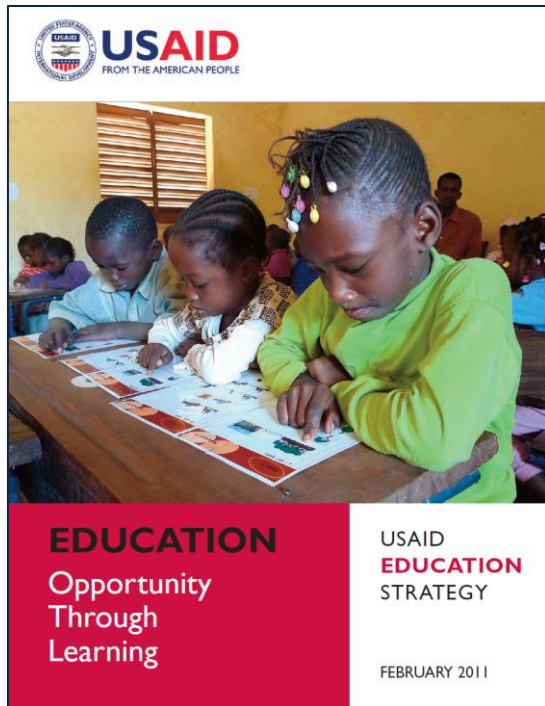




**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# 2011 USAID Education Strategy Implementation Guidance



Revised April 2012

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# I. Introduction

The 2011-2015 Education Strategy, approved by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Rajiv Shah in February 2011, is the first Agency-wide sector strategy issued under his leadership. As such, it reflects the policy priorities of this Administration, articulated in the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-6) on Global Development and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), as well as the Administrator's internal reform priorities embodied in *USAID Forward*. The Education Strategy Policy Task Team (PTT) strived to translate the top-line policy messages of these seminal documents into a new kind of Agency strategy—one that emphasizes greater selectivity in where we invest and drives toward greater focus, scale for impact, and evidence-based rigor in both analysis and results measurement. While it offers flexibility around country-led and locally-relevant priorities, it no longer enables “all things to all people” programming. It specifically aims over time for a more coherent Agency focus and footprint, addressing issues of educational quality, relevance, and equitable access in crisis and conflict environments. It also phases out previously funded activities that are no longer in our strategic core, such as early childhood education, secondary education, and life-long learning skills.

The Education Strategy identifies three overarching goals to guide USAID education assistance through FY 2015:

- Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015;
- Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to produce a workforce with relevant skills to support country development goals by 2015; and
- Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners.

The focus of Goal 1 on ensuring the **quality** of learning at the primary grade level is an explicit policy choice in response to evidence demonstrating that years of investment by governments, USAID, and other donors in access was not delivering successful and measurable learning outcomes. Goal 2 focuses on workforce and higher education objectives and supports educational investments beyond basic education that are **relevant** to the **developmental needs** of a community or country. Goal 3's strategic focus reflects a pragmatic understanding of the priority need for equitable **access** to safe learning opportunities in conflict and crisis environments. Together, these strategic choices reflect the overarching US policy guidance contained in the PPD-6, QDDR and *USAID Forward*, and the most recent research on these specific issues. The strategy narrows Missions' programming options—a difficult decision that the Agency has not made lightly.

This Education Strategy Implementation guidance serves as the primary reference tool for Missions and other operating units to address questions that may arise during the implementation of the strategy. It should be read in the context of four other recent Agency documents:

- USAID Evaluation Policy<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> USAID, Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, Office of Evaluation and Research (PPL/LER), *USAID Evaluation Policy: Year One*, (February 2012). <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/USAIDEvaluationPolicy-YearOne.pdf>. See also USAID, Bureau for

- Policy Directive on Agency-wide Policy and Strategy Implementation
- USAID Project Design Guidance
- USAID Policy Framework

The Implementation Guidance is also supplemented by two key documents that can be found online:

- **Technical Notes**
- **Reference Materials**

The Technical Notes provide more in depth guidance on critical issues of alignment and project design approaches that enable counting toward global goals. The Reference Materials offer field staff a range of relevant research studies and reports that may shed light on the issues and methodologies referenced in this document.

These documents have been prepared in consultation with USAID regional bureaus and some individual Missions. In preparing the documents, a host of complex policy, technical, statistical and management subjects were reviewed and addressed. The results strike a balance among rigor, practicality, and appropriateness. As the strategy is implemented, USAID and its partners will learn from this work, and USAID will revise these documents accordingly.

## II. Implementing the Education Strategy

### 2.1 Roles and Responsibilities

On July 12, 2011 the Administrator issued the Policy Directive on Agency-wide Policy and Strategy Implementation that establishes a requirement for alignment with new Agency-wide strategies or policies, as well as a process for seeking exceptions to them. Missions should refer first to this policy directive to understand the broad context and overall guidance of the education strategy. Regional Bureaus' education teams provide frontline support to the Missions in overall strategy implementation; therefore questions from missions should be directed first to the appropriate Regional Bureau. EGAT/ED is responsible for providing technical reviews and leadership, further guidance in support of the strategy, and the aggregation of results data that will support the top-line strategy goals. While one or another bureau may take a lead role on a specific part of the overall process, the institutional norm will be one of close collaboration and communication between the regional and pillar bureaus. Where there are non-technical policy issues, EGAT/ED and Regional Bureaus/ED will consult with PPL in order to make a sound recommendation to the Mission. At key points in the budget process, BRM will work closely with regional and pillar leaders on addressing resource allocation trade-off decisions should they arise.

### 2.2 Timing of Implementation

In his Agency Notice issuing the Education Strategy, Administrator Shah called for missions to begin implementation immediately, even as he acknowledged the risks and difficulties in doing so. The target date for field missions' having programs consistent with the new strategy is the beginning of FY 13.<sup>2</sup> The timing of alignment is especially critical for Goals 1 and 3 where quantitative targets cannot be achieved without at least three years of implementation ending with FY 2015. Per the May 2011 FAIQs, and in the absence of a formal exception request, "*all FY12 education funds that are not currently part of an award should be programmed in support of transition to the new Education Strategy and all FY13 education funds should be aligned with the strategy.*"<sup>3</sup> FY12 completes the hard pivot *planning* year requiring intensive consultation to agree on a new Results Framework in the early part of the year, as well as a detailed project design and integrated performance monitoring and performance or impact evaluation plan prepared, and when possible, procured by the end of the fiscal year.

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<sup>2</sup> The Strategy's Goal 1 of 100 million improved readers was based on two key assumptions: 1) no student should be counted more than once and 2) aligned "direct" programming (see glossary in Technical Notes) of USAID, host countries, and donors would run for a minimum of three school years. School years may coincide with USAID's fiscal years, but Missions will adjust generic planning assumptions to meet country needs and requirements.

<sup>3</sup> USAID Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, Office of Education, *USAID Education Strategy Frequently Asked Implementation Questions (FAIQs)*, (2011). [http://cms1.usaid.gov/EGAT/offices/edu/education\\_toolkit/upload/ED-FAIQs-20-May-11-final-1.pdf](http://cms1.usaid.gov/EGAT/offices/edu/education_toolkit/upload/ED-FAIQs-20-May-11-final-1.pdf)

## 2.3 Funding Parameters

Absent a specific exception, the Education Strategy's primary funding sources—Basic and Higher Education funds—must be devoted to activities that directly address one or more of the three goals, or can be directly attributed toward supporting these goals.

Basic Education (BE) funds are to be used in support of the numerical targets for Goals 1 and 3. For BE funds, the first consideration is whether programming falls under Goal 1 or Goal 3. Under Goal 3, programming still must adhere to USAID's longstanding agreement with Congress on guidance for the use of BE funds.<sup>4</sup> Goal 2 programming can be funded through Higher Education funds or with other funds available to the missions.

Missions should make every effort to support host country governments' understanding of the rationale behind the Education Strategy. If, however, despite policy dialogue, information sharing and other forms of discussion, governments do not consider reading/student learning outcomes as a priority in the education sector, countries not affected by Crisis and Conflict should consider withdrawing from basic education programming.

## 2.4 Project Alignment

The new Agency-wide Strategy requires transition by Missions into concrete and specific projects (a "set of planned and then executed interventions identified through a design process") consistent with USAID's reform vision as a modern development enterprise and for renewed development leadership within the U.S. Government. It is analogous to Presidential Initiative planning, which identifies the specific outcomes sought through U.S. engagement and empowers field Missions to shape programming in a country-led, locally-relevant way. The challenge of achieving a more coherent corporate vision for global education is to understand how the Strategy's goals might be appropriate for a country, and, if appropriate, how best to accomplish the goals locally.

