



Ending Learning Poverty and Building Skills:

Investing in Education from Early Childhood to Lifelong Learning


April 2023



The World Bank is the largest external financier of education in the developing world. We support education programs in more than 90 countries and are committed to helping countries increase access to quality education at all levels, reduce Learning Poverty, and develop skills, by putting in place education systems that ensure opportunities for all.



THE WORLD BANK
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Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the strongest investments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. It delivers large, consistent returns in terms of income and is the most important factor to ensure equity and inclusion.

For societies, education drives long-term economic growth, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. For individuals, it promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction. Globally, there is a 9% increase in hourly earnings for every extra year of schooling.

Making smart and effective investments in people's education is critical for developing the human capital that will end extreme poverty. At the core of this strategy is the need to tackle the learning and skills crisis, put an end to Learning Poverty, and help youth acquire the advanced cognitive, socioemotional, technical, and digital skills they need to succeed in today's world.

The World Bank's global education strategy is focused on ensuring learning happens—for everyone, everywhere.

Over the last two decades, the World Bank¹ has committed more than US\$73 billion² to supporting education projects, covering 160 countries and 25 regional states. This support has included technical assistance, loans, and grants designed to improve learning and provide everyone with the opportunity to get the education they need to succeed. The numbers highlight the importance of education for the achievement of the World Bank's twin goals of ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. There is strong demand for support: the World Bank's most recent country opinion survey of stakeholders in low- and middle-income countries identified education as both the top development priority and preferred priority area for World Bank Group support.

¹ The World Bank comprises two institutions: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and the International Development Association (IDA). They form part of the World Bank Group, which also includes the institutions [The International Finance Corporation](#), [The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency](#) and [The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes](#).

² All dollars are in US\$ unless otherwise indicated. This figure is as of June 2022.

The World Bank is the largest external financier of education in the developing world. The Education Global Practice has a portfolio of 180 projects providing a total financing of \$23.9 billion.³

EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

In the last three fiscal years (FY 20-22), the World Bank's new commitments averaged almost US\$ 5 billion per year in projects designed to improve learning and provide children and youth with the education they need to succeed. Our current portfolio of education projects totals \$23.9 billion including IBRD, IDA and Recipient-Executed Trust Funds.⁴ IDA operations comprise about 60% of the education portfolio.

The World Bank is also the largest implementing agency of the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) grants for low-income countries, managing 55% of GPE's portfolio at the country level (\$1.98 billion).



FINANCING⁵

The Education GP provides implementation support to 180 projects for a total commitment of

\$23.9 BILLION

This includes:

113 IDA credits/grants
(\$14.85 BILLION)

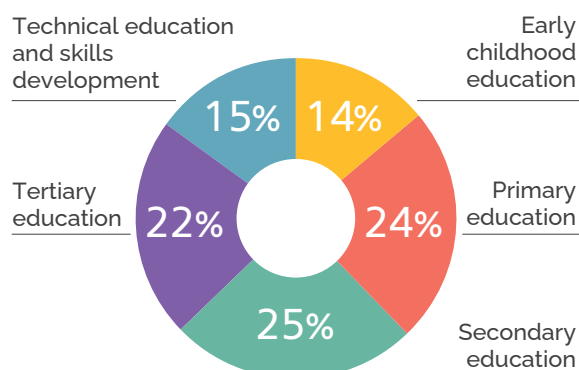
46 IBRD loans
(\$8.51 BILLION)

21 Recipient-Executed Trust Funds
(\$520 MILLION)



FINANCING BY EDUCATION LEVEL

World Bank investing by education level:⁶



**Fragility, Conflict
& Violence Settings**

\$5.21B

45 projects

**Technical Education
and Skills Development**

\$2.45B

43 projects

³ \$23.9 billion is the total value of all active projects as of June 30, 2022.

⁴ In Recipient-Executed Trust Funds (RETFs), the World Bank passes funds on to a third party while retaining an operational role, such as appraisal and supervision of the activities financed by these funds.

⁵ All numbers are as of June 30, 2022.

⁶ This does not include financing spent on public administration or other education funding.



