



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# EDUCATION

Opportunity  
Through  
Learning

USAID  
**EDUCATION**  
STRATEGY

FEBRUARY 2011

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EDUCATION  
STRATEGY**

2011-2015

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WASHINGTON, DC

# MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

I am pleased to share with you USAID's Education Strategy. It is a product of intensive collaboration among senior managers, technical and policy experts at the Agency, and consultation with external partners and experts.

This strategy ushers in a new era of evidence-based strategic guidance that will lead to more focused and collaborative education investments aimed at improving learning outcomes and institutional sustainability in our partner countries. It is an example of USAID's commitment to use development resources selectively, efficiently, and with greater accountability and impact.

There are few investments more worthwhile than helping ensure children are healthy, secure and prepared to prosper in a globalized world—whether those children reside in America, Afghanistan, Tanzania or Guatemala. We have worked for decades with many committed partners to promote education quality and opportunity, and we have achieved impressive gains in promoting universal primary quality education opportunities for all of our children, but there remains much more to do.

Where access to education has been secured, we must shift focus to the quality and relevance of learning. To achieve our goals, we must deploy the power of new technologies and promote the natural curiosity and entrepreneurial spirit of our young people. And we must do so sustainably and in close partnership with national governments, municipalities, civil society, the private sector, and most critically, with parents and children themselves. Together, we have the ability to eradicate illiteracy, provide safe spaces and learning opportunities for the most vulnerable children and create engines of economic growth through higher education institutions.

It is my hope that this strategy will embody and give meaning to President Obama's memorable statement in Cairo in 2009—that "Education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century."



**Rajiv Shah**

Administrator

U.S. Agency for International Development

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Education Strategy was produced over five months by the USAID Education Strategy Policy Task Team (PTT), co-chaired by Letitia Butler from the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning and David Barth from the Office of Education. In addition to the co-chairs, the PTT consisted of five individuals selected from across the Agency because of their recognized knowledge of the sector and leadership on education issues: Suezan Lee (Office of Education), Mitch Kirby (Asia and Middle East Bureaus), Lubov Fajfer (Bureau for Europe and Eurasia), LeAnna Marr (USAID Macedonia), Pape Sow (USAID Senegal), and Elizabeth Roen (Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning). These USAID staff worked intensively and collaboratively, carrying out their full office workload at the same time as this critical strategy work.

Within USAID, the PTT reached out in consultation with the Education Sector Council, regional and functional bureau representatives, education officers in field missions around the world, and senior management in both headquarters and the field. Outside of USAID, consultation and briefings were held with key US interagency partners, interested Congressional staff, and selected external partners from think tanks, academia and other development agencies or partners.

Finally, the PTT also benefited from virtual collaboration with a group of leading experts in educational research, who responded to our call for evidence from cutting-edge research in the areas of our strategic focus.

USAID is grateful to all those who contributed their time, knowledge and professional assessments to helping us hone our strategic focus. As we move to implementation of this strategy, we intend to remain fully open to feedback on how to adjust the strategy to ensure the Agency is achieving greater impact and sustainability in partnership with host countries, other donors and a wide range of development and education stakeholders.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 2010, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah commissioned a new Agency-wide Education Strategy to ensure that USAID's global education investments would be informed by recent Presidential policy guidance; grounded in the most current evidence-based analysis of educational effectiveness; and aimed at maximizing the impact and sustainability of development results. This 2011-2015 Education Strategy was created to reflect these core principles.

This Education Strategy is premised on the development hypothesis that education is both foundational to human development and critically linked to broad-based economic growth and democratic governance. Research has demonstrated that education raises individual incomes and, in an enabling environment, can contribute significantly to economic growth. Education helps ensure that growth is broad-based and reaches the poorest. Through its impact on economic growth, education helps catalyze transitions to democracy and helps preserve robust democratic governance. Education also helps improve health outcomes. Access to education is a crucial precondition to educational impact, but what matters most thereafter is the quality of education. Because of these important links to other powerful drivers of development, educational investments should be understood as dynamic and transformational levers of change.

Embracing the President's 2010 U.S. Global Development Policy principles, USAID will invest education resources strategically to achieve measurable and sustainable educational outcomes through enhanced selectivity, focus, country-led programming, division of labor and innovation. Additionally, critical priorities such as improved evaluation practices, gender integration and sustainability will undergird all of our investments. We will look for opportunities to achieve greater impact and scale, based on a country's commitment to reform, potential to achieve rapid results, and relative educational need. We will also encourage phasing out of programs that are very small or non-strategic, unless they can demonstrate a very high marginal

impact on policy reform, system strengthening, program integration or innovation piloting. As a result, USAID's future global education footprint is expected to evolve in shape and size, and to be more closely coordinated with partner governments, civil society, other donors and the private sector.

Based on projected resource availability, and on the policy principles above, USAID will pursue three global education goals:

- **Goal One:** Improved *reading skills* for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015;
- **Goal Two:** Improved ability of *tertiary and workforce development* programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals; and
- **Goal Three:** Increased equitable *access to education in crisis and conflict* environments for 15 million learners by 2015.

This Education Strategy explains the rationale for selecting these goals; provides illustrative results, activities and measures of success; and links all of these in an illustrative results framework. Important crosscutting issues of concern are discussed, including youth programming, gender equality, marginalized populations and disabled learners, and integrating education with other development priorities. Finally, the strategy promises a "roadmap for implementation" that will provide more detailed guidance to field missions on how USAID will institutionalize its new policies, build a 21st century research agenda, explicitly seek more robust partnerships, and establish new norms and incentives for educational strategic planning and knowledge sharing.

# EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

Education is foundational to human development and critical to broad-based economic growth. Few societies have achieved high and sustained rates of growth or significantly reduced poverty without first investing in expanding access to quality education. Further, education has proven essential for developing an informed and active citizenry, required for healthy democratic practice and for enabling individuals to make smarter choices affecting health and household welfare. Education remains the key for unlocking the individual's intellectual and creative potential.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has long been a thought-leader and innovative practitioner in global education. It has pioneered new knowledge in systematic program analysis and planning, community participation methods, sponsoring cutting-edge research in distance learning, girls' education, and learning outcomes, and has promoted holistic approaches to educational achievement. From years of research and experience, we have learned important lessons about education:

- **Education raises individual incomes.** In virtually all countries, workers who have gone through more years of schooling earn more. Over time, the increase in income leads to significantly higher standards of living and greater opportunities. Every additional year of schooling has been estimated to increase income per worker by 8.3 percent, on average.
- **In an enabling environment, education can contribute significantly to economic growth.** The acquisition of skills is central to building human capital, increasing labor productivity, catalyzing the adoption of new technologies and innovations, and accelerating novel applications of existing technologies. In an economy open to trade and with well-functioning markets, workers can add not only to their own incomes, but to the country's economic growth in a significant and sustainable way.
- **Access to education is a crucial precondition, but what matters most thereafter is the quality of education.** Getting students into schools is not enough. Studies show that if students acquire few skills because of poor-quality education, large increases in school enrollment will not translate into gains in economic growth. High-quality education gives students the cognitive skills they need to prosper in the job market.
- **Basic skills and high-level skills are complementary.** The growth benefits derived from more workers with top-level skills depend heavily on the share of the workforce with at least basic skills. In other words, focusing on a few "islands of excellence" and building the skills of a highly-trained elite, when basic education for most of the population is still poor, is unlikely to help the economy grow.
- **Reaping the economy-wide benefits of improvements in education takes time and sustained engagement.** The impact of education on growth requires gradual change in the skill mix of the labor force, which may take several decades to complete. Over time, these changes will have dramatic effects on a country's development path, but require patience to realize fully.
- **Improving the quality of education requires incentivizing certain types of behaviors among policymakers, administrators, teachers, students, and parents.** For that reason, efforts to improve educational quality are highly context-specific and context-dependent. They require a good understanding of the complex cultural, social, and political forces at work, and they take time to yield results.
- **Education helps ensure that growth is broad-based and reaches the poorest.** In countries where access to education is widespread, the poor are in a better position to achieve gains in earnings. Even in developed countries, more equally distributed skills predict more equally distributed earnings.