Missions were expected to have begun the process of alignment of their education programmatic activities when the Education Strategy was issued in February 2011. The July 2011, *Policy Directive on Strategy Implementation*, provides support for this transition by outlining the process of consultation and the timing of implementation. Responsibility for the achievement of the Education Strategy's goals is shared across the Agency by Regional, Pillar Bureaus and Missions, each with a distinct role:

- Missions are ultimately responsible for developing and implementing programming in their countries that will collectively support Agency-wide achievement of the targets.
- Regional Bureaus have primary accountability for supporting the missions in their successful implementation of the Strategy, including representing missions in discussions about alignment and exceptions.
- EGAT/ED provides overall technical leadership and specific guidance and will communicate technical assessments to Regional Bureaus and PPL on the quality and

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<sup>4</sup>USAID Bureau of Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade, Office of Education, "Clarification of Basic Education Earmark, 12/15/09," (2009). [http://inside.usaid.gov/EGAT/offices/edu/education\\_toolkit/upload/earmarks.pdf](http://inside.usaid.gov/EGAT/offices/edu/education_toolkit/upload/earmarks.pdf)

appropriateness of programming. With the support of Regional Bureaus, EGAT/ED is responsible for aggregating and analyzing data against the Agency's global targets.

- PPL and the Office of Budget and Resource Management (BRM) are neutral arbiters, ensuring timely resolution of disagreements on policy and budget alignment.

## Assessing Alignment

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on how Missions can best ensure alignment of their education portfolio to the Education Strategy at the project design phase. In order to assess alignment of Mission programming with the USAID Education Strategy, Missions and AID/W will need to examine five criteria:

- 1. Fit with Host Country Priorities:** Missions will need to confirm and describe the fit of one or more of the three strategy goals with the resources, policies, priorities and needs of the country's development plan for education.
- 2. Evidence-Based Programming:** All projects must be framed as part of a development hypothesis where interventions directly support what is required to reach the stated/desired result. The logical connections and the assumptions should reflect recent rigorous and compelling evidence of what works to improve reading outcomes at scale. Some resources to support project design can be found in the Reference Materials of this Guidance; Regional Bureaus and EGAT/ED are available to assist Missions with project design decisions.
- 3. Scalability:** Scalability is demonstrated by the ability to replicate the key elements of a project that were deemed critical to its effectiveness at scale (regional, national) and (b) the project's affordability over the mid and long-term, given a country's total projected resource envelope.
- 4. Activities and Budgets Linked to Goals and Targets:** The causal linkages between activities to the top-line goal(s) and the magnitude of funding levels allocated to these activities demonstrate alignment. A fully aligned portfolio will show how each activity or component is related to the achievement of Goal 1, 2, or 3 targets, with all funding allotted to these activities or components.
- 5. Performance Monitoring and Performance and Impact Evaluation:** Every project must integrate a monitoring and evaluation plan. All large or pilot projects must also design a performance or impact evaluation plan during the project design phase.<sup>5</sup> The plan must also identify performance indicators, including the relevant standard education indicators. Monitoring and evaluation requirements are covered in PPL's Project Design Guidance and the Evaluation Policy.

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<sup>5</sup> A large project is one which is at or above average dollar value for the Development Objective. A pilot project is any development program intervention or set of interventions that demonstrate new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope if the approach is proven successful.

[http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID\\_Evaluation\\_Policy\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID_Evaluation_Policy_FAQ.pdf)

## Exceptions to Alignment

The Agency recognizes the challenges of redirecting resources to new purposes. There are political, contractual, and practical problems in changing course, especially once projects or activities have been agreed or launched. Ideally, the point of departure for implementing the new Education Strategy would be the conception of a new Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) or the end of an existing project. In the absence of such an ideal sequence, the Agency's new Policy Directive on Implementing Agency-wide Strategies and Policies acknowledges that there will inevitably be exceptions to the time framework mentioned above.

The Policy Guidance on Implementing Agency-wide Strategies and Policies spells out how the Regional and Pillar bureaus collectively determine the status of alignment of current and future projects and major procurements. Requests for exceptions are originated by Mission management and sent to the appropriate Regional Bureau Education Officer, as well as to the Director of EGAT's Office of Education. If an agreement is not reached, PPL and BRM will work with the two AA's to broker an agreement. Programs that are not aligned and have not received an exception may jeopardize future funding levels.

For Missions filing requests for exceptions, the following could be an acceptable basis for an exception:

- a) Projects in the last 12-18 months (from February 2011 to July 2012) of their life may, if necessary, be "grandfathered", but follow-on activities are to be aligned toward the new Strategy;
- b) Projects approved within the previous 12-24 months as part of a CDCS (prior to the approval of the Education Strategy in February of 2011);
- c) Projects with overriding aid effectiveness impact (such as critical host country priorities, priority use of host country systems, or donor division of labor);
- d) Projects supporting broader national security goals; and
- e) Projects representing broad Congressional interests.

## 2.5 Project Implementation

- Under *USAID Forward*, the Implementing Procurement Reform Initiative<sup>6</sup> directs the Agency to increase its use of host country institutions and systems, both governmental and non-governmental, to build capacity and promote country ownership for enhanced aid effectiveness (see <http://forward.usaid.gov>). Capacity-building and systems strengthening—in terms of strategic, technical and financial management—are anticipated outcomes of the Initiative. USAID's Education Strategy also promotes system strengthening and capacity-building as intermediate achievements needed to link programming to the strategic goals of improved reading, relevant workforce and tertiary programs, and effective access to education in conflict or crisis zones.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information the "Implementation and Procurement Reform" under USAID Forward see <http://forward.usaid.gov/node/317>.



- In the process of CDCS development, new education project development, and/or existing project re-design, Missions are encouraged to consider for each program and project the opportunities for providing support to government or to local non-government organizations to directly implement the programming with needed resources or technical assistance (unless there is heightened risk of corruption). Various approaches and tools are available to Missions for these purposes. The USAID Forward website (see above) and a new online Donor Engagement Toolkit (<http://inside.usaid.gov/PPL/offices/de/toolkit/>) provide a wealth of information on such approaches, and both Regional Bureau and EGAT/ED representatives can support Missions as they explore the advisability and feasibility of direct support mechanisms.
- Importantly, the educational landscape in developing countries will not change measurably without local leadership and coordinated efforts among development stakeholders in the country, including government, other donors, civil society, and the private sector, that support, indeed own, the evidence-based programs and projects proposed to achieve the goals and outcomes of the Strategy. A robust, sectoral analysis—specific to what is happening in support of reading or other objectives will enhance dialogue with key partners to develop coordinated strategies that collectively improve education outcomes. Ideally, this can be accomplished through an inclusive sector working group or donor coordination group. The Education Strategy can be helpful as a resource document when working with other donors and host governments, especially in countries where this is a distinct break from past programming.

## 2.6 Performance Monitoring and Evaluations

A formal monitoring and evaluation system needs to be in place to track progress against a project's full set of expected results based on the CDCS and project designs. This is related to, but separate from, operational performance reporting. Stakeholders need to be involved in examining the results of periodic monitoring, reporting, and progress toward the goal. Inclusive methods should be built into a cycle of continuous project design and assessment. The distinctions between monitoring and evaluation are as follows:

- **Performance Monitoring** tracks changes in performance indicators that are selected prior to project implementation to reveal whether desired results are occurring and whether implementation is on track. Performance indicators must include, at minimum, the required and **relevant** standard outcome indicator(s) for the education sector (see [Box 1](#)).<sup>7</sup> Performance monitoring documents the association or correlation of the observed changes in outcomes, as well as input and output indicators. It also provides data on the status of program implementation and responds directly to reporting requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that in countries with interventions only at the lower primary level under goal 1, Missions should report only on the grade 2 outcome indicator; in countries with programming extending through the whole of primary should report on both reading indicators.

- **Performance and Impact Evaluation** address with what confidence observed changes in student learning outcomes can be attributed to USAID interventions and why those observed changes may or may not have occurred. Results of evaluations are critical to learn about project effectiveness, contribute to research, and help in developing evidence of what works, when, and why. In the context of the Education Strategy, Goals 1 and 3 have changes in learning or access outcomes as quantitative targets.

