

CLARIFICATION OF BASIC EDUCATION EARMARK

12/15/09

Funding under the Basic Education (BE) earmark for USAID has gone up dramatically since 2000. This document provides the USAID definition of ‘basic education’ and offers guidance on permissible and non permissible uses of basic education earmarked funds in order to provide programming clarity for USAID operating units. If there are specific questions on the interpretation of this guidance, please contact the Education Office Director in EGAT.

A. DEFINITION

USAID defines basic education broadly, to include all program and policy efforts aimed at improving pre-primary education, primary education, secondary education (delivered in formal or non-formal settings), and in programs promoting learning for out-of school youth and adults. Capacity building for teachers, administrators, counselors, and youth workers is included. Basic education includes literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development for learners. The common thread among these elements is that they help learners gain the general skills and basic knowledge needed to function effectively in all aspects of life.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As a guiding principle, to the extent possible, the intent of Congress and USAID is that BE funds should be used for programs that can help countries achieve significant results in advancing their national education goals. In other words, BE funds should not generally be used for programs that do not have advancement of basic education objectives as the primary, overarching objective.

C. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What types of activities can be funded under the basic education (BE) earmark?

A: Activities funded under the BE earmark must fall within the parameters of the definition given above. Activities must also fit into the Foreign Assistance Framework (under FACTS), specifically the sub-element definitions under IIP/Education/Basic Education element, which was developed by the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F) and the USAID Education Sector in consideration of the earmark. Operating units should review indicators and definitions. There must be at least one standard F indicator for Basic Education when BE funds are used; however, custom indicators can also be used. See Annex I for Basic Education Sub-elements and definitions.

In general, the following types of activities are covered under the earmark:

- Activities that increase access to or quality of basic education in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and in programs that prepare learners for formal certification through non-formal modalities.
- Work with higher education institutions that provide pre-service or in-service teacher training for pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers, youth development instructors and counselors, and education administrators.
- Programs in adult literacy and out-of-school youth programs that provide literacy, numeracy and basic life skills training (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, etc.).
- Basic life skills components of workforce development programs, sometimes called workforce readiness skills (e.g. literacy, numeracy and other basic skills like problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, etc.).
- Community participation focused on improving access and quality of schooling and youth development (e.g., Parent Teacher Associations, School Management Committees, other community based organizations supporting parental engagement, girls' enrollment, inclusive education and/or local accountability for school management and use of resources).
- Education system reforms for pre-primary, primary and secondary school levels, as well as non-formal education, including policy reforms, improved information and data systems, monitoring and evaluations, etc.
- Overarching guidance for the use of BE funds is that they should be coordinated to support broader improvements in education systems and priorities, ideally as articulated in national education goals and plans. BE funds should not be used to fund soft skill components of other sector projects.

2. Can BE funds be used with other funds for an activity?

Yes. BE funds can be pooled with other funds to support a cross-sectoral program. However, the specific use of BE funds must follow the guidance given above. Where there is pooling of funds for an activity, the operating unit should explain the activities in each associated program area or element narrative in operational plans and reports in order to provide necessary clarity regarding funding, indicators, and results.

3. Can BE funds be used to fund workforce development (WFD) activities?

It depends. BE funds can not be used to fund hard skills in vocational education (e.g. automotive repair). However, BE funds may be used for workforce development activities where the focus is on the development of basic life skills or workforce readiness skills. They include the development of cognitive and social skills that employers globally value in their workforces at all levels: problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills, etc. Thus, BE funds may be used for WFD as long as the primary use of basic education funds is for improving students' literacy, numeracy, or other basic life skills.

An example would be a BE-funded activity for vulnerable populations (such as at-risk youth in a post-conflict environment) that includes some technical training considered

important for improving livelihood opportunity or employability, provided that the training is integrated with literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills development. The overall focus should be on preparing vulnerable populations to be better prepared to engage in lifelong learning, contribute to their communities, and become better equipped to engage in livelihoods or employment.

4. Can BE funds be used to fund specific content areas of instruction such as civic education, health education, sanitation and hygiene, and/or environmental education?

The BE earmark is not intended to fund specific areas or materials of instruction such as civic education, environmental education, sanitation, hygiene or health education, which are usually supported by other funds. Education teams are encouraged to collaborate with other technical teams, who manage such funds, to implement such programs. BE funds may only be used to fund the content areas above in programs where they are nominal parts of a larger curriculum designed to achieve literacy, numeracy and other basic skills development for learners. Basic skills do not include “life skills” for HIV prevention as defined by Global Health and PEPFAR.

5. Can BE funds be used to fund school feeding activities?

No. Since the objective of school feeding programs is generally a nutritional and not an educational objective, normally, school feeding programs are funded under maternal and child health or food security programs and not supported with BE funds. Education teams may, however, consider working with such programs, to coordinate funds for cross-sectoral programming.

6. Can BE funds be used to fund English Language or English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction?

BE funds can be used to fund English language instruction if this is a general content area in primary or secondary education in both formal and non-formal contexts. BE should not be used for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction.