- Through its impact on economic growth, education helps catalyze transitions to democracy and helps preserve robust democratic governance. Economic growth and development are the most important factors influencing regime transition and democratic survival. Researchers agree that improvements in average per capita income increase the probabilities of democracy and democratic survival. Furthermore, access to quality education is often a key factor in transforming individuals from “subjects” to citizens – allowing them to participate meaningfully in the political life of their countries.
- ***Education helps improve health outcomes.*** Greater educational attainment, especially for girls, leads to overall health improvements as well as to reduction in fertility and infant mortality. It has also been associated with increased infant birth weight, better nutrition, age-appropriate entry into school, better lifetime school achievement, and lower risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.
- ***A society’s provision of quality education is of vital interest to the private sector.*** The private sector has a vital short, medium and long term stake in the provision of quality education. Businesses invest significant human and financial resources in assessing education needs and problems, assisting the development of policies and programs aimed at improving education, and supporting education program delivery. This makes business a key partner in efforts to define and address a society’s education needs.

# CONTEXT

## INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS – THE LAST TWENTY YEARS

**T**he global state of education is poor. More than 70 million school-age children do not have access to schooling. Of those who do attend, hundreds of millions more are not being taught the basic skills that they require to be competitive economic actors in a globalized world. Drop-out rates remain high and too few students, especially girls, matriculate into tertiary education. While important gains in primary school enrollment have been achieved across the developing world, and the gender gap in access to primary education has been narrowed or closed in many countries, the strong focus on improving access has not changed the fact that education quality remains poor in most developing countries. Unless we make significant progress in quality, the enormous power of education to change lives and societies for the better will remain untapped.

Over the last twenty years the international community has significantly increased focus on the impact of education on country development. Education's role in development first gained international recognition with UNESCO's 1990 Education for All (EFA) pledge to support universal education. This commitment was reaffirmed in 2000 with the Millennium Declaration calling for, among other things, universal primary education and the promotion of gender equality at all levels of education by 2015. The Monterrey Consensus in 2002 and Doha Declaration in 2008 have mobilized resources and international fiscal cooperation for development financing.

The EFA/Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was established in 2002 to mobilize financing and accelerate progress toward the EFA goals. FTI is the main mechanism for coordination of global donor resources aimed at basic education. Its board administers a fund supporting endorsed country education plans. Nineteen donor countries contribute to the fund and a total of \$1.6 billion has been disbursed to 36 low-income countries to support their national education plans. The United States par-

ticipates on the Board of Directors and is funding administrative reform of FTI with an emphasis on improving monitoring and evaluation. Decisions concerning whether the United States should help capitalize the FTI fund are revisited annually based on the potential impact of the assistance as well as the responsible stewardship of the resources.

## THE U.S. POLICY CONTEXT – 2010 AND BEYOND

The USAID 2011 Education Strategy will be implemented in the dynamic policy context of principles and guidelines enunciated in the 2010 National Security Strategy, the 2010 U.S. Global Development Policy, and a new 2010 USAID Forward reform initiative. Together with the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), these policy and reform initiatives set the context for why it is critical to invest in education in the developing world—and why it is critical to do so smartly, with evidence-based decisions that deliver real, measurable results.

The Global Development Policy places special emphasis on promoting broad-based economic growth and democratic governance, using “game changing” innovations, and tailoring development strategies to the unique and demanding contexts of countries experiencing complex emergencies. In light of the evidence presented for how education contributes to economic growth and governance, the commitment in this strategy to promote research, technology and innovation to help accelerate educational achievement, and the application of lessons hard-learned through U.S. engagement in conflict and crisis contexts, is fully consistent with the Global Development Policy and will help advance its core goals.

The 2010 QDDR by the U.S. Department of State and USAID sets the stage for more holistic and integrated U.S. Government country planning. These more coherent U.S. assistance approaches may in turn lead to a deeper understanding of the local context for education programming and to the relevance



of educational investments to all else that the host country, the U.S. and other partners are trying to achieve developmentally.

The USAID Forward Initiative, launched by Administrator Rajiv Shah in 2010, aims to reform and revitalize USAID's strategic policy, planning and evaluation capabilities, and to redefine how USAID will engage with host country partners. These reforms are key to implementing the aid effectiveness principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action while ensuring more effective programming and closer collaboration with local actors in education and other sectors.

Finally, in 2010, the U.S. Government also renewed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, including MDG 2 on Universal Primary Education which commits donors to *"ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling"* and MDG 3 to *"promote gender equality and empower women"* including by *"eliminating gender disparity"* in all levels of education. This commitment combined with American values to promote human dignity and support democratic governance and economic growth will undergird all that USAID pursues through this new strategy, with key emphasis on the sustainability of results and mutual accountability between donors and country partners.

USAID has been directed by Congress to invest substantially in supporting education programming worldwide. Appropriations for USAID basic education activities have increased from less than \$100 million in FY 2000 to \$925 million in FY 2010; higher education received an additional \$200 million in FY 2010. According to guidance accompanying appropriations, basic education funds are to be used to impart basic literacy and numeracy skills, and to promote systems and programs that will result in improved learning of basic skills around the world.

In FY 2010, 32 percent of the programs receiving USAID education assistance, over half that fiscal year's basic education budget, addressed issues of education in fragile or conflict-affected states. Programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan alone account for over 40 percent of USAID resources dedicated to education programming. The types of issues arising in conflict countries inevitably differ in scope and kind from more stable countries, and a realistic strategy must distinguish between them and program accordingly.

# THE STRATEGY

The USAID Education Strategy is grounded in the overarching objective of advancing sustained and inclusive economic and social development in partner countries through improved learning outcomes over the next five years. The following section identifies key principles and outlines the main elements of the strategy. An illustrative results framework is attached as Annex A.

## STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

For USAID's education assistance to meet the challenges of the 21st century, our programs must be strategically aimed to achieve measurable and sustainable educational outcomes. In addition to adhering to the critically important principle of developing country-led strategies and country-tailored program designs, this 2011 USAID Education Strategy calls for USAID Missions to embrace the U.S. Global Development Policy principles of selectivity, focus, country responsibility, division of labor, and innovation in their program design and development. USAID Washington will likewise consider these policy principles when headquarters' approval is required for program and resource requests. Finally, USAID reaffirms principles related to evaluation, gender integration, public-private partnerships and sustainability as necessary for strong strategies and programs.

**SELECTIVITY:** USAID will promote greater regional and country selectivity in the allocation of education-specific resources by prioritizing the following actions:

- **Seek Impact and Scale:** USAID will place strong emphasis on the potential of a country program to realize significant reform, achieve rapid results, lead to broad-based impact, or be taken to national scale from local or regional levels. Absolutely essential to attribution of credible achievement is an assessment of the country's capacity and commitment to drive such impact and scale. Such assessment should involve the full range of parties with an interest in or means to impact that capacity and commitment, including the private sector.
- **Assess Relative Need:** USAID will balance size, scale, and regional priority by assessing a country's relative education needs. This will require an assessment and indexing of a series of indicators across countries, including data on poor learning outcomes, gender inequity and marginalization, and degree of access to education in conflict and crisis countries.
- **Invest in Sub-Saharan Africa:** While 38 percent of non-Critical Priority Country resources in FY 2010 are already invested in Sub-Saharan Africa, USAID will increase resource flows to this sub-region, where program proposals meet criteria outlined in this strategy.
- **Set a Resource Floor:** Unless a small investment can be justified in terms of its demonstrably high impact on policy reform, system strengthening, program integration, or innovation piloting, USAID will phase out education programs in countries where these fall below a threshold of \$2 million annually. This threshold level represents the balancing point between management costs and the potential gains of an investment. Phase-out decisions will be addressed through USAID's new strategic planning processes, but will only be made following full assessment of trade-offs, opportunities for "hand-off" to other donors or development partners, and examination of the effects of phase-out on non-assistance aspects of the bilateral relationship.
- **Define Donor Division of Labor:** USAID will consider the presence, orientation, and results of other bilateral and multilateral donors in each country where USAID education investments are proposed to understand comparative advantage, identify opportunities for complementarity, and avoid duplication.