One significant difference between these methods exists with regard to the strength of causal inferences that can be drawn about the relationships between outcomes and outputs/inputs. The Evaluation Policy notes that experimental methods (i.e., random assignment into treatment or control groups) generate the strongest evidence of impact, but that they may not always be feasible. Alternative methods or quasi-experimental designs (e.g. difference-in-differences or regression discontinuity) can also be used.<sup>8</sup> Performance evaluations are valuable for understanding why or how a project performed, identifying unintended consequences, and estimating how USAID programs may have contributed to overall outcomes. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual.

**Box 1: Standard Outcome Indicators for Performance Plan and Report (PPR)<sup>9</sup> and Performance Monitoring<sup>10</sup>**

**Goal 1:<sup>11</sup>**

1. Proportion of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text.
2. Proportion of students who, by the end of the primary cycle, are able to read and demonstrate understanding as defined by a country curriculum, standards or agreed-upon by national experts.

**Goal 2:<sup>12</sup>**

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

**Goal 3:**

1. Number of learners enrolled in primary schools and/or equivalent non-school based settings.
2. Number of learners enrolled in secondary schools and/or equivalent non-school based settings.

**USAID Evaluation Policy: Implications for Education Programs**

ADS 203, the Evaluation Policy, CDCS Guidance, and Project Design guidance all reinforce the requirement that performance monitoring and performance or impact evaluation plans be integrated into project/program design. While performance monitoring per ADS 203.3.2 – 203.3.5 is required of all projects, the USAID Evaluation Policy further requires that all large

<sup>8</sup> Additional information on experimental and quasi-experimental methodology is available through EGAT/ED and PPL/LER.

<sup>9</sup> Data reported in the PPR will need to correspond to the **standard outcome indicators**. Both **direct** – those beneficiaries/students reached with direct USG assistance (funded in part or in whole by USG) – and **indirect** – those students affected through a follow-on – such as countries taking a USG-funded pilot intervention to scale, with no additional USG funding; or donor and country harmonization around a common technical approach, in which USG has been instrumental.

<sup>10</sup> See tables 5-6 in the Technical Notes for a full list of outcome, output, and input indicators.

<sup>11</sup> It is recommended that programs supporting Goal 1 should report on **both** standard outcome indicators if programming extends through primary cycle. These indicators were developed in collaboration with the global education community and are also used by the Global Partnership for Education.

<sup>12</sup> For additional information on reporting requirements for Goal 2 please see the Technical Notes.

projects (at or above average dollar size for a development objective managed by an Operating Unit) have either a performance or an impact evaluation. Further, “any activity within a project involving untested hypotheses or demonstrating new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through US Government foreign assistance will, if feasible, undergo an impact evaluation. If it is not possible to undertake an impact evaluation for an untested hypothesis, operating units may instead undertake a performance evaluation, provided that the final evaluation report includes a concise but detailed statement about why an impact evaluation was not conducted.”<sup>13</sup>

Data gathered for performance monitoring and evaluation, either of which may rely on data from large-scale assessment gathered by a third party, can contribute to the measurement of goals 1 and 3.<sup>14</sup> This explains why plans for performance monitoring/evaluation and performance and/or impact evaluation need to be integrated into project design during the planning stages. **Performance and impact evaluations should be done by an external team that is contracted separately.** Both evaluators and data collectors should be engaged at project inception for all performance evaluations involving a baseline and endline. For specific roles and responsibilities, as well as information on types of evaluations, please reference the USAID Evaluation Policy (see [Box 2](#)).

#### **Box 2: Evaluation Policy Resources**

Education officers can seek guidance from their Regional Bureau education contact, Evaluation POCs, EGAT/ED, and PPL/LER to be sure they are clear on the expectations, limitations, and intended uses of performance monitoring, performance, and impact evaluations.

Evaluation supports programmatic accountability and contributes to global knowledge and learning in the education sector. Education program managers should work with their Operating Unit's program office and Evaluation Point of Contact to determine which education programs require evaluation under the Policy, as well as what other evaluations are needed for management decision making, building the evidence base in the education sector, or other purposes.

- Education programs should follow the evaluation standards and requirements in the USAID Evaluation Policy, available at <http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation>.
- [Answers to frequently asked questions to the Evaluation Policy can be found at: http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID\\_Evaluation\\_Policy\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID_Evaluation_Policy_FAQ.pdf).
- [Though it is in the process of being revised, performance monitoring is currently guided by ADS 203, Sections 203.3.2 through 203.3.5, available at http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/203.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/203.pdf)

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<sup>13</sup> “Whether a hypothesis is “tested” or “untested” is often a matter of professional judgment. However, in the project design phase an effort should be made to synthesize the best available evidence regarding the intervention(s) being included in the project – for example, the approach to teacher training, the use of performance incentives to improve health worker productivity, or the strategy to foster community development through strengthening local governance bodies.” *USAID Evaluation Policy*, section 5. See also [http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID\\_Evaluation\\_Policy\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/policy/evalweb/USAID_Evaluation_Policy_FAQ.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Guidance on performance monitoring and counting is described in detail in the Technical Notes, where there is also information on the use of impact evaluation.

## 2.7 Incorporating Impact Evaluation into Education Projects<sup>15</sup>

In some contexts, Missions may consider supplementing performance monitoring with more rigorous impact evaluation. Impact evaluation, done correctly, is an opportunity to not only enhance the way USAID reports on its contributions toward the 100 million goal through rigorous evidence of its early-grade reading interventions, but also to contribute to the learning and research agenda on what works to improve long-term education outcomes. Some leading research topics include the evaluation of innovative, low-cost approaches to teaching children to read in different contexts; determining when workforce development programs lead to employment; and what interventions lead to higher levels of access. Below are a few important operational considerations that Missions should weigh when planning for an impact evaluation:

**Why conduct an impact evaluation?** Impact evaluations generally strengthen the ability to attribute causal changes to specific interventions. A well-designed and properly executed evaluation—whether it is experimental or quasi-experimental—can provide 1) evidence that a particular intervention works; 2) insight into possible opportunities and challenges for scalability; 3) cost-effectiveness information; 4) contributions to the growing knowledge base; and 5) justification for USAID support of education interventions focused on improving outcomes.

**Planning, Design, and Timing:** If a Mission chooses to conduct an impact evaluation, care should be taken that the specific intervention (project), is well thought-out and ready to be studied vis-à-vis an evaluation. Typically, before rolling-out an impact evaluation, many months have gone into planning the intervention (project) and deciding how, where, and when it will be implemented. In most cases, a minimum of 6 months has been spent on an intervention/program design before it is tested. In many cases, 9 months to a year have been spent on working out the kinks in material development, training programs, and targeting strategies before final decisions are made to begin an intervention. This would all happen in parallel with the actual evaluation design, for which instruments are designed and tested, small pilots are conducted, and decisions are made on an evaluation strategy (experimental or quasi-experimental).

**Design Considerations:** Impact evaluations typically collect (at a minimum) baseline, midline, and endline data, which can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal.<sup>16</sup> A cross-sectional evaluation measures a specified outcome (i.e. reading skills) at a specified milestone, e.g., end of Grade 2, at different points in time, **not** of the same students. Cross-sectional designs, holding

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<sup>15</sup> EGAT/ED is developing a research and evaluation agenda for Goals 1, 2 and 3, which will identify a set of evaluation hypotheses that USAID seeks to test over the next several years. USAID intends to use this agenda to work with other donors and governments to build up a coordinated base of evidence around what works in education programming. It is hoped that this research and evaluation agenda will inform the design of future USAID education programs based on evidence, and will also guide USAID Missions in designing their evaluations of education programs.

<sup>16</sup> Most Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and Poverty Action Lab (JPAL) impact evaluations are randomized control trials, which utilize longitudinal data. For more information on IPA and JPAL please visit: [www.poverty-action.org](http://www.poverty-action.org) and [www.povertyactionlab.org](http://www.povertyactionlab.org)

other design and measurement issues constant, can provide useful estimates of change. Longitudinal evaluations generally strengthen the ability to attribute causal changes to specific interventions. Longitudinal designs require tracking of individual students and scores, at a large scale, which can be difficult to achieve but is generally seen as more robust. The comparative advantages of longitudinal designs are reduced if only a baseline and end line (only 2 points) are anticipated.