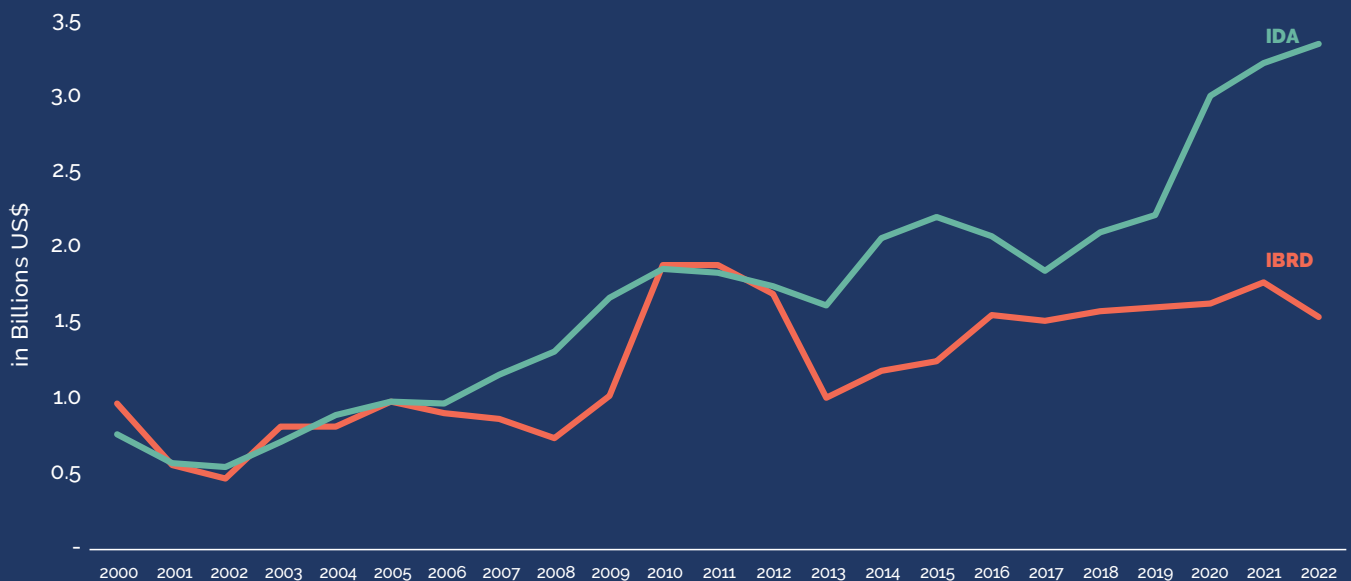
OUR VISION

To ensure that everyone can achieve her or his full potential with access to a quality education and lifelong learning. We envision a world in which all countries prepare all their children and youth to succeed as citizens and have the tools to participate in their country's development.

OUR GOAL

By 2030, our target is to halve **Learning Poverty**—the share of 10-year-old children around the world who cannot read and understand a simple text. We are working towards that target by helping countries build foundational skills like literacy, numeracy, and socioemotional skills—the building blocks for all other learning. Throughout all education levels—from early childhood to tertiary education and beyond—we help children and youth acquire the skills they need to thrive in school, the labor market and throughout their lives.

The World Bank's annual new education commitments recently reached \$US 5 billion⁷



The two lines refer to the two institutions comprising the World Bank: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA). IBRD lends to governments of middle-income and creditworthy low-income countries. IDA provides interest-free loans—called credits—and grants to governments of the poorest countries.

⁷ The numbers shown are 3-year averages referring to new grants and loans agreed with countries. Each grant or loan is then executed in a period of 3-5 years.



WHAT WE DO

The World Bank works directly with governments, providing technical assistance, loans, and grants. We help countries apply innovative solutions to education challenges, focusing on systemic reform throughout the education cycle—from early childhood through tertiary education and lifelong learning. We do this by generating and disseminating evidence, ensuring alignment with policymaking processes, and bridging the gap between research and practice.

OUR APPROACH TO REALIZING THE PROMISE OF EDUCATION FOR ALL

To guide our policy advisory and operational support to countries, we focus on policy actions that are needed to accelerate learning and that characterize the way many successful systems operate. These are presented within five interrelated pillars of a well-functioning education system that underpin the **World Bank's education policy approach**: learners, teachers, learning resources, schools, and system management.