**FOCUS:** USAID will ensure greater education program focus within countries according to the country context, in support of strategic goals, and in search of the highest potential for results. For example:

- In *stable, well-performing countries* with unmet needs in basic education, the priority focus will be on assuring learning outcomes for primary grade children, especially in reading.
- In countries with *high potential for rapid economic growth and increased integration with the global economy*, the priority focus will be on tertiary education that generates the human capacity and workforce skills needed for the country's development.
- In *countries that have both the capacity and commitment to work simultaneously on basic and tertiary education*, programs may be larger-scale with an emphasis on system strengthening.
- In *crisis or conflict-affected countries*, access to education for children and youth is the logical focal point of a program. A focus on the quality of learning outcomes will also be necessary in these circumstances, but not as the short-term, highest priority that defines program success.

**COUNTRY OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY:** The principles of selectivity and focus are not inconsistent with the goal of country ownership and responsibility. Providing host country leadership a clear articulation of USAID's priorities and comparative advantage as a donor can enable them to make strategic choices and necessary trade-offs. Importantly, it can provide donors the signals needed to assess host country commitment to long-term reforms. This strategy introduces the President's global policy principles to guide high-level resource allocations, while leaving the critical strategic program planning decisions to our field professionals in country.

Based on USAID Forward guidance, USAID education programs will actively assess and seize opportunities for reliance on host country planning and implementation systems – supportive of, but separate from, interventions that seek to strengthen education systems. Whenever possible, USAID will support initiatives and innovative ideas presented by host country governments and civil society that contribute to the education goals in this strategy. However, given that developing country education systems are often complex, under-regulated, and vulnerable to system and resource abuse, USAID field mis-

sions must approach direct assistance and other local capacity-building mechanisms with care and with a commitment to risk assessment and mitigation.

**DIVISION OF LABOR AND DONOR MIX:** It is essential in today's multi-stakeholder development landscape that USAID place greater priority on communication, collaboration, and coordination with donors, host country governments, and other in-country partners including the business community to coordinate priorities and drive to a deliberate division of labor in the sector. Ideally, this should derive from strong country ownership of a national education plan and country leadership of the donor community. Absent this, USAID will coordinate with bilateral donors, multilateral banks, and other international organizations to maximize allocation of donor talent and resources across the sector and reduce fragmentation that burdens host country systems. In countries where USAID is a relatively minor player in education, it may be advisable to work through the agency of other donors (where risk is assessed and mitigated), using sector-wide approaches, multi-donor trust funds, delegated cooperation, or other innovative cooperation modalities.

**INNOVATION, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY:** A signature comparative advantage of U.S. education assistance to the developing world is our ability to tap and adapt the deep reservoir of knowledge within the American science, technology and business communities, both directly and through the value-adding filter of academic and foundation research. At the heart of these disciplines is a demand for evidence of what works or does not work and why, as well as a thirst for testing new hypotheses. Adopting these solution-seeking mindsets and leveraging these American assets must become critical components of how USAID professionals identify, design, manage and evaluate our education programs. USAID is actively encouraging the use of science, technology and other innovations in our education programs. Examples of innovations include private financing and delivery mechanisms, higher education partnerships, and a Grand Challenge: All Children Reading by 2020. Information and communication technologies can, for example, collect and transmit data by mobile phones to monitor real time teacher absenteeism, facilitate the delivery of instruction or learning materials through audio and video materials, radio, television, computers, internet, mobile devices, and improve access to communication technology through partnerships with communication service providers.

**ENHANCED EVALUATION PRACTICES:** Citizen support for education programs in partner countries cannot be achieved or sustained without the accountability and demon-

strated learning provided by rigorous evaluation practices. USAID's Evaluation Policy (January 2011) will guide our education programming, including through building local capacity for evaluation, integrating evaluation into the design of programs, unbiased measurement and reporting of program status and outcomes, insistence on addressing the most relevant questions with the best evaluative methods, and a commitment to wide disclosure of key findings.

**SUSTAINABILITY:** The President's Global Development Policy also places a strong priority on achieving sustainable development outcomes through building capacity in the national and community-level public sector institutions to provide basic services over the long term. In most countries, this encompasses increasing economic growth, domestic revenues and working towards a country's ability to finance its own quality public education sector. It also includes strengthening the public education system broadly, through rationalized policies on curriculum, employment, professionalization, and financing, as well as investments in infrastructure, training and planning. However, improved learning outcomes will never result solely from the efforts of public employees, but rather from the networked efforts of government, parents, community organizations, and the private sector (both non-profit and for-profit, local and international, host country residents and diaspora members). It is through such interweaving of diverse interests that educational quality, relevance and sustainability is more likely to emerge.

**GENDER EQUALITY:** Per the U.S. Global Development Policy, the U.S. will make "investments that benefit women and girls." USAID education programs will promote gender equality. To do this, USAID education programs should promote gender parity, gender equity, and focus on improving education quality for both boys and girls. When designing education programs, projects, and activities aimed at achieving the goals in this strategy, USAID will consider the goal-specific gender issues affecting boys and girls, young men and young women, and develop gender equity strategies to address these issues during implementation.

## EXPECTED CHANGES AND TRADE-OFFS

As USAID missions move to reassess and reshape their education portfolios consistent with these principles, we expect to see a number of changes, including shifts in USAID's global education footprint, increasing demand for evidence of success, a higher degree of risk-taking, more reliance on host country leadership, and more strategic coordination with other donors and the private sector.

Country programs will evolve to become more strategic and more focused on specific outcomes and impacts. USAID education investments will be driven by prioritizing contexts where interventions are realistically and measurably achievable in a 3-5 year timeframe (even within a longer, strategic context.) Education programs will be more closely linked to economic growth and transparent, democratic governance reforms because of the powerful correlation and synergies between them. By deepening our focus on quality of learning outcomes across country programs, USAID will strengthen its ability to draw cross-country data comparisons and share lessons learned and best practices.

USAID's professional interaction with outside experts in the development, donor, business, foundation and academic communities will increase—most especially with non-traditional partners from the technology, and scientific research disciplines. Our collaboration with other US government agencies working in education will increase—such as with the US Departments of Education, Labor and Agriculture, and with the Peace Corps. In addition, USAID's education staff will benefit from a re-energized agency commitment to technical excellence, enhanced strategic planning, strategic program standards, and a more explicit plan for staff professionalization, training and career advancement.

USAID will face some difficult trade-offs:

- With few exceptions, USAID plans to **discontinue funding over time** for a number of educational sub-sectors or specialties which, examined in isolation, are important to subgroups of students and citizens, but which do not directly contribute to a broad, scalable objective of quality learning or do not represent USAID's comparative advantage. For instance, we will de-emphasize general upper-secondary education investments except in cases that contribute to restoring access in conflict or crisis-affected environments or where vocational or workforce development training is delivered in secondary settings. Similarly, important education interventions such as early childhood development and adult literacy, among others, are unlikely to appear in USAID programming unless they directly contribute to the strategy's goals.

- With greater concentration of focus in *fewer program targets*, USAID can and should continue an integrated approach to strategic analysis, and should coordinate with partners and the host country government to achieve comprehensive reform. However, USAID will focus education assistance on the goals outlined in this strategy. (Exceptions to this may be found in country programs with funding levels elevated for other than technical reasons.)
- USAID Missions may require more lead-time to develop country-led, donor-engaged, stake-holder informed, evidence-based strategies and projects.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

The USAID Education Strategy includes three goals. The first goal is to improve reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015. Goal 1 builds upon USAID's long experience in primary education and, more recent leadership in supporting interventions to improve learning outcomes. It recognizes that learning takes place at all levels but adopts a particular focus on early grade reading improvement as the foundation for future learning.