Whichever approach to data collection for an impact evaluation is chosen, the Mission should consider how errors caused by dropouts, repetitions, or missing data will be addressed. If, for instance, in using a cross-sectional design, there are substantial differences in repetition rates from baseline to endline, these differences could introduce error into the estimates of the impact of interventions. If, in using a longitudinal design, students cannot be tracked over time, bias may be introduced—in part because those students who cannot be tracked may differ from those who can be tracked. While there are adjustments that can be made to correct for these types of error, *none of these methods are perfect*. Because the trade-offs between a cross-sectional and a longitudinal research design are a function of many factors, including whether the overall study design is experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational, an expert should advise which is best dependent on country and project context.

**Cost:** The most expensive aspect of any impact evaluation is the cost of data collection. Per the USAID evaluation policy at least 3% of any given project budget must be set aside for both monitoring and evaluation. For a \$30 million USD program, that is equivalent to \$900,000 USD, which is somewhat below average<sup>17</sup> for a typical impact evaluation conducted by an academic or multilateral institution.

Information on evaluation resources is included in Box 2 above. EGAT/ED is available for consultations with Missions on both the incorporation of impact evaluation into project design and questions related to whether and how impact evaluation data might be used for contributing to the count. Missions are encouraged to closely collaborate with their Regional Bureau and EGAT/ED when considering impact evaluations to avoid duplication of effort within USAID or between USAID and its partners. There also may be opportunities for Missions and EGAT/ED to collaborate and jointly fund impact evaluations through new or existing global mechanisms.

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<sup>17</sup> One round of data collection including instrument design, testing, and roll-out, survey administration, data collection and cleaning costs, and analytical report-writing costs about \$400,000 on average. So, multiplied by three rounds of data, that equals to an average cost of \$1.2 million USD.

## III. Implementing the Strategy by Goal

### 3.1 Goal I: Improved Reading for 100 Million Children in Primary Grades by 2015

#### 3.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of projects under Goal I will be to produce meaningful, measurable improvement in student reading outcomes for the largest possible number of children. As such, USAID will prioritize investments in projects that are based on evidence-to-date and have the potential to go to scale. Approaches that respond to local context, build both awareness and demand, and maximize government ownership are most likely not only to be successful, but also to contribute to the growing evidence base and to be able to incorporate innovation where needed. (See Reference Materials, which provides information on evidence-based programming for successful primary grade reading projects.)

#### 3.1.2 Project Design

Evidence shows that student reading outcomes are very low in many countries in which USAID and other donors have been working, despite years of emphasis on improving access to education. Thus, this Strategy prioritizes an emphasis on projects that will most directly improve reading results within partner country systems. To do this, Missions will need to engage key stakeholder groups, including host country governments, other donors, implementing partners, and academics in designing project alternatives and identifying incentive structures and adaptations to improve impact on primary grade reading outcomes.

Missions' projects can indirectly impact subject areas other than reading, such as math and science, but it is expected that these subjects will be addressed through support to system strengthening (which may include, *inter alia*, teacher training, data and administration, school management and governance). Missions are strongly encouraged to seek out initiatives and innovative ideas offered by host country governments and civil society to leverage local leadership and enhance the sustainability of results under Goal I.

#### 3.1.3 Determine Project Parameters

##### Complete Needs Assessment and Baselines

There is a range of approaches to engaging with host country governments and civil society on programming to achieve improved primary grade reading outcomes. Assuming that reading is a priority of both the host government and local education stakeholders and that there is an 'entry point' for USAID to assist in its improvement, the questions below may be useful in new project design:

- History – is reading being taught in the primary grades? How has reading traditionally been taught? What reading improvement projects have come before? With what effect(s)?
- Political context – are there expectations that children will learn to read early and well? Are stakeholders (government, civil society, schools, etc.) focused on improving reading? Are there influential champions? Is the government open to

- constructive criticism? Will data that may show poor results of the current system be shared with stakeholders?
- Systems – does local capacity exist to engage in reading improvement efforts? To implement projects on a large scale? To assess progress based on quality data?
  - Curriculum – have standards been developed and informed the curriculum? Does the curriculum address the five core skills in an integrated and systematic way?
  - Assessments – are assessments reliably detecting primary grade reading skills development challenges? Is the information being used to improve learning outcomes? Is there monitoring of progress in reading outcomes by school and classroom units?
  - Instructional approach – what instructional approaches feature most prominently in teacher preparation institutions? In the classrooms? Are these effective and efficient?
  - Language of instruction – what is the official government policy? What is the practice? How does this relate to materials development/distribution, teacher preparation and posting, assessment, etc.?
  - Time on task – is the necessary amount of instructional time being allocated to reading instruction<sup>18</sup>? Are systems in place to track implementation of instructional time policies? Are systems prepared to devote the required number of hours?
  - Teacher professional development and support – how does the system prepare primary teachers? What mechanisms exist for ongoing teacher development? What supportive supervision is provided for classroom instructors?
  - Availability of materials – do high quality, contextually relevant, gender sensitive materials exist? Are they well-aligned with the curricula? Are they in the schools? What is the local production capacity for textbooks?
  - Parental and community support—what is the current role of parents and communities in preparing children for school and supporting learning to read in the early grades? What approaches have been tried to increase this support? What promising approaches should be tried?

A critical aspect of the stock-taking is collecting data on reading achievement levels. USAID does not mandate a particular assessment methodology but has supported the development of a very successful tool—the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA). This tool has been adapted for use in many countries, both by USAID and other partners and is available for use by the general public. However, there are many other valid and reliable reading instruments, including some host country instruments, and ASER-type instruments ([asercentre.org](http://asercentre.org)).

For the purpose of Goal I, baseline data on reading, representative of the area where programming will be implemented, will build understanding of the magnitude and dimensions of the problem as well as provide a starting point (baseline) against which to measure change brought about by an intervention. If there is already national testing of primary grade reading in place, these data could be used as baseline, provided the psychometric properties of the

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<sup>18</sup> It has been estimated that literacy development requires roughly 250-300 instructional hours per year. One study estimated that there were only 380 total hours to cover all subjects in primary school in Ghana. See Abadzi, H. (2007). *Absenteeism and beyond: Instructional time loss and consequences*. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4376.

assessment are adequate and the measures are sufficiently sensitive to detect changes at the low end of the distribution of reading achievement, i.e., recognition of letters. The design and sampling frame should have sufficient statistical power to detect differences important to the Mission and host country, such as by sex and/or region.

USAID's experience has shown that primary grade reading assessments can serve as a catalyst for building support for a strong focus on reading within the government, local communities, and donor partners. If government officials are engaged directly in visiting schools, collecting data, and analyzing findings and observations, they may be more likely to take action in response to their experiences. This engagement can result in remarkable learning and an urgency to bring about changes on the part of high level ministry officials. Whether government officials are involved in implementing the assessment or not, there should be wide dissemination of assessment findings to appropriate stakeholder groups and the general public, always retaining a focus on policy dialogue with government and other key decision makers.

Missions may want to consider conducting the mandatory project-level gender analysis at the same time as this assessment (or integrating the gender analysis into the assessment) to streamline the two processes.

With the data indicated above in hand, key project design questions to be considered in the assessment design include:

- What are the priority issues to address? Where might investments best be made to strengthen the system to produce greater outcomes in the acquisition of primary grade reading skills? What are the demand-side factors that need to be accounted for or strengthened?
- What are the most effective strategies for addressing key priorities? What interventions might make a difference in ensuring that children learn to read so they can then 'read to learn' and benefit fully from primary level schooling?
- How can innovations that are borrowed and contextualized to the current situation be tested to see if they are effective and efficient?
- Within the framework of national interventions, who are the most appropriate groups (geographic, ethnic, boys/girls/, social status as examples) to target?
- What partners can engage in the effort?
- How can government involvement be expanded to build ownership, uptake and sustainability?

### **Identifying Activities**

Identifying project components that are effective, sufficient and scalable to achieve desired improvements in reading outcomes requires working closely with government and other partners (USG basic education activities, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), other donors, civil society organizations, and the private sector). The body of evidence about what works in primary grade reading in developing country contexts is limited but growing, and some of it is summarized in the Technical Notes. The Reference Materials contain a bibliography referencing related studies conducted by USAID, other donors, and academic institutions and



institutes. USAID education projects should be based on the best available evidence and positioned not only to be effective but also to contribute further to the growing evidence base.

Missions should use appropriate assessment and diagnostic tools to develop a results framework. The review of evidence-based projects will build confidence that the selected set of projects or activities are likely to result in improved outcomes. USAID will favor projects that: (a) will produce the best reading outcomes for the greatest number of participants within the timeframe of the strategy, i.e., by end of FY 2015; (b) are the most effective approach to achieving those outcomes; and (c) are scalable and sustainable.

