state providers of education include private, for-profit, non-profit, community, faith-based, and other non-governmental organizations.[123]

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Defined by the U.S. Government Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth as an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes,

and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.[124]

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION
Characterized by interaction with peers and educators, through which children improve their use of language and social skills, start to develop logic and reasoning skills, and talk through their thought processes. They are also introduced to alphabetical and mathematical concepts and encouraged to explore their surrounding world and environment. Supervised gross motor activities (i.e. physical exercise through games and other activities) and play-based activities can be used as learning opportunities to promote social interactions with peers and to develop skills, autonomy, and school readiness.[125]

PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS
Programs typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (i.e. literacy and numeracy) and establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal, and social development, in preparation for lower secondary education. These focus on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialization. This policy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

POST-CONFLICT
The period of time up to 10 years after battle; deaths fall below the level of 1,000/ year, regardless of whether or not this was accompanied by a peace accord, as long as conflict does not resume.[126]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS
All education beyond secondary school level, including that delivered by universities, further education colleges, and community providers.[127]

SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
Acts or threats of physical, sexual, or psychological violence or abuse that are based on gendered stereotypes or that target students on the basis of their sex, sexuality, or gender identities. School-related gender-based violence reinforces gender roles and perpetuates gender inequalities. It includes rape, unwanted sexual touching, unwanted sexual comments, corporal punishment, bullying, and other forms of non-sexual intimidation or abuse such as verbal harassment or exploitative labor in schools. Unequal power relations between adults and children and males and females contribute to this violence, which can take place in formal and non-formal schools, on school grounds, going to and from school, in school dormitories, in cyberspace, or through cell phone technology. School-related gender-based violence may be perpetrated by teachers, students, or community members. Both girls and boys can be victims, as well as perpetrators.[128]

LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programs typically designed to build on the learning outcomes from primary education level. Usually, the aim is to lay the foundation for lifelong learning and human development upon which education systems may then expand further educational opportunities. Some education systems may already offer vocational education programs at this level to provide individuals with skills relevant to employment. Programs at this level are usually organized around a more subject-oriented curriculum, introducing theoretical concepts across a broad range of subjects. Teachers typically have pedagogical training in specific subjects and, more often than at the primary education level, a class of students may have several teachers with specialized knowledge of the subjects they teach. This policy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Programs typically designed to complete secondary education in preparation for tertiary education or provide skills relevant to employment, or both. Programs at this level offer students more varied, specialized, and in-depth instruction than programs at the lower secondary level. They are more differentiated, with an increased range of options and streams available. Teachers are often highly qualified in the subjects or fields of specialization they teach, particularly in the higher grades. This policy will follow partner countries' laws, regulations, policies, and definitions regarding education level.

SELF-RELIANCE

A country's ability and commitment to plan, finance, and implement solutions to solve its own development challenges.[129]

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional skills are cognitive (cognitive flexibility, response inhibition, attention control, and working memory), emotional (emotional knowledge and expression; emotion and behavior management), and social (basic social engagement).[130] Through the process of social and emotional learning children, youth, and adults acquire and use the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Social and emotional skills are developmental, linked to the age and stage of the beneficiary, and importantly, can be learned.

SOFT SKILLS

Cognitive, social, and emotional skills, behaviors, and personal qualities that help people to navigate their environment, relate well with others, perform well, and achieve their goals. Soft skills are expressed in the form of observable behaviors, generally in the performance of a task.[131] The term "soft skills" is frequently used in youth employment or workforce development programs. Soft skills is sometimes used as a synonym for social and emotional skills, yet depending on the program, it can refer to a wider range of skills, behaviors, or qualities.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Includes a range of interventions to assist individuals in acquiring knowledge and developing skills and behaviors to find jobs, establish viable self-employment ventures, and/or stay employed and productive in a changing economy, including through creation of policies, programs, and systems that respond to labor market demands in the formal and informal sectors.[132]

YOUTH

According to the USAID Youth in Development Policy, USAID uses the term youth and young people interchangeably. While youth development programs often focus on youth in the 15 to 24-year age range, USAID programs also are likely to engage individuals aged 10-29 as a broader youth cohort.[133]

ENDNOTES

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