Goal 2 focuses on improving equity, expanding access, and improving the quality and relevance of tertiary and workforce development programs. It has a particular focus on strengthening the capacity of host country technical and tertiary institutions to increase access to underserved groups; improve the quality and relevance of education, training and applied research; and fostering strategic partnerships between U.S. and host country institutions.

Goal 3 builds on the substantial commitments by USAID to assist with education programming in crisis and conflict environments. It will increase access to education for 15 million learners in crisis and conflict affected countries by 2015. While Goal 1 has a sharp focus on early grade reading, education programming in conflict and crisis affected settings requires a broader and more contextual approach. Goal 3 will support learning opportunities for children and youth; strengthen crisis prevention efforts; and develop host country institutional capacity to provide education services.

These three goals will guide education-specific resource allocation. Given different country contexts, all results listed below are illustrative and provided as examples of types of activities that could contribute to each goal.

## GOAL 1: IMPROVED READING SKILLS FOR 100 MILLION CHILDREN IN PRIMARY GRADES BY 2015

In 2000, the international community, including USAID, rallied around Millennium Development Goal 2 to provide universal access to primary education for all children by 2015. In the past decade, significant achievements have been made increasing primary enrollment worldwide. For example, enrollments in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 51 percent between 1999 and 2007 and the net enrollment rate in South and West Asia (SWA) had reached 84 percent by 2007.<sup>6</sup> However, children in low-income countries are completing primary school at only 67% of the rate of high-income countries and progress has been slow. Moreover, recent studies show that for many students in low-income countries, very little learning is occurring in the classroom. In Mali, Pakistan and Peru more than 70% of children in the primary grades could not read at grade level.<sup>8,9</sup> In fact, in Mali, 94% of children at the end of grade 2 could not read a word in a simple sentence. The leading international assessment, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), indicates that low-income countries are performing at the bottom 5th percentile in the world.

However, studies have also shown that learning outcomes have a direct correlation to a country's economic growth. A 10% increase in the share of students reaching basic literacy translates into a 0.3 percentage point higher annual growth rate for that country.<sup>10</sup> Other research has shown that early grade reading competency is critical for continued retention and success in future grades.<sup>11</sup> This link is especially relevant for low-income children, because they tend to have home and school environments that are less conducive to early reading development relative to those of higher income children. Children who do not attain reading skills at the primary level are on a lifetime trajectory of limited educational progress and therefore limited economic and developmental opportunity.

Recognizing the importance of early grade reading interventions, USAID has developed an early grade reading assessment for developing countries and has taken a leading role in rallying others around this issue.<sup>12</sup> Given limited resources, USAID believes the most strategic impact it can make in basic education is to address early grade reading as an outcome that is critical to sustain and ensure learning for children.

This strategy recognizes the importance of educating children in their native languages where possible in the earliest grades. This allows for earlier comprehension and a smoother transition into other languages in subsequent years. For the purposes of this



strategy, primary grades can be defined by the partner country's system which can range from the first four to eight years of schooling. No matter how primary grades are defined, USAID will measure the performance of our programs primarily through the improvement of reading skills for primary grade students after two years of schooling, consistent with international measures adopted by the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.

Of course, children's future economic potential depends not just on reading instruction, but also on mathematics and other skills. School administrators cannot focus on only one of these as they promote both systems development and improved learning outcomes. However, effective reading is a necessary pre-condition for skill development in all other areas and, as such, will be the primary target by which we hold ourselves accountable for results in basic education. Missions may choose to invest in system reform programs that have associated benefits in math (or other skills) learning, but should not be supporting such programs as stand-alone goals. Programs only targeting math or other subjects (e.g., computer literacy, English language training, social sciences, etc.) should be coordinated with USAID programs but funded by national and local governments and other donors.

Investments in early childhood education (ECE) have also proved to deliver substantial, measurable results. ECE can be a critical reading readiness intervention for children, particularly for the disadvantaged whose mother tongue is different from the officially taught language in school. USAID encourages partner governments to evaluate the benefits associated with early childhood development programming. Where possible, countries should be examining methods to deliver developmentally appropriate educational content to their youngest children. USAID missions should focus resources on and will be held accountable for the achievement of reading gains at the primary grade levels and therefore should only pursue ECE-level interventions when they are seen as critical to achieving measurable improvements in reading outcomes later in primary grade levels.

### PROPOSED ILLUSTRATIVE RESULTS TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED READING

A myriad of factors contribute to low reading levels, including teacher absenteeism, frequent closure of schools, limited instructional time, lack of relevant and accessible reading material, poor teaching practices and limited use of reading assessment instruments. There is a growing body of research that identifies key interventions that improve reading, including structured reading instruction, providing more and better read-

ing materials, training teachers to teach reading, parental and community participation, and frequent assessment.

There is also widespread agreement that improving learning outcomes on a national scale, particularly in reading, requires simultaneous interventions at four levels: (1) teaching and learning in the classroom, (2) effective school management, (3) national policy and structural reforms to support school and classroom level changes, and (4) engagement and accountability by communities and the public at large.<sup>13 14</sup>

Though the precise nature of activities to promote reading will depend on local context and needs, the following illustrative results exemplify the type of activities USAID will support.

### RESULT 1.1: IMPROVED READING INSTRUCTION

Several successful reading programs have found direct interventions at the classroom level resulted in positive results on student learning. For example, in India, Liberia, and Ghana, impressive reading results were achieved by establishing time for reading, providing intense training and supervision for teachers, assuring continuous assessment, and making available appropriate reading materials.<sup>15 16</sup> Informed by this research, USAID will focus on **improving reading instruction** through three types of interventions: (1) improving teacher effectiveness; (2) increasing availability and use of reading materials; and (3) strengthening classroom and school management.

Though the precise nature of our efforts will depend on the local context and needs, as well as the problem definition and program opportunities that arise from working with our partners in the public and private sector, the following are illustrative examples of activities designed to improve reading instruction:

- Increase instructional time for reading, reduce teacher and pupil absenteeism, and encourage reading at home, community libraries, and other venues;
- Train teachers to teach reading, utilize appropriate language for reading instruction, and use para-professional teachers;
- Ensure an adequate supply of age and language-appropriate reading materials (including in formats made accessible to the disabled), establish school libraries, link teacher training to the appropriate use of reading materials, support student's use of reading materials in school and at home;

- Establish and enforce reading standards and utilize reading diagnostic tools on a continuous basis; and
- Address gender issues and reduce barriers that impact reading levels of girls and boys.

## **RESULT 1.2:** **READING DELIVERY SYSTEMS IMPROVED**

For learning outcomes to be achieved on a sustainable basis at the national level, a robust primary education system needs to be developed. A strong education system will include good governance, efficient and transparent financing, healthy institutions (such as teacher training colleges), effective management and properly functioning incentive mechanisms. Many successful educational programs have had difficulties in effectively scaling up its program at the national level. For example, in Colombia, the Escuelas Nuevas program was very successful in seeing large reading gains at the community level. However, when the model was taken to scale by the World Bank in the 1980s, the learning outcomes were mixed.<sup>17</sup> The mixed results are in large part due to the complexities and challenges in building a healthy primary education system that can support improved reading delivery systems. Recognizing that improved reading on a national scale presupposes a strong primary education system, USAID will support country's effort in building its primary education system.

Studies have shown that, in many developing countries, teacher absenteeism and lack of standards and assessment result in low learning outcomes.<sup>18 19</sup> The following activities are illustrative of actions that could be taken to improve reading delivery systems at the primary level:

- Assist the government to set clear standards and benchmarks for reading;
  - Implement policies and programs to promote reading;
  - Develop and implement school-based reading improvement programs;
  - Strengthen reading systems such as those for testing reading outcomes, monitoring performance over time, and supervision (including teacher time on task) and training of teachers;
  - Promote parent and community engagement in children's reading outcomes including through strengthened school management committees if appropriate;
- Establish professional standards and codes of conduct and support professional development for teachers and administrators;
  - Improve timely distribution and utilization of textbooks and instructional materials that utilize reading diagnostic tools;
  - Develop relevant reading curricula and ensure an adequate and timely supply of reading materials;
  - Support appropriate, cost-effective and scalable technologies (e.g., audio, video, computers, internet, mobile devices) that have the potential to improve reading or reading system performance; and
  - Identify and address gender dimensions that could contribute to, for example reducing pupil absenteeism or assuring that girls and boys both have access to a supply of reading materials.