Despite the timeframe of the Strategy's targets, USAID cannot ignore the potential impact of innovative approaches to achieving learning outcomes. All projects are encouraged to explore innovative approaches appropriate to their local circumstances to achieve project goals. This effort will be augmented by the Grand Challenge for Development (Education).<sup>19</sup> Country programs should also consider devoting a portion of available funding to solicit, support, and evaluate innovative approaches, including those integrating appropriate technology.

Missions will be asked to develop projects/activities in consultation with their Regional Bureaus. Projects will need to be supported by a credible development hypothesis for achieving Goal I and a well-developed results framework that maps causal linkages between planned activities and reading outcomes. The majority of activities that can reasonably be expected to improve reading will occur at the classroom level,<sup>20</sup> consisting of multiple components, e.g., instructional approach (including the use of a language students speak and understand), materials, training/coaching, classroom-level assessment, approaches to school or classroom organization, and improved accountability. It is critical that the components come together in a classroom such that student reading can realistically be expected to improve.

### **Identifying Expectations and Results**

In order to articulate how a new project's activities will achieve improved reading outcomes<sup>21</sup>, it will be important for Missions to assert a clear development hypothesis, using recent assessment results, including qualitative findings from consultative meetings, coupled with existing government strategic plans, along with whatever pupil assessment data has been collected. Missions are encouraged to refer to the USAID Project Design Guidance, which can be found at: <http://inside.usaid.gov/PPL/offices/spp/upload/FINALPDGuidanceI2091I.pdf>.

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<sup>19</sup> USAID's *Grand Challenge for Development: All Children Reading* focuses on overcoming the following two critical barriers to massive success in reading: Lack of On-Demand Access to Learning Materials and Lack of Improved Education Data to Support Analysis, Transparency and Accountability. More information can be found here: [www.AllChildrenReading.org](http://www.AllChildrenReading.org)

<sup>20</sup> 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 should be coordinated with USAID programs, but funded by national and local governments and other donors. Likewise, while USAID encourages partner governments to evaluate the benefits associated with early childhood development programming, USAID should only pursue early childhood education interventions when ECD programs are seen as critical to achieving measurable improvements in reading outcomes in later primary grades. When ECD is being supported by other donors then early grade reading programs can be built off of existing interventions.

<sup>21</sup> Depending on the CDCS and the scope of education activities within country – meaning whether the country is working on more than one goal - the highest level reading result may be at the Development Objective or Intermediate Result level.

Using this clear development hypothesis, the Results Framework can be expected to translate new activities, sub-intermediate results and intermediate results into the Strategy's topline goal of improving the reading skills of 100 million primary grade-level children. As mentioned above, to measure a project's contribution to the top line goal, Missions will need to obtain reading performance data at the same grade levels over time (cross-sectional approach) or at different grade levels for the same sample (longitudinal approach), set thresholds and objectives, calculate changes in performance levels (midline and endline), and extrapolate observed performance gains to the universe of students from which the probability sample was drawn. It is recommended to use cross-sectional designs for counting the numbers of students with reading skills gains.<sup>22</sup> It will be important to ensure the measurement of reading skills at grade 2, early in grade 3, or in the equivalent accelerated learning level in the first year (baseline), or second year (latest possible baseline), ideally, at midline and at endline in the third year of a project<sup>23</sup>. Unless a country has formalized processes for tracking primary reading skills at grade two, many (if not most) projects will require the introduction of primary grade reading assessments, using a sample representative of the intervention group, to ensure that results can be extrapolated for larger student populations, as appropriate.

In countries where reading support projects extend to the higher grades, it is recommended that missions measure reading skills in order to report on the end-of-cycle standard indicator. In many countries, these results will be generated through standardized national assessments. Even if programming support is limited to the lower primary grades, there may be value in measuring reading outcomes in the final primary grade in FY 2012, FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015 to determine whether reading skill improvements at lower primary persist through upper primary.

The top line goal refers to the number of children demonstrating improvement in reading skills. Improvement can be measured across a range of components: non-readers (e.g., percentages of children who cannot recognize a single letter or single word), letter recognition, word recognition, fluency, comprehension, and grade level literacy. However, for the purposes of the count toward 100 million, missions should use words correct per minute (wcpm) with comprehension, using grade-level text, as the indicator for measuring change. All projects supporting Goal I are required to report results for relevant standard indicators. The Technical Notes for this guidance specifies in detail the steps missions should follow in estimating and then counting contributions toward the 100 million.

Projects supported by Basic Education funds have 17 standard indicators for reporting purposes (3 Outcome measures and 14 Output measures). Given the Strategy's quantitative targets, it will be important for Missions to select and report on as many of the 17 standard indicators as are applicable to their projects. The indicators are included in the Technical Notes for this guidance. Missions may continue to use other measures as custom project indicators.

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<sup>22</sup> Please see Technical Notes for a more complete discussion of relative strengths and weaknesses of approaches to counting.

<sup>23</sup> Grade 2 should be used where possible, to allow for reporting against the standard indicator, although the actual grade may be different depending on the country context and previously conducted assessments. For new assessments, grade 2 is the recommended grade for assessment.

## 3.2 Goal 2: Improved ability of Tertiary<sup>24</sup> and Workforce Development programs to produce workforce with relevant skills to support country development by 2015

### 3.2.1 Introduction

Inequity of access for underserved groups, poor quality of tertiary institutions, and low relevance and/or low quality of workforce development programs together hobble a nation's labor productivity and limit its development efficiency. They also present an unacceptable barrier to the individual citizen's realization of human potential.

This comprehensive goal jointly addresses the subsectors of *tertiary* education and *workforce development* in a way not traditionally done. Both subsectors prepare individuals for the workplace, but at different economic or social levels. As such, they tend to be addressed as separate programs, with separate funding sources and communities of practice. While this Guidance discusses them individually, it will make sense over time for field practitioners to see them as related aspects of a country's labor force development. This should be considered simultaneously at the strategic planning stage. Increasing emphasis on cross-sectoral analysis—a common aspect of both subsectors—will require a more entrepreneurial and collaborative programming approach, which may also result in improved workforce preparedness and, eventually, improved employment outcomes. This cross-sectoral approach requires special collaboration between education and other sectors (i.e. economic growth, microenterprise development, health, agriculture (Feed the Future), energy, and conflict management) with a stake in improving skills and employability of the labor force; successful workforce programs often pool sector funds to achieve mutually beneficial results. Additionally, given the dynamic, cross-sectoral nature of workforce development and higher education, USAID education programs may achieve one or more of the results cited in the Education Strategy Goal 2.

### 3.2.2 Project Design

Special Considerations in Design and Implementation:

- To achieve Goal 2 outside of post-conflict or crisis contexts, USAID discourages use of discrete or stand-alone tertiary and workforce development programs. Programs that provide “one-off” training within a targeted institution are discouraged over those that develop the capacity of public and private higher education and workforce institutions both on the demand and the supply side and that also address the needs of learners, as well as programs that address institutional systems and incentive structures. Examples might include:
  - The economic growth sector places an emphasis on developing an enabling environment for firms to increase their productivity, particularly in the formal sector. This domain is important for workforce programs that seek to develop skills credentials, accreditations of training programs, partnerships with

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<sup>24</sup> Tertiary and higher education are used interchangeably in this Guidance.

businesses and business communities, and internship and apprenticeship programs for young people.

- Microenterprise Development focuses on strengthening value chains and providing financial services so that micro- small- and medium-sized enterprises can produce and earn more.
- Investment in “leverage points” in the system is encouraged, such as: tertiary education partnerships financing broadly inclusive and high quality training programs; mainstreaming of workforce readiness and vocational education systems; or funding platforms that enable private sector partners to collaborate more effectively with education and training providers for more relevant curriculum and higher standards.

### 3.2.3 Determining Program Parameters

The broad alignment criteria above must make sense in the context of both a program’s strategic direction and the intermediate results of a Mission’s Results Framework—with a clear development logic that connects them. As stated above in section **III. Implementing the Strategy by Goal**, workforce development programs cannot be funded with Basic Education funds. Thus, more active use of multi-sector funding streams may be needed to support cross-sectoral programming. For instance, workforce development programs can be funded either by higher education funds or by funds from other sectors. Missions are encouraged to promote programmatic and financial collaboration between the sectors, especially ED and EG, in order to promote a demand-driven approach to workforce development with strategic relevance. Importantly, Missions implementing the Presidential Initiatives (Feed the Future, Global Health, and Global Climate Change) are encouraged to seek the programmatic intersection of tertiary/workforce activities and Initiative efforts, allowing the use of Initiative resources (as feasible and desirable) to fund needed workforce or tertiary activities.