7. Can BE funds be used to fund computer skills and technology training?

BE funds can be used for general computer literacy courses when computer literacy is a part of the general content area taught in primary and secondary education, both in formal and non-formal contexts, and/or when computers are used as part of the curriculum to carry out school work. BE funds should not be used to fund computer programming or computer certification or other types of technology-related training.

8. Can BE funds be used to fund construction and rehabilitation of education facilities?

Yes, but generally it is not recommended. Evaluations have indicated that construction per se is not a cost effective use of USAID funds and there are often issues with ensuring the adequate ongoing provision of teachers and materials once schools have been

constructed or rehabilitated. BE funds can be used to fund construction and/or rehabilitation of education facilities where there are strong justifications but generally this should not be a significant portion of any USAID Basic Education Projects.

9. Can BE funds be used to fund Private International Schools?

BE funds should not be used to support elite private schools but they can be used to support low cost private schools that help significantly expand access to quality basic education for the poor. As noted under the Guiding Principles above, “BE funds should be used for programs that can help countries achieve significant results in advancing their national education goals.” There may be logical reasons for the USG to support private elite schools overseas but USAID BE funds should not be used for this purpose.

Where additional questions arise, staff should refer to the guiding principles on page one.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR EXCEPTIONS FROM THE GUIDANCE

USAID guidance is issued to promote effective, evidence-based programming, and to increase consistency and predictability of operations. This guidance is determined based on decades of experience in education programming and represents the best understanding of leading technical experts. This guidance is also the product of extended discussions with the authors of the earmark in Congress. If an Operating Unit seeks clarification or has a question about whether an activity falls within the parameters of the requirements, the OU should seek additional guidance by contacting EGAT/ED and their regional bureau, and EGAT/ED will coordinate a review and response with the Regional Bureau technical officers, GC/Washington, or the GC's Regional Legal Advisor, as appropriate.

Any exception to the guidance will require interventions at the highest levels of the Agency and require additional communication with Congress.

Annex 1 – Basic Education Sub-Elements and Definitions

Proper Accounting for the Use of Basic Education Funds

Whenever basic education funds are used by an operating unit, they *must* be assigned to one of the basic education sub-elements (and corresponding indicators) in the Foreign Assistance Coordination and Tracking System (FACTS) these sub-elements indicators are:

Program Element 3.2.1: Basic Education

Sub-Element 3.2.1.1: Pre-Primary Education

Definition: Introduce very young children, generally aged at least 3 years, to pre-academic readiness. A structured and purposeful set of learning activities are provided either in a formal institution or as part of a non-formal child development program.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.2: Primary Education

Definition: Provide children an education in reading, writing, and mathematics, and the basic skills of problem-solving, cooperative learning, and communication to develop pupils' ability to obtain and use information they need about their home, community, and country. Activities typically utilize a formal school curriculum in or outside of a school. Primary education is also sometimes called elementary education.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.3: Lower Secondary Education

Definition: Provide more advanced basic learning and basic skills that include critical thinking, assessing solutions, team cooperation, and effective communication, beyond the primary level. The teaching is typically more subject-focused, requiring more specialized teachers and materials for each subject area. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education. Lower secondary education is sometimes referred to as junior high school, middle school, or junior secondary school.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.4: Learning for Out-of-School Youth

Definition: Provide learners, generally 13 to 24 year olds, an alternative education that integrates reading, writing, and mathematics with basic skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, team building, and effective communication. These complementary learning activities are typically designed to reintegrate youth back into a formal school setting or provide an equivalent primary or secondary school diploma.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.5: Literacy and Numeracy for Adults

Definition: Provide individuals, 18 years or older, basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. It requires a unique set of learning activities with specialized instruction. Activities may be formal or non-formal, but are typically outside of the formal school setting.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.6: Upper Secondary Education

Definition: Continue basic subject area learning and skills, including critical analysis, problem solving, and complex communication, beyond lower secondary level. The instruction is highly organized along subject lines, as are textbooks, and teachers need a higher level of subject-specific qualifications. In most countries, this level is the final stage of basic education. Upper Secondary Education is sometimes referred to as high school, senior high school, or senior secondary school.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.7: Education Systems

Definition: Contribute to sustained improvements in education quality, efficiency, and equity through strengthened education policy, governance, financing, facilities, human resources, public information, and management of education services. A range of activities may target the national, regional, district, and community levels of the education system; pre-primary, primary, lower-secondary, upper secondary, and non-formal education; and public or private education.

Sub-Element 3.2.1.8: Host Country Strategic Information Capacity

Definition: Establish and/or strengthen host country institutions' management information systems (MIS) and their development and use of tools and models to collect, analyze and disseminate a variety of information related to the program element. These may include, but are not limited to MIS for government ministries or other host country institutions, needs assessments, baseline studies, censuses and surveys, targeted evaluations, special studies, routine surveillance, data quality assessments, and operational research. This sub-element may also include developing and disseminating best practices and lessons learned and testing demonstration and/or pilot models. Related training, supplies, equipment, and non-USG personnel are included.