## **RESULT 1.3:** **GREATER ENGAGEMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY BY COMMUNITIES AND THE PUBLIC**

It is widely recognized that community and parental engagement in education is a vital force in the effort to remove barriers to quality education, mobilize scarce education resources, and increase accountability for results in learning. There are examples, such as in Pakistan and India, where student report cards being made available to parents resulted in increased learning achievement. In Liberia, large reading gains were achieved in a program that mobilized and engaged local communities, where schools were required to report student reading results to parents. In this successful program, they also engaged the public through radio programs that addressed reading issues.

Beyond parental engagement, improving reading for millions of children will also require widespread public support and engagement from communities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Civil society organizations, including parent teacher associations, education advocacy groups, voluntary professional associations, and the media, can also contribute to reading improvement. The private sector can play a variety of important roles in improving reading. These include but are not limited to assessing and contributing relevant technology needs and assets, developing and providing resources and complementary learning platforms and opportunities, and providing accountability and policy advocacy as it relates to the govern-

ment's role in delivering quality education to ensure that children are able to read.

Some illustrative activities to bring greater transparency and accountability with key stakeholders could include:

- Establishing school management committees to include reading reports in school development plans;
- Mobilizing and engaging communities to address the reading issues of the school;
- Strengthening community and education stakeholder access to and utilization of education data for local decision making;
- Implementing a media campaign to increase public awareness about the importance of reading; and
- Mobilizing and engaging the private sector to provide learning materials or to advocate for improved reading environment.

## **GOAL 2:** **IMPROVED ABILITY OF TERTIARY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO PRODUCE WORKFORCE WITH RELEVANT SKILLS TO SUPPORT COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT GOALS BY 2015**

The 21st century knowledge-driven global economy underscores the need for higher levels of education and cognitive skills beyond a primary education. Studies found that tertiary education attainment raised developing countries' productivity and GDP significantly. One study showed that an additional year of secondary or tertiary educational attainment raised national output by 19 percent and GDP growth by 0.5 percent.<sup>20</sup> Another study on Sub-Saharan Africa showed that a one-year increase in tertiary education raised the average growth rate by 0.24 percent and boosted income by 3 percent over a five year period.<sup>21</sup> However, as globalization creates increasing demand for higher level skills, a growing number of young people in developing countries find themselves without the relevant knowledge and skills and are unable to fully participate in and contribute to economic development. A daunting challenge facing developing countries in meeting competitiveness demands is how to improve equity and expand access to tertiary and workforce development programs, and at the same time to maintain and improve their quality and relevance.

The cross cutting nature of tertiary education and workforce development programs makes them essential for achieving development goals in all sectors by promoting technological innovation and research, and enhancing worker productivity, entrepreneurship and job creation. Strengthening the quality and relevance of tertiary and workforce development education and training is one of USAID's strategic development priorities. *It should be noted that vocational and technical education and training programs can be delivered at upper-secondary and post-secondary levels and in formal and non-formal settings.*

Factors that undermine achieving equitable access, especially for students from lower income and marginalized groups including girls and young women and students with disabilities, include disparities in income, access to quality secondary education, and geographic proximity to education and training institutions, as well as absence of transparent admission policies and procedures. The expansion of demand for secondary and tertiary education has significantly increased government costs of providing public education and decreased ability of governments to adequately fund the increasing demand. The expansion of demand and increased enrollments, in many instances, also led to a decrease in quality and relevance of education and training. Such mismatch of skills created shortages in critical occupations required for economic development.

A combination of sustained capacity and carefully sequenced reforms is required to foster quality tertiary and workforce development systems. This complicated task requires close strategic cooperation and coordination among donors, key stakeholders, and the host country. USAID has a wide-range of experience and expertise in this field. Thus, USAID assistance will focus on improving equity of access to workforce development and tertiary education and training, improve quality and relevance of these programs, and improve quality of research in strategically selected disciplines that support development priorities. Extensive engagement of the business community and other relevant partners – at all stages of the problem definition and program development process – will be vital to this work.

Though the precise nature of activities to promote this goal will depend on local context and needs, the following illustrative results are examples of the type of activities USAID will support.

## **RESULT 2.1:** INCREASED ACCESS TO VOCATIONAL/TECHNICAL AND TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR UNDERSERVED AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Broad-based economic development is unlikely to be achieved and sustained if large segments of the population do not have access to educational programs that afford them opportunities to develop knowledge and skills required to engage in productive activities. Depending on specific country context, need, and opportunities, USAID efforts could include:

- Strengthening transparency of admissions procedures to tertiary institutions;
- Merit and need-based scholarships, internships, and exchange programs that align with the host country development priorities; and
- Policies and mechanisms for affordable student loans.

## **RESULT 2.2:** IMPROVED QUALITY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF COUNTRY DEVELOP- MENT PRIORITIES

Many factors contribute to fostering the success of tertiary education institutions to deliver quality education and research. USAID's and others' experience suggests that fostering and promoting institutional autonomy and accountability, encouraging diversity of educational models, fostering robust working relationships between tertiary education institutions and external stakeholders (e.g. business), encouraging competition and collaboration, and strengthening regional partnerships will reduce inefficiencies and promote innovation, all of which will enhance country ability to more effectively address development priorities. USAID approaches will aim to:

- Improve public-private sector collaboration, including university partnerships and alliances with the private sector to stimulate and finance research;
- Support quality and expansion of applied research by modernizing university research management systems and developing or modifying the legal framework to enable secure registration and patenting of intellectual property;

- Establish centers of excellence affiliated with universities to provide services to and strengthen connection with the private sector; and
- Improve faculty and staff training through joint collaborative research and teaching.

## **RESULT 2.3:** IMPROVED RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF WORK- FORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The introduction of new technologies has ignited the economic development process worldwide. For developing countries, these development trends require long-term economic reforms and a coordinated workforce development strategy. An effective workforce development strategy must include demand-driven systems that offer a wide range of education, training and information for skills development and creation of a new mindset for work. Establishing extensive business, non-profit and public sector linkages and partnerships at all levels – local community, national, regional, and international – are likewise central. USAID interventions will focus on:

- Establishing partnerships with regional and U.S. institutions and the private sector to deliver employability skills relevant to market needs, establish skills standards, and develop demand-driven curricula;
- Strengthening capacity to develop and implement industry-recognized skills certification;
- Improving career counseling and mentoring; and
- Promoting policies that support development of effective vocational and technical programs.

## **GOAL 3:** INCREASED EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN CRISIS AND CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS FOR 15 MIL- LION LEARNERS BY 2015

Of the over 70 million primary school-aged children not in school, nearly 40 million live in countries affected by armed conflict. Tens of millions more are living in situations where they have been displaced or otherwise affected by natural disaster. Finally, untold numbers of children and youth are at risk every day in their communities or neighborhoods from lawlessness, crime and gang activity. There is a growing recognition in the international community of the need to address these complex

problems.<sup>22</sup> Because education is not only a human right, but also can mitigate the effects of fragility and conflict, it is critical to restore education venues, services and system capacity for children and youth – and especially older youth.