### 3.2.4 Identifying Activities

Tertiary education programs typically include the following elements:<sup>25</sup>

- **Policy Development and Reform** develops policies and laws that improve the quality, contributions and accessibility of higher education; support their effective implementation and monitoring; and ensure the participation of higher education institutions, the private sector, civil society and other interested parties in the development and implementation of such policies and laws. This would include, but not be limited to, national policies that support more equitable access, greater competition, enhanced autonomy, improved transparency in admissions, more effective collaboration with the private sector and civil society, improved accountability, and increased transparency with regard to revenue generation, expenditures and financial management.
- **Institutional Capacity Development** increases higher education institutions’ ability to contribute to social and economic development by strengthening their organizational effectiveness, which includes, but is not limited to, improving: management and

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<sup>25</sup> See the Foreign Assistance Framework at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136594.pdf> (Higher Education)

administration (including financial management and planning); research capacity and methods; collaboration with the private sector and external stakeholders; policy analysis; facilities; degree programs; curricula; and pedagogy.

- **Regional, National and Local Development** engages tertiary education institutions in addressing social and economic development challenges. Programs include, but are not limited to, applied research and technology, policy analysis and consultation, community outreach, and service delivery.
- **Professional Development** broadens and increases access of individuals to professional development opportunities in the discipline of higher education, including but not limited to faculty development programs and programs in higher education leadership, administration and management.
- **Host Country Strategic Information Capacity** establishes and/or strengthens 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. The 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.

Workforce development encompasses the range of interventions necessary to enable people to enter into and/or remain competitive in the marketplace. It encompasses the delivery of training and education and also the development of systems, institutions, and policy supporting relevant, cost-effective services. Program Elements<sup>26</sup> include four sub-elements:

- **Systemic reform** promotes policies and strengthens systemic capacity to provide quality, demand-driven formal and non-formal workforce development opportunities, with special consideration to gender issues and access to workforce education programs for male and female youth.
- **Partnership development** increases participation and establishes networks among public and private civil society stakeholders to identify workforce needs and coordinate efforts to create and sustain equitable, effective workforce development programs, especially for youth.
- **Workforce readiness** creates and sustains pre-employment and employability programs for male and female youth and men and women in formal and non-formal settings.

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<sup>26</sup> 4.6.3 in the Foreign Assistance Framework. See page 79 of the Foreign Assistance Framework at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/136594.pdf>, (under Economic Growth)

- **Technical/vocational** training for employment creates and sustains career-enhancing education and training programs that are responsive to the current and future labor needs of local, regional, and international employers, both formal and non-formal.

### 3.2.5 Identifying Expectations and Results

Assessments should closely examine the host country development priorities, the existing policy environment, the strengths and weaknesses of the sub-sectoral system, and areas of opportunities for reform and growth. This evidence should then be cross-referenced with the USAID Mission’s strategic objectives and priorities, identifying the areas of common strategic value and the most pertinent areas for technical assistance. In the case of a workforce development assessment, there should be additional emphasis on framing opportunities around the Mission’s broad strategic objectives, taking into account Mission priorities concerning targeted regions, population sub-cohorts, industry sectors, and contextual challenges related to macro-level stability and equity. Once the areas of assistance are identified, the assessment analyzes the institutional and organizational strengths, weaknesses, and needs of potential reform/assistance targets. The Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) Policy Paper further elaborates such guidance and effective approaches. All activities designed to strengthen institutional capacity should make full use of the HICD approach. (Please refer to the HICD Policy Paper in ADS 201: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/201maf.pdf>.) Additional guidance is provided in the Higher Education Policy Paper (ADS 216) which is under revision.

Missions may want to consider conducting the mandatory project-level gender analysis at the same time as this assessment and/or integrating the gender analysis into the assessment.

The Strategy has one indicator for Goal 2. This indicator will be augmented by other Standard Indicators. In addition Missions may use other indicators as appropriate to their programs. Technical notes to this guidance provide further information on higher education and workforce development programming.

## 3.3 Goal 3: Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners.

### 3.3.1 Introduction

Goal 3 elevates the importance of programming for equitable access to education in conflict<sup>27</sup> and crisis environments—both to contribute to humanitarian response and for conflict mitigation and stabilization. Worldwide, 67 million primary school-age children are out of school.<sup>28</sup> Of those children, 31 million children of primary school age are out of school in the

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<sup>27</sup> An armed conflict is “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.” per the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). Wallensteen, Peter & Margareta Sollenberg, 2001. ‘Armed Conflict 1989–2000’, *Journal of Peace Research* 38(5): 629–644.

<sup>28</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report, “The Hidden Crisis: Armed conflict and Education” (2011).

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/>

11 most fragile and conflict affected states where education programs are present.<sup>29</sup> An additional 29 million secondary school-age youth are out of school in these 11 countries, for a total of 60 million out of school children and youth.

Where children and youth do not have access to basic education, providing basics such as facilities, materials, teachers, and safe spaces becomes necessary to make learning possible. Goal 3 recognizes that access is a necessary, but not always sufficient, pre-condition for a quality education. Thus, under this Strategy, USAID education programs contributing to Goal 3 should ensure equity of access to education by explicitly addressing inequalities that may be a consequence of specific geography and/or group based discrimination leading to grievances. Disparities in access to education opportunities can be systemic, arising from consistent inequalities in policy frameworks or exclusionary practices.

Because no two crises or conflict situations are the same, programs to improve access will look very different depending on the context. Therefore, it is important to hinge Goal 3 programming on the following principles:

- Increased access to basic education is the primary objective
- Education programs should be based on ‘do no harm’ principles - Education programs should not exacerbate conflict.

### **3.3.2 Project Design**

Goal 3 programming covers a diverse range of formal and non-formal education interventions to improve access to education in order to address a wide spectrum of learners, from school age children to out-of-school youth in a range of crisis or conflict environments. Under Goal 3, projects may address educational access challenges and gaps, including gaps in the quality of early grade reading, at various levels of schooling from primary to secondary schooling, and at various intervention points from school construction and restoration of education services to policy and systems reform. Projects should, however, be developed to have a direct contribution to the goal of increasing access of primary school children and youth to basic education.

To illustrate this variety of interventions that crisis, conflict and instability contexts may require, projects under this goal may include, *inter alia*:

- the provision of temporary and permanent schools
- accelerated learning projects
- access to out-of-school and non-formal education projects
- alternative education service delivery (e.g., inter-active radio instruction)
- curriculum revision and/or supplementary materials in key content areas related to the crisis or conflict including disaster risk reduction (DRR)
- training and/or mentoring for teachers or teachers’ aides on supporting the psychosocial well-being of learners

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<sup>29</sup> USAID Alert list 2010, SBU.

Conflict-specific education content may also be addressed through:

- advocacy for policies that ensure access to education for all, especially marginalized groups
- social mobilization projects to promote learners’ access to education opportunities
- direct support for host country budgets targeted to increased access
- technical support and capacity building

### 3.3.3 Determining Project Parameters

Country specific analyses will help Missions determine and tailor the most appropriate interventions for improving access to education under Goal 3. Missions can use the expedited design process as outlined in the Project Design Guidance. As with Goals 1 and 2, those countries with an approved CDCS can begin with a quick baseline review to determine whether the Mission believes Goal 3 programming is appropriate.

Currently USAID recognizes three distinct contexts in which Goal 3 programming is acceptable. These include: conflict-affected, post conflict and fragile countries; crises including natural disasters; environments affected by lawlessness, violence, and crime and gang activity. [Table I](#) provides a context to better understand countries and situations of crisis or conflict.<sup>30</sup>

<b>Table I: Understanding Countries and Situations of Crisis or Conflict</b>		
<b>Context</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Thresholds</b>
<b>Conflict-affected, post conflict and fragile countries or environments</b>	Countries that are listed as highly fragile, moderately and conflict-affected, including countries that experience severe political instability such as coups d'état, civil war, government collapse, or similar destabilizing events, are included under goal 3.	Top 10-15 red critical countries in the USAID alert list, and critical post countries, would be given programming priority.
<b>Crisis including natural disasters</b>	Countries that experience crisis such as a sudden influx of refugees and a wide range of natural disasters	Case by case
<b>Lawlessness, violence, crime and gang activity</b>	Regional Bureaus in collaboration with EGAT/ED will conduct an analysis to determine which environments meet the standards of lawlessness, crime, and violence as defined in Appendix 3A	Case by case, but sufficiently severe to affect national or regional stability and limit access to education

#### **Conflict Affected, Post Conflict and Fragile Countries or Environments**

There will be countries or environments that do not appear on the lists cited but that may experience an eruption of violence, destabilization or a natural disaster. The use of “environments” rather than “countries” is an intentional distinction: while most countries that program under Goal 3 will be unstable or war-torn, there may be a few which are viewed as relatively stable but are suffering localized or regional conflict or a high degree of lawlessness that may threaten the country’s broader stability. Where this argument is made for programming under Goal 3, it is important that the localized instability represents a sufficient threat to national stability, and that it will be identified as such in the Mission Strategic Resource Plan (MSRP) and/or the CDCS, or in a comparable strategic communication with

<sup>30</sup> Further indices can be found in the Technical Notes and Resource Materials documents.



