



With USAID's help, women return to school after twenty-one years

# Bringing Adult Literacy Education to Mozambique

## Challenge

Education is a top priority for Mozambique's government, but the country continues to suffer from a high illiteracy rate - a legacy of colonialism and a 16-year civil war that followed independence from Portugal in 1975. After little more than a decade of peace, Mozambique still lacks sufficient schools and teachers to guarantee education for the nation's youth. The government is struggling to provide adult literacy services to make up for lack of opportunity in the past. An estimated 60% of adults still cannot read and write, with the illiteracy rate higher among women. Those with little or no formal education face limited job prospects despite a growing economy. They also are disadvantaged when it comes to learning new skills to improve their lives.

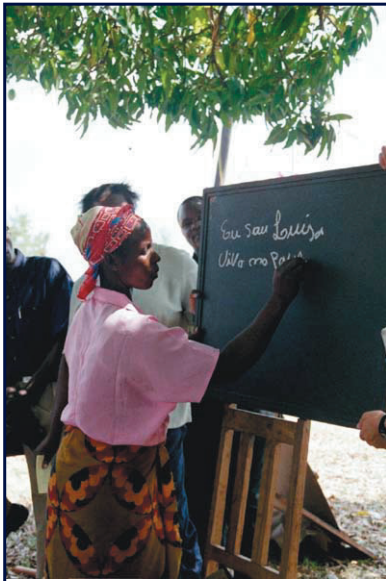


Photo: USAID/Jay L. Knott

Adult literacy student Luisa Eduardo demonstrates her Portuguese writing skills.

“After getting back into school, I learned a lot. We studied subjects that were new to me, including history, mathematics, Portuguese, science and geography.”

- Luisa Eduardo

## Initiative

USAID's food security strategy provides rural Mozambicans with knowledge they can use to increase their household incomes. But high levels of illiteracy can make it difficult to train people, especially women, to participate in income-generating activities. In the Zambezia Province of central Mozambique, USAID addressed this problem by funding adult literacy instructors in ten rural districts to supplement the government's struggling literacy program.

In the remote village of Lioma, 37-year-old Luisa Eduardo resumed her primary education after twenty-one years away from school. A divorced mother of four, Luisa barely supports her family by subsistence farming. Unlike many Mozambican women of her generation, she had attended school as a girl. But a fire destroyed her family's home when she was 14, and Luisa was forced to marry and never returned to school. Custom at that time prohibited married women from attending school because it was feared that educated women would disrespect their husbands.

## Results

Within two years, literacy instructors in Zambezia Province taught 4,285 adults - more than sixty of them women - to read and write or improve their literacy. Now Luisa can calculate the price of goods she buys at the market and help

with their homework. She also knows how to grow vegetables like onions, tomatoes and lettuce, which she learned by observing a USAID-sponsored garden program at her school. Luisa hopes that continuing her education will allow her to get a better job in the future. Mozambique is expanding its adult literacy program and are now incorporating the USAID-funded instructors into its payroll. USAID will continue to supplement the government's efforts by paying to train more than 400 new instructors in 2004.

Case Study



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