More than one-half of the out-of-school children live in conflict-affected and crisis contexts.<sup>23</sup> The US clearly recognizes the link between our national security and the need for US to show leadership in promoting global peace and security.<sup>24</sup> Research has shown that inequitable, poor quality education can directly contribute to factors that cause conflict in countries, such as in Rwanda, Kosovo or Nepal.<sup>25</sup> However, studies have shown that increased levels of quality primary and secondary education in a country reduce conflict.<sup>26</sup>

Among donors, USAID has already demonstrated innovation and leadership in our education work in conflict and emergency contexts. USAID has 32% of its education programs in conflict-affected countries and more than 50% of its funds are expended in these countries. Research and policy centers have commended USAID's work in these difficult contexts and call for deepening of such capability within the Agency. Given these factors, USAID's education strategy has focused its third goal on increasing equitable access to education for children and youth in these contexts.<sup>27</sup>

USAID will seek to increase equitable access to education in environments affected by crisis and conflict—including at the national, sub-national or regional levels. We will focus on access, especially equity of access, because inequity of access to social services, including education, along identity lines such as religious, ethnic, and geographic, is a key risk factor of social unrest.<sup>28</sup> In addition, selecting geographic areas of interventions (whether selected by government or donors) that favor one zone over others can fuel ethnic and class tensions and result in widespread discontent and possible violence.<sup>29</sup> Beyond access to educational services for children and youth, we will also focus on strengthening the institutional capacity of school systems, especially in the area of crisis prevention. As in all cases, the quality of the education services is also essential. While the principal focus under this goal will be on access, it is expected that programs will insist that the education provided is of the best quality possible under the particular circumstances. In addition, USAID development assistance programs will need to closely coordinate and collaborate with humanitarian assistance providers to provide quality education early in crisis and conflict circumstances.

Though the precise nature of our efforts will depend on the local context and needs, the following illustrative results exem-

plify the type of activities we will continue to support in crisis and conflict-affected states.

### **RESULT 3.1:** **SAFE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROVIDED**

Education in conflict and crisis environments is a function of providing security, services, infrastructure, and stability where the absence of such fundamental requirements will prevent effective learning. It is, first and foremost, a question of assuring access to safe spaces, to physical infrastructure, and to basic education services, primarily to children and youth. USAID programs will focus on activities such as:

- Provision of safe learning opportunities for all children and youth, girls and boys, including formal and non-formal programs that focus on literacy, numeracy, and basic skills, as well as teacher training where there are shortages;
- Community-based efforts to restore access and to provide safety from violence, especially for marginalized groups; and
- Rehabilitation and construction of temporary, semi-permanent, permanent infrastructure that is accessible to all.

### **RESULT 3.2:** **CRISIS PREVENTION EFFORTS STRENGTHENED**

Given the importance of both the rapid restitution of educational services after crisis or conflict and the need to avoid reigniting conflict, crisis prevention is central to safety, social stability and educational outcomes. Therefore, illustrative USAID programs under this goal will aim at:

- Fostering institutional and policy changes that can support crisis prevention, such as reforms in language policy, hiring policies, the location of education services, and patterns of resources allocations that often contribute to instability and grievances in the first place;
- Supporting community engagement, reconciliation, social engagement, peace education, and violence mitigation programming through the curriculum and other learning activities;
- Providing psychosocial support to teachers and students to ensure quality teaching and learning;



- Ensuring the curriculum is hatred-free and demilitarized;
- Developing reintegration programs for child soldiers (girls and boys) and victims of torture and trauma;
- Providing materials and training around disaster risk reduction, such as the preparation of disaster response plans at school and municipal levels; and
- Providing life skills training to youth.

### **RESULT 3.3:** **INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY TO PROVIDE SERVICES STRENGTHENED**

The period following natural disaster, man-made instability or outright conflict—especially if these conditions prevail for an extended period—presents critical opportunities to restore (or build for the first time) the system conditions that will make future investments and learning successful. This often involves the restoration of educational systems and teacher cadres to enable the return of services. Universal primary education alone is not enough to alleviate fragility; post-primary education is also needed to produce the qualified pool of personnel and administrators that a government needs to rebuild. Finally, making progress in education in these environments requires meeting the special needs of war or crime-affected youth, demobilized soldiers, and other vulnerable populations. To help rebuild institutional capacity as quickly as possible after a crisis or conflict, USAID approaches will include:

- Supporting recruitment, assessment of levels and qualifications, deployment, monitoring, and training of teachers and providing instructional materials;
- Developing information systems to ensure efficient and transparent recruitment, deployment, qualification, and compensation of the teaching corps;
- Establishing efficient and transparent accreditation and examination systems; and
- Supporting policy reforms to ensure equity and transparency of management of education and training services.

USAID should comply with this strategy by 2013 by shifting resources to education programs that are appropriate to the country context and in line with host country plans while also contributing to one or more of the previously stated goals.

Education programs will be reviewed in Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) for compliance with this strategy and any exception must be justified and approved through the CDCS process or, in the case that there is no CDCS, through consultation with the Office of Education and the PPL Bureau. Implementing guidance will be issued within approximately two months of publication of this strategy; for country-specific guidance on designing education programs that comply with the strategy, USAID operating units should consult with the Office of Education and with education advisors in their regional bureaus.

### **MEASURING AND LEARNING FROM EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

By effectively measuring and analyzing the outcomes and impacts of USAID's education programs, and by sharing those findings, we hope to achieve several important objectives:

- Demonstrate what works and what does not work;
- Improve our program performance;
- Target our resources at the most effective interventions; and
- Increase accountability through the measurement and disclosure of information about education program effectiveness, relevance and efficiency.

Per USAID policies and guidance, all education programs contributing to the three goals in this strategy will be designed and implemented with a clear performance monitoring plan. For major projects, an evaluation will be required to document and learn from project performance and outcomes and, where possible, to establish through carefully designed impact evaluations whether the project had a measurable impact.

#### **USAID'S EVALUATION POLICY**

Per the Evaluation Policy, consideration must be given during the design phase of education programs to the types of evaluation to be undertaken for the highest level objective for which management will hold itself accountable. Identifying key evaluation questions at the outset of a program will guide the actions taken during implementation to capture relevant data. Performance Management Plans will include indicators that measure results at the outcome and impact level, when feasible and appropriate, in addition to the output level. At the initiation of a program, baseline data, including for variables that

correspond to key outcomes and impacts, will be collected and analyzed to establish a reference point. Program managers will maintain data and documentation that may eventually be made available to independent evaluation teams. Routine program monitoring and site visits are expected throughout the life of the program or project.

Evaluations will use methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence that corresponds to the questions being asked, taking into consideration time, budget and other practical considerations. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are recognized to yield valuable findings; observational, quasi experimental and experimental designs all have their place. The selection of method or methods for a particular evaluation should be appropriate for answering the evaluation question and consider the empirical strength of study design as well as the feasibility. Methodological strengths and limitations will be communicated explicitly both in scopes of work related to evaluation design and in final evaluation reports.

To support host country capacity building, USAID will include local host country partners in reviewing the design of evaluations and, when possible, as members of evaluation teams. USAID will also support stronger host country data and evaluation systems needed to measure progress on the goals and targets in this strategy. Missions should consider how to ensure sufficient staff time, expertise and budget resources to monitor and evaluate programs.

## USAID EDUCATION STRATEGY INDICATORS

A common indicator is provided below for each goal. Program officers should use these indicators (in addition to others as appropriate) for goal level reporting but design their own indicators for the intermediate result level that are logically linked to the overall goal. Per USAID policy, all indicators should be disaggregated by sex.

### **GOAL 1: Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015**

- Percentage change in proportion of students in primary grades who, after two years of schooling, demonstrate sufficient reading fluency and comprehension to “read to learn.”

### **GOAL 2: Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce workforce with relevant skills to support country development goals by 2015.**

- Percentage change in proportion of tertiary and workforce development programs producing workforce with relevant skills that support country development goals.

### **GOAL 3: Increased equitable access for 15 million children in environments affected by crisis and conflict by 2015.**

- Percentage change in Primary Net Enrollment Rate.

It is important to note that the numerical targets associated with the first and third goals are premised on results achieved in recent years, on the assumption of host country commitment to stipulated targets, and on continued access to sufficient resources. If the resource envelope for basic education funding changes, the achievement of the stipulated targets will likely be affected.