AID/Washington. Where there is uncertainty if Goal 3 programming is appropriate, the Mission should articulate a rationale to the Regional Bureaus and EGAT/ED.

### **Crisis, Including Natural Disasters**

USAID uses the term “crisis” to refer to states where the central government does not exert effective control over its own territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of its territory, where legitimacy of the government is weak or nonexistent, and where violent conflict is a reality or a great risk. Natural disasters range from earthquakes to floods, hurricanes to drought, and include blizzards, landslides, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and cyclones that lead to financial, environmental, and human loss. While natural disasters can occur anywhere, certain areas are at greater risk due to their geography, increasing environmental degradation, or heightened levels of poverty, which render them more vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters and less able to cope with the effects (see [www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/educationcluster/](http://www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/educationcluster/)). They change the context in which governments and communities can provide an education to its citizenry.

### **Environments Affected by Lawlessness, Violence, Crime and Gang Activity**

Environments affected by lawlessness, violence, crime and gang activity are characterized by high murder rates, perceptions of citizen insecurity, the presence of gang activity, organized crime and/or drug trafficking. Although not often captured by the USAID alert list, when severely affected, they can be considered to be in crisis or conflict. The challenges faced in these environments reflect the state’s inability to provide even minimum levels of security and may be relatively localized.<sup>31</sup> Such violence can threaten peace processes or peaceful development. See Reference Materials for more information.

### **Complete Needs Assessment**

Similar to other sectors during a crisis, assessments are recommended to ensure the design of an effective education program in crisis and conflict. Prioritizing education in crisis and conflict is predicated by the fact that a conflict or crisis has a distinct impact on the education sector and children and youth more broadly.

Unlike Goals 1 and 2 (particularly operation in stable environments), where national level education data and statistics will often be able to provide a clear indication of needs, accurately determining needs in crises, particularly following sudden onset emergencies, can be supported by assessments of the impact of the crisis on education.

Basic steps include:

- Reviewing existing data
- Primary data collection from affected groups
- Assessment of the impacts on learners, infrastructure, school personnel, and government capacities
- Assessing the psychosocial needs of affected populations

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<sup>31</sup> Strand, Havard; Dahl, Mariannne. “Defining Conflict Affected Countries,” Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011, *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education* (2011).

Effective responses in crisis and conflict environments require collective action. In order to make development aid in crisis and conflict-affected environments more effective and efficient, leveraging existing resources is encouraged in addition to collaboration and coordination at several levels. Key agencies and offices to coordinate when programming under Goal 3 are included in the Reference Materials for this guidance.

Schooling is frequently interrupted by a crisis or conflict. To provide a contextually relevant response, a variety of assessment tools may be used to determine the impact of the crisis or conflict on access to education. Assessments should pay particular attention to the most vulnerable groups. Immediately following a crisis, it is critical to coordinate with international and national partners leading the process such as for Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) and Post Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNA)<sup>32</sup> or Education Cluster assessments. In all cases, identifying what information or data already exists is the first step.

Assessments should include an analysis of the current provision of education and how it impacts and is impacted by the crisis or conflict, as well as the country's ability to respond appropriately (including the national, regional and municipal governments). A baseline against which increases in the number of learners receiving basic education can be measured in midline and endline surveys is of course needed and should also include status of key inputs, namely school buildings, educational materials, teachers, and school management. The priority is to document which groups are being systematically excluded from formal and non-formal educational opportunities. Those groups should be described with respect to their gender, ethnic, geographic, religious, and linguistic characteristics that have made them vulnerable to exclusion.

Missions may want to consider conducting the mandatory project-level gender analysis at the same time as this assessment (or integrating the gender analysis into the assessment) to streamline the two processes.

### **3.3.4 Identifying activities**

While specific program interventions to improve access to education will vary from context to context, a growing body of largely qualitative research and practice suggests the value of keeping the following cross-cutting issues in the forefront when designing inclusive projects:

- Gender
- Child protection and psychosocial support
- HIV/AIDS
- Youth
- Disability

For Goal 3, it is expected that interventions should aim directly at those policies or practices that restrict equitable access based on gender, class, disability, ethnicity, language group, geographic location, religious affiliation, academic ability, or other factors that have been

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<sup>32</sup> INEE, Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response and Recovery (2010).

identified as the basis for exclusion of certain groups. Policy and practices could include: curriculum (including hidden curriculum); instruction, personnel, teacher recruitment (including who makes up the teaching force); language of instruction; resource and budget allocations (and spending) to regions/provinces, or other key issues that favor or explicitly or implicitly discriminate against certain groups. Up-to-date resources and tools for programming related to access to education is included in Reference Materials.

Missions should coordinate with government authorities and other appropriate stakeholders in addition to the sector working group or the Education Cluster in order to avoid duplication, identify gaps, and contribute to a coordinated approach to education reconstruction, rehabilitation, and transition. Working with education authorities on preparedness and contingency planning is a critical area in crisis and conflict environments. This process brings relevant actors together to analyze potential emergencies and their impacts. It then establishes clear objectives, strategies, policies, and procedures to map out critical actions that respond to an emergency. Projects implemented under Goal 3 should, to the extent possible, be adaptive and flexible so that they are able to meet evolving and emerging needs. Any emergency-specific interventions—including the provision of temporary learning spaces and rapid learning materials distribution—should be designed to help lay the foundation for sustainable development and reconstruction of the education sector.

Additional information on estimating numbers of learners with increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments is provided in the Technical Notes to this guidance.

## IV. Cross-cutting Themes

### 4.1 Gender

The Education Strategy indicates that USAID will invest education resources to achieve measurable and sustainable educational outcomes. Critical priorities such as gender integration will undergird all these investments. This reflects the U.S. Government's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), 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 MDG3 to "promote gender equality and empower women" including by "eliminating gender disparity" in all levels of education.

In keeping with our international commitments, USAID education projects will promote gender equality. As stated in the Strategy: "To do this, USAID education projects 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."

Identifying gender issues impacting the goals of the Strategy is done through a gender analysis. This refers to the systematic gathering and analysis of information on gender differences and social relations to identify and understand the different roles, divisions of labor, resources, constraints, needs, opportunities/capacities, and interests of men and women (and girls and boys) in a given context. USAID requires that the findings of a gender analysis are used to inform the design of projects/activities. USAID encourages officers to use relevant gender analyses conducted by other donors or NGOs. Gender analysis can be integrated into and/or completed in coordination with any other assessments that will be conducted as part of the planning process.

#### **Gender Issues Related to Goal 1**

The Education Strategy states that reading skills are improved through: 1) improving teacher effectiveness; 2) increasing availability and use of reading materials; and 3) strengthening classroom and school management. Across those outcomes is the mandate to address gender issues and reduce barriers that impact reading levels of girls and boys. Interventions that promote gender equality and reading skills are mutually reinforcing.

Improving teacher effectiveness relates to both their ability to teach children to read and to create a classroom setting that facilitates reading. Strengthening classroom and school management by providing teachers specific tools and skills (e.g., positive discipline techniques, equitable treatment of male and female students; adherence to professional standards and teacher codes of conduct) will contribute to a better learning environment. A logical correlation exists between safe environments and children's inclination to stay in school, as well as parents' willingness to send or continue sending their children, especially girls, to school, thereby increasing attendance and retention rates. The Progress in International Reading Study (PIRLS) 2006 International Report indicates that a safe and secure school environment is a key

aspect of a positive learning environment and that across the 40 countries participating in the study, on average, there was a positive association between school safety and average reading achievement. Combining modules on reading instruction along with modules on gender-equitable classroom management will contribute to improved reading skills.