## CROSSCUTTING ISSUES

The following issues are areas of special concern for USAID and cut across two or more of the three goals of this strategy.

### **Youth Programming**

The demand by host country governments, civil society, USAID country missions and other donors for youth focused programming is rapidly growing. There are approximately 1.5 billion young people around the world making up the largest youth generation in history. About 1.3 billion youth are in the developing world. Investments today in youth development will pay future dividends in economic growth and positive social change. Youth should be treated as partners, valuable assets, leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators in finding the right solutions to global challenges. At the same time, this “youth bulge” places significant pressure on labor markets, may potentially contribute to social instability and requires educational content relevant to employment opportunities.

Out-of-school youth require training that provides them with relevant and marketable skills to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Training programs designed to prepare youth to engage in enterprise and business development need to address the knowledge gaps created by incomplete schooling, the lack of social connections, and the lack of business-related skills. Thus, there is a need for formal and informal secondary and tertiary education to address and enhance the learning, living and working skills of young people.

While youth are a particular focus of some education and training programs, it should be noted that USAID engagement with youth goes beyond education programs and spans all development goals including economic growth, democracy and governance, global health, food security, and global climate change. USAID is in the process of developing a more cohesive and focused approach to engaging youth.

*This strategy addresses these needs as integral to two of our three education goal areas, with youth programming an element of providing relevant workforce training and tertiary development activities under goal two and increasing access to education (including literacy, numeracy, and life-skills training) in conflict and crisis settings under goal three.*

## Gender Equality

Within the education sector, high and cascading returns to investments in girls' education have been one of the most important findings of educational and development research in the past two decades. In most developing countries, girls are less likely than boys to enroll in school, stay in school, or have their educational needs met through non-formal means. On the other hand, educated girls tend to delay marriage, have fewer and healthier children, and contribute more to family income and to national productivity. In some parts of the world, boys lag behind girls in educational outcomes. For example, in Botswana, Lesotho, and Namibia boys may be taken out of school to contribute to the family income through cattle herding. Boys in Latin America and the Caribbean often have higher repetition rates and lower achievement rates than girls.

Per USAID policy, "Operating Units must do gender analysis for long-term planning related to assistance objectives or intermediate results, and all projects and activities must address gender issues in a manner consistent with the findings of that analytical work."<sup>30</sup> USAID missions and other units with education programs should use the findings of that analysis and also do additional gender assessment if necessary to ensure that education interventions take local gender dynamics into account and promote gender equality. Education interventions that target girls or boys should be based on sound gender analysis, meet an identified need or demand, promote learning outcomes, bring about systemic change, and work to transform the power dynamics between the sexes.<sup>31</sup> Promoting gender equality in education remains a top priority in all three of our goal areas.

*This strategy promotes gender equality and USAID education programs will take measures to increase gender parity and improve gender equity at all levels of education, with gender-sensitive inter-*

*ventions tailored to the specific gender issues present in a country's educational system.*

## Learners with Disabilities

Students suffering from disabilities represent one of the largest cohorts of children who do not attend school. In fact, one-third of out-of-school children in developing countries have a disability and recent research shows that disability is a stronger correlate of non-enrollment than either gender or class. The difference in primary school attendance between disabled children and children without disability can reach 60 percentage points or more. Children who do attend are often neglected by teachers and administrators who have not been trained in inclusive education techniques. The inclusion of children with disabilities into regular schools requires, inter alia, political leadership, flexible curricula, accessible infrastructure, trained teachers and accessible learning materials.

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in December 2006 has effectively directed attention towards the rights of people with disabilities. Disability is attracting increasing consideration by both national legal systems and policy makers worldwide, with 96 of the countries that have ratified the CRPD being located in the Global South. We can anticipate growing country demand for technical assistance on how to include children with disabilities in their education reform systems.

The Government of the United States' commitment to supporting the Education for All goals implies a commitment to helping all children realize their potential. This includes improving opportunities for historically marginalized groups including ethnic minorities, indigenous, multilingual (i.e. native language different from the language of instruction), rural, and disabled populations.

This strategy will emphasize inclusion in schooling of marginalized groups, with a focus on removing barriers to the inclusion of learners with disabilities, including the physical barriers to reaching education venues, pedagogical barriers, and the social exclusion that is a result of a society's negative attitudes towards disability.

## Integrating Education with Other Development Priorities

USAID is entering a new policy realm of selectivity and focus for all our development investments, with a high priority signaled for economic growth and democratic governance. Food security, global health and global climate change investments are

critical and well-funded goal areas. For education, we expect to see some country programs that will emphasize an explicit education objective because of the direct relevance of education improvements to the country's development challenges. Others may see education integrated into other, leading development objectives as foundational and supportive.

USAID will promote the Communities of Learning approach where appropriate. This means that schools can and should act as a primary resource center for the delivery of services that extend beyond education. School buildings can serve as community centers to promote public goods in a number of other sectors, including agriculture, health and nutrition, civic education, adult literacy, youth and sport and ICT. USAID will promote ensuring that schools are at the center of a community's overall well-being.

USAID has long been the global leader in providing targeted long-term training, both in-country and around the world. Long-term training programs, while expensive, can be crucial to helping develop the cadre of technocrats and other professionals who can help developing countries transition towards prosperity. It can ensure sustainability of broader reform programs. Long-term training, planned as part of a comprehensive human and institutional capacity development assessment, will be used to help achieve the economic and social development objectives identified as critical by USAID and the host government.

In addition, it is anticipated that USAID programs with goals in other sectors such as global health, food security, global climate change, economic growth, and democracy and governance, may use education interventions to help meet those goals, consistent with legislative authorities and other USAID policies. For example, a program working to achieve food security may support adult literacy training for women farmers to help them improve their ability to learn and apply new methods. A global health program may work to keep girls in secondary school as increased years of schooling is shown to delay the age that girls become sexually active or pregnant. Such interventions would be supported largely by the funding allocated for those initiatives. While education program managers should coordinate and integrate activities with other sector programs, education funding will focus on achieving the goals set out in this strategy. *This strategy argues for promoting integration between education and other sectors where appropriate and where the outcome is likely to be improved potential for economic growth, democratic practice and health and well-being.*

# A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTATION

To turn this Education Strategy into action, a roadmap for implementation will be issued within approximately two months of publication of this strategy. That roadmap will provide a timeline and implementation guidance that prioritizes the following areas of action:

## INSTITUTIONALIZE NEW POLICIES

Building the new policy principles into our education programs will require explicit efforts to:

- Promulgate the strategy and its subsequent operational guidance;
- Create analytics for selectivity and focus (e.g., inventory, assess and catalogue existing programs by country, commitment, relative need, program thrust, program size and donor mix);
- Specify expectations for evaluating current and future programs; and
- Integrate guidance on selectivity and focus into USAID's country strategic planning guidance and budget planning.

## BUILD A 21ST CENTURY RESEARCH AGENDA

Evidence-based research has been at the heart of all of USAID's great institutional successes (including, for example, the Green Revolution, oral rehydration therapy, and social marketing techniques in family planning). However, today's challenges occur in a world shrunken by the immediacy of communication and technology, populated with a bewildering diversity of actors, and facing supersized outcomes, both good and bad, born of complexity.

To deal with such challenges, USAID must revitalize its capacity and commitment to science and technology (S&T) in a way

that responds to the changing global landscape, including by working in multiple and networked partnerships, utilizing cutting-edge research, reaching to non-traditional alliances with technology firms, and doing so together with nascent host country research capacity.

USAID's education professionals are developing the most aggressive research agenda for education in the history of the agency. Leading thinkers in education have been engaged to help design both theoretical and applied research programs around topics as diverse as teacher effectiveness, school feeding, innovative financing, transparency and accountability, technology and student testing. In addition to the academic community, USAID is working closely with foundations and think tanks to establish a broad network of concerned partners, including the World Bank, DFID, the Brookings Institution, and the Hewlett Foundation. This research program aims to develop unimpeachable answers to the remaining questions on how best to impart knowledge and skills to children.

The research will be coordinated between education specialists in the Office of Education and experts in research, S&T and innovation from USAID's Policy, Planning and Learning Bureau, and innovation fellows from USAID's Development Innovation Ventures group. Initial research programs are being proposed to examine the following: the relationship between transparency and data sharing and learning outcomes; the impact of school feeding programs not on attendance but on learning, the practical application of mobile technology on school management and instruction; the usefulness of national education accounts; and a suite of research around all aspects of teaching, from recruitment and retention to methodology, supervision and practice.

In order to spur innovation in the field, USAID will be sponsoring a Grand Challenge for Development in Education. The concept of the Grand Challenge is to identify potential gains in education and the barriers that have kept us from achieving them. Then a series of challenge grants or other tools would be deployed to identify innovative interventions from the field



that can be taken to scale. The Grand Challenge for Development in Education will be launched in the early stages of the strategy period and will contribute to the achievement of at least one goal area.

## LEVERAGE THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

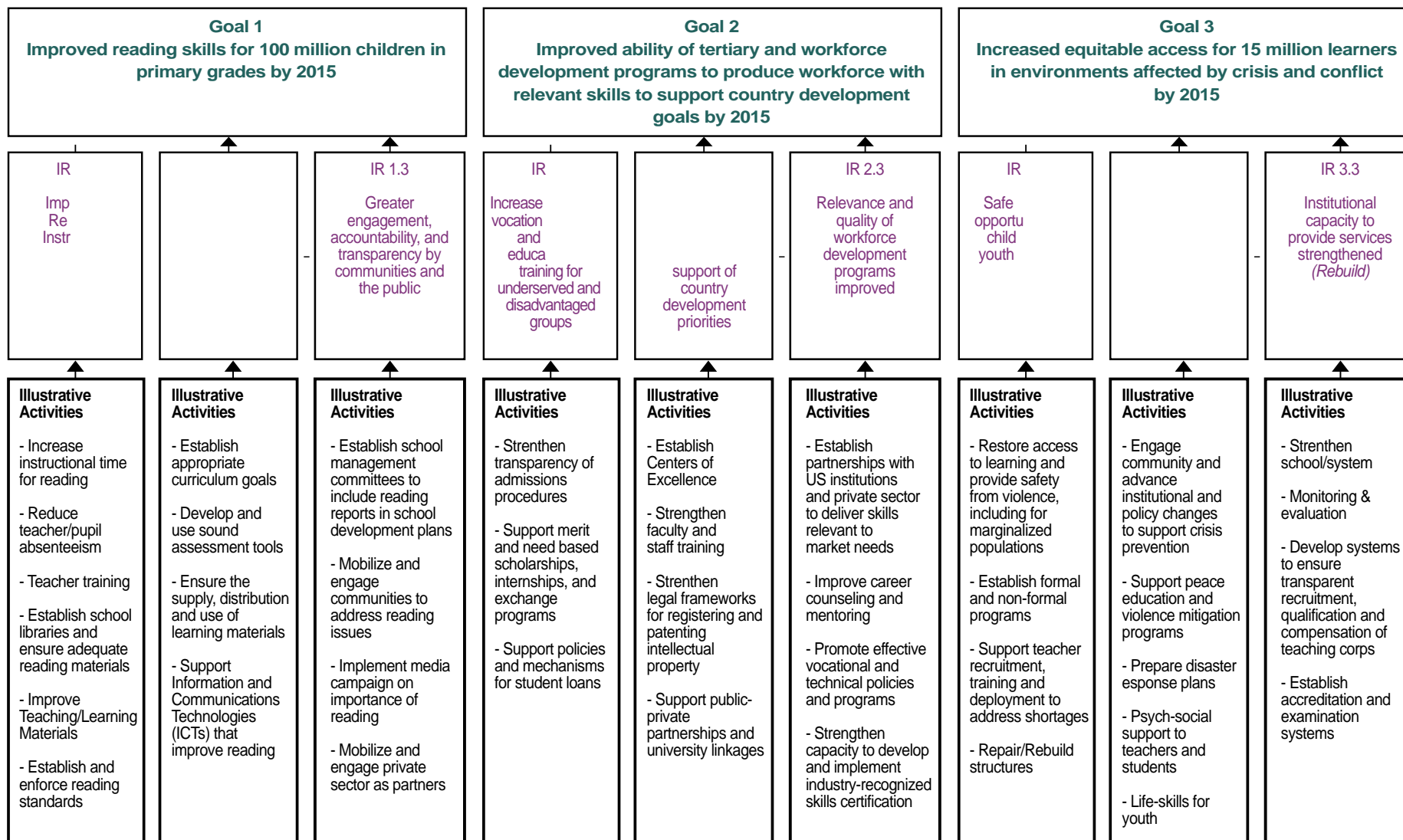
One of the most striking changes facing USAID is the growing multiplicity of development actors. While partnering is not new to the Agency, we must do better in creating a shared vision around development problem definition, strategic goals, and coordinated efforts. As our understanding of the challenges becomes more complex, so must the solutions be multi-faceted. To that end, USAID's education programs will be strengthened by systematic and purposeful outreach to a variety of partners, including other U.S. agencies, host country governments and civil society, other international donors, multi-lateral organizations, foundations and the private sector.

USAID's experience with partnering with the private sector—including through Global Development Alliances—has leveraged resources, enriched program content by including private or corporate perspective and expertise, and taught us new lessons of innovation. An important next step for USAID's ability to innovate and replicate recent successes will be special arrangements such as public-private partnerships with US non-governmental and academic organizations that are on the cutting edge of learning. In particular, USAID will seek to partner with leading researchers around the globe to ensure that our problem definition and programming remains state-of-the-art. Partnerships are also being formed with a new generation of foundations looking to support educating children and young people around the globe. Combined with new alliances with multinational corporations, host country businesses and business associations as well as global advocates like the World Economic Forum, these partnerships have the potential to foster enhanced problem definition, promote more effective program solutions, and spur numerous innovations in technology, methodology and administration within education systems.

## ESTABLISH NORMS AND INCENTIVES FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

USAID education programs are generated at the country level to ensure they are tailored to local needs and opportunities, reflecting USAID's comparative advantage as a donor. However, decentralization must be balanced with appropriate corporate oversight, strategic guidance, and knowledge sharing across the Agency. Mission education officers must be connected in a global network of education professionals, allowing them frequent interchange of new ideas, recent innovations, best practices, and lessons learned from other countries. USAID will deliver this systematic support through strategic and operational guidance, technical assistance and direct staff support to field missions, and Agency-wide knowledge-sharing.

## Annex A: ILLUSTRATIVE USAID Education Strategy Results Framework



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Soto, M. (2006). *The Causal Effect of Education on Aggregate Income*. Working Paper 0605. International Economics Institute, University of Valencia.
- <sup>2</sup> Hanushek, E. and D. Kimko (2000). "Schooling, Labor-Force Quality, and the Growth of Nations." *American Economic Review* 90(5): 1184–1208.  
Hanushek, E. and L. Woessmann (2008). "The Role of Cognitive Skills in Economic Development." *Journal of Economic Literature* 46(3): 607–68.
- <sup>3</sup> Hanushek, E. and L. Woessmann (2009) *Schooling, Cognitive Skills, and the Latin American Growth Puzzle*. NBER Working Paper 15066. National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- <sup>4</sup> Przeworski, A., et al. (2000). *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.  
Barro, R. (1999). *Inequality, Growth, and Investment*. NBER Working Paper 7038. National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.
- <sup>5</sup> According to USAID's *Education From a Gender Equality Perspective*, with reference to UNESCO, parity is attained when the same proportion of boys and girls are entering the education system, achieving education goals, and advancing through the different cycles of education. Equity is the process of being fair to girls and boys and taking measures to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent girls or boys from operating on a level playing field - such as scholarships to achieve gender parity in enrollment rates.
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