Gender issues exist in teaching and learning materials. Findings of a 2007 UNESCO study indicate that:<sup>33</sup>

- Gender bias in textbooks is a serious issue.
- Studies from developing and developed countries find that females tend to be greatly underrepresented, and both males and females are depicted in gender-stereotyped ways.
- Gender bias in formal curricula can result in girls being steered toward gender-stereotyped courses of study and away from mathematics and science and boys missing any specific assistance in reading and language skills in countries where they lag behind in these areas.

New reading materials developed under Goal 1 can both increase children's literacy and promote gender equality if the materials are gender equitable and free of gender bias. Free of gender bias means the reading materials have equal numbers of references to both girls/women and boys/men. When girls and boys are referenced, they should be depicted in a variety of ways, avoiding stereotypes of gender roles often ascribed to girls and boys. Gender-equitable materials would, therefore, show girls playing sports, excelling in math or science, aspiring to a full range of professions, as well as doing more traditional activities such as care giving, domestic chores, etc. Conversely, images and stories about boys would depict a range of activities from taking care of children, enjoying reading, doing domestic chores, etc. Teaching and learning materials can either reinforce gender stereotypes that exist in the larger community, or they can transform them by providing girls and boys with a more expansive view of what they can do and who they can be.

## **Gender Issues Related to Goal 2**

Gender disparity in enrollment, attendance, and professorship in tertiary education is a major issue. In Chad, for example, 15 percent of enrolled students at the tertiary level are women. While Liberia has a 43 percent female enrollment rate, this statistic brings into question the effects of war on the male population and the likelihood that secondary and primary schools have been recruitment sites for boy soldiers. Gender inequity can also be seen among teachers and professors. In Afghanistan, women comprise 29 percent of teachers at the secondary level; which drops to 12 percent at the tertiary level.

Per MDG 3, which calls for eliminating gender disparity in tertiary education by 2015, interventions should encourage equal enrollment of women and men into higher education institutions through targeted outreach efforts. Scholarship programs and higher education knowledge exchange with universities in the United States can build capacity in host-country higher education institutions. In male-dominated programs, such as hard science and

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<sup>33</sup> Rae L. Blumberg, "Gender Bias in Textbooks: A Hidden Obstacle" *The Road to Gender Equality in Education*. Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring report 2008. (2007)

economics, women might be drawn in with scholarships and mentoring by female experts. Young men can be drawn to higher education by creating professional programs relevant to their context, be they based in modernizing industry or developing agrarian technique.

Sex-disaggregated data should be collected to monitor the inclusion of men and women in higher education. Such information can help ensure colleges and universities remain safe spaces, implement gender policies effectively, and enroll equal numbers of men and women.

### **Gender Issues Related to Goal 3**

In crisis and conflict-affected environments men, boys, women, and girls are all disadvantaged due to their sex and related gender roles, although for different reasons. For instance, young boys are often targeted to join fighting forces or gangs as seen in Northern Uganda and Central America. Furthermore, during conflict boys and men face societal pressure to be aggressive and dominant. In pastoralist communities in Southern and East Africa, where there are often internal conflicts over cattle and grazing rights, boys are taken out of school for long periods of time and expected to defend their lands, and herd and graze cattle and other livestock. Although women and girls also are engaged with fighting forces as cooks, “wives” to combatants, and other domestic duties, they face other challenges in these situations. In many cases they lack critical access to resources and opportunities that are even scarcer in crisis and conflict-affected environments than in development settings. Extreme challenges include school-based sexual and gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and the use of rape as a weapon of war.

Projects should assess the impact of the crisis on girls and boys, and their ability to access education. Ways to achieve this include collecting demographics on school-going children and youth by age and disaggregated by sex. Safety and access issues for the learning environment should be included in any program strategy. Gender roles can change during crisis or conflict; therefore conducting a gender analysis is not enough. Assumptions and observations should be revisited on an ongoing basis and assessed for continued validity. The gender analysis should be integrated into the education and conflict assessment.

Where possible, projects should be developed that are more attractive than soldiering, and are viewed as viable options for women and girls who would otherwise be drawn into early marriage and motherhood. Projects should adapt to the students’ situation, so girls can bring their children and boys can attend a later school shift after work or farming. Both sexes should receive psycho-social support if they are reintegrating from combat, kidnapping, or trafficking.

Projects should ensure the school system offers alternative spaces and time for learning, and provides teachers with training to manage children traumatized by war. In order for schools to retain girls in conflict zones, institutions can expand their purpose to support household and community needs. For example, when a student’s parent is lost or killed, they may be asked to take on extra responsibilities at home. Boys often are asked to earn a wage while girls to care for younger siblings and tend to the home.

Project design should include teachers, school administrators, and Ministers of education to learn about the socio-political shifts that affect the school and student learning. Focus groups

with parents and students can help clarify the challenges a community faces during conflict and crisis. It is important to document the numbers of boys to girls in classes across all levels of education several times during the course of the school year as frequent internal population shifts in areas of conflict can occur. Attention should be paid to the psycho-social ramifications of conflict and crisis not only on the students, but also on teachers and administrators.

Women and men should be equally involved, and where appropriate, women should be given the lead in developing action plans to build peace in their communities. With regard to movement to post/conflict or crisis, women must not be excluded from the peace-building and stabilizing processes. Further, the equal voice and testimony of men and women during rebuilding and reparation will aid in building communities founded on the interests of both groups.

## **4.2 Youth and Education**

Globally, today's youth at 1.77 billion is the largest generation ever to transition to adulthood. Youth aged 10-29 years represent 30 percent or more of the population of many developing countries. They present a set of urgent economic, social and political challenges that are crucial to long-term progress and stability in developing and transition countries. How successfully youth transition to adulthood in five critical domains—education, employment, family formation, healthy lifestyles and positive civic engagement—will affect development outcomes for decades to come. Yet, with sufficient investment in learning, work, and engagement opportunities for youth, the “youth bulge” of today can be transformed into the “demographic bonus” of the future.

In response to this critical and time-sensitive opportunity, USAID is currently creating its first Youth in Development Policy, incorporating youth into country strategies. USAID's existing programming encompasses both mainstreaming of youth into sector-based projects and priorities (“cross-cutting”), and in certain countries, takes a cross-sectoral youth development approach, which aims to build sustainable youth development systems at scale. In both cases, education officers often provide significant leadership for youth activities, due in part to our focus on learning, skills development, and age-sensitive programming. Education personnel are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively and entrepreneurially by taking steps to bring together other technical sector colleagues to work together on strategic youth investments.

Within the Strategy, youth activities are encouraged in Goal 2 and Goal 3. In Goal 1, as part of a project that focuses on children in primary grades, literacy achievements by over-age learners in accelerated projects that are the equivalent of grades 2 and 3 may be included in results reporting but cannot be a discrete youth literacy project. For Goal 2, focus on youth employment through system support for youth-oriented workforce development programming is a high priority for many countries, especially those with large youth demographics, which research has shown to be correlated with civil conflict. As stated earlier, these interventions should not be discrete projects, but part of system reform and capacity building effort. For Goal 3, youth are a high priority cohort for all three IRs: 3.1 opportunities for learning for youth (including young adults); 3.2 conflict mitigation with youth; and 3.3 institutional capacity strengthening to ensure that flexible learning systems are established for youth who may be simultaneously supporting their families and seeking to return to their education.

USAID's Youth Policy, being developed by a Policy Task Team (PTT), is anticipated in 2012. The policy development process, and the resulting policy document, will provide supporting guidance for cross-sectoral youth programming.



## V. Sources of Assistance

For questions about this Implementation Guidance for the Education Strategy, Missions are encouraged to contact the appropriate Education Officer in their Regional Bureau or the EGAT Office of Education. In addition to their Education staff, Regional Bureaus and EGAT have several mechanisms available to support strategy implementation. Services include support for strategy and project design, support for analytical tasks including designing and conducting assessments, and delivery of state-of-the-art training sessions.

***Because of the importance and richness of datasets produced under the strategy and our commitment to sharing evidence, all agreements with USAID contractors, cooperative agreement partners and host countries should provide USAID access to the data sets. Missions are also strongly encouraged to send their data sets (baseline, midline and endline), to both Regional Bureaus and EGAT/ED. These datasets will facilitate up-to-date Agency reporting against the Strategy and will be the basis of analysis that will deepen the educational community's understanding of effective early grade reading programming and access.***

If you have questions, please send an email to [EdGuidance@usaid.gov](mailto:EdGuidance@usaid.gov).



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