LEARNERS ARE PREPARED AND MOTIVATED TO LEARN

- Quality childcare
- Nutrition
- Early stimulation
- Early childhood education



TEACHERS AT ALL LEVELS ARE EFFECTIVE AND VALUED

- Meritocratic profession
- Effective human resource function of Ministry of Education
- Continuous school-based professional development



CLASSROOMS ARE EQUIPPED FOR LEARNING

- Simple, effective curriculum
- Books and supportive technology
- Coaching and structured pedagogy
- All students are taught at the right level



SCHOOLS ARE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

- Eliminate all types of violence and discrimination in schools
- Students with disabilities have access to and can participate in learning
- Ensure universal access in built and virtual environments



EDUCATION SYSTEMS ARE WELL MANAGED

- Enhance implementation capacity, from schools to central ministries
- Career track for school leaders
- Clear mandates and accountability
- Learning is measured
- Merit-based professional bureaucracy



KEY RESULTS

432 MILLION # OF STUDENTS REACHED
THROUGH OUR ACTIVE PROGRAMS—
1/3 OF THE STUDENTS IN CURRENT CLIENT
COUNTRIES

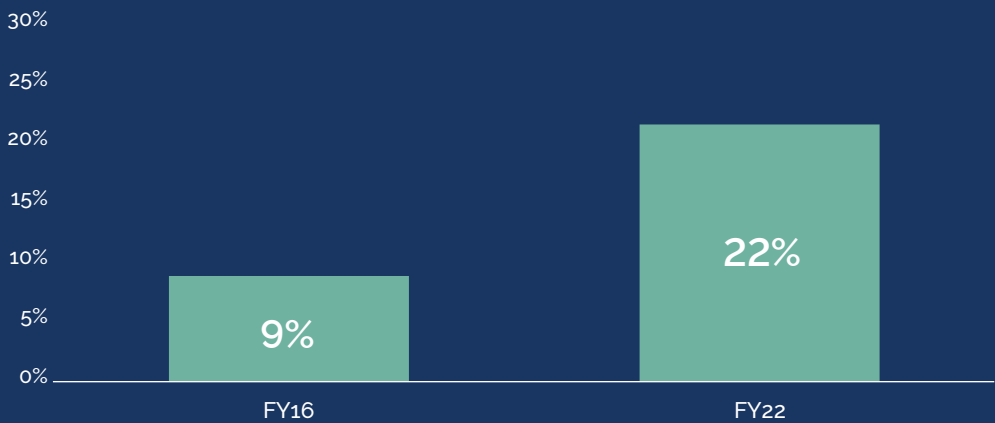
18 MILLION # OF TEACHERS REACHED
THROUGH OUR ACTIVE PROGRAMS—
NEARLY 1/4 OF THE TEACHER WORKFORCE
IN CURRENT CLIENT COUNTRIES

SCALING UP IMPACT IN EDUCATION

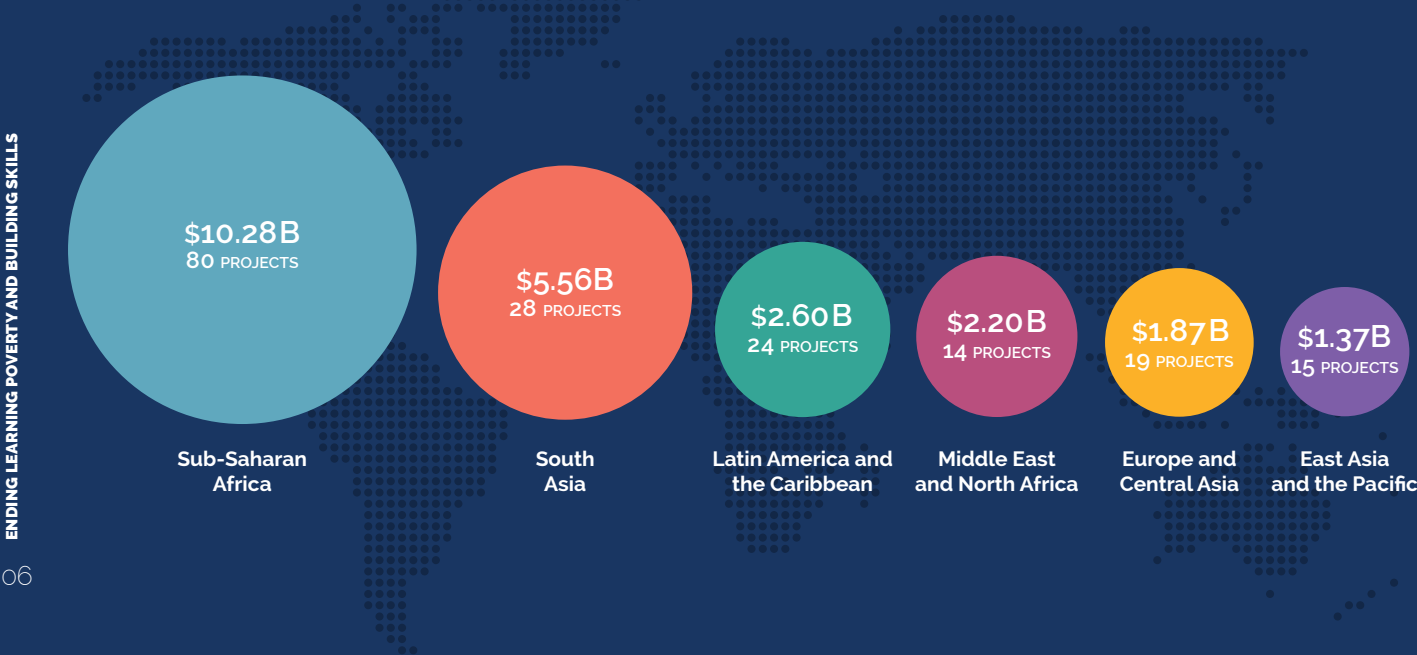
Increasing focus on Fragility, Conflict & Violence (FCV) settings:

Our engagement in education in FCV settings is rapidly increasing. 22% of the Education GP's portfolio was in FCV countries in Fiscal Year 2022.

Relative Share of the Education Portfolio in FCV Countries (FY16 and FY22)



World Bank Education Investments Around the World (US\$)—as of June 30, 2022



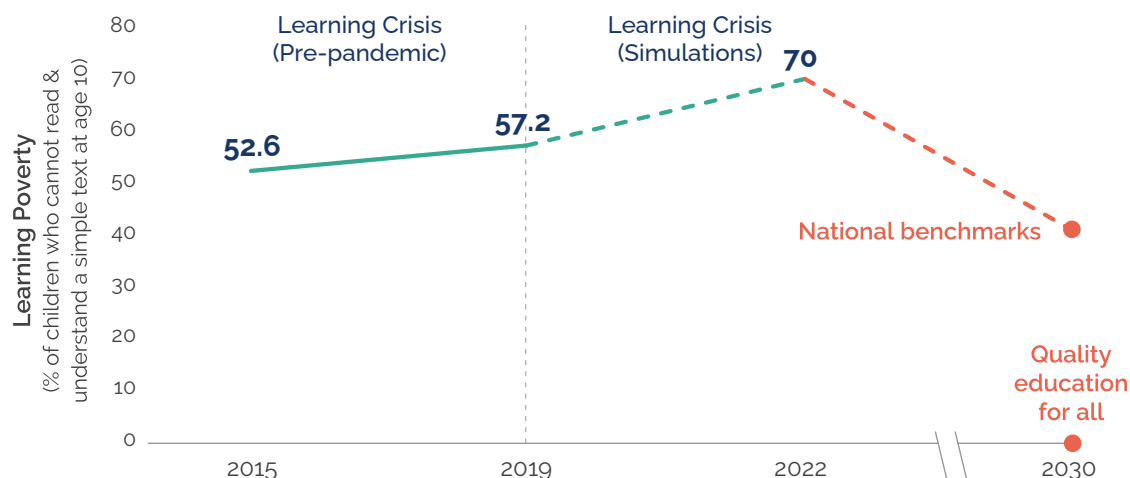
LEARNING POVERTY: SPOTLIGHTING THE GLOBAL LEARNING CRISIS

Even though most children are in school, a large proportion are not acquiring fundamental skills. Moreover, 246 million children are not even in school. This is a learning crisis that threatens countries' human capital development. Without foundational learning, students often fail to thrive later in school or when they join the workforce. The learning crisis is undermining countries' efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4): quality education for all by 2030.

To highlight this crisis, we worked with the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to introduce the concept of Learning Poverty—the percentage of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10. Even before the pandemic, progress had stalled: Learning Poverty had reached 57% in 2019 among low- and middle-income countries. As a result of the pandemic—the worst shock to education and learning in recorded history—Learning Poverty is estimated to have risen to 70%. One billion children saw their in-person education interrupted for more than a year, and for many, the interruption was for two years. School closures and ineffective remote education caused students to miss out on learning, and also eroded the skills and knowledge that students had already learned. On average, for every 30 days of school closures, students lost about 32 days of learning. Such high levels of Learning Poverty are an obstacle to all future learning and a warning sign that all global education goals are in jeopardy, including countries' national benchmarks for learning, let alone SDG4.

Without decisive policy action, this generation of students now risks losing \$21 trillion in potential lifetime earnings, or the equivalent of 17% of today's global GDP. Unless urgent action is taken, unrecovered learning losses will also lead to greater inequality, because students from poorer and less educated households lost more ground during school closures.

The pandemic deepened the existing learning crisis jeopardizing the achievement of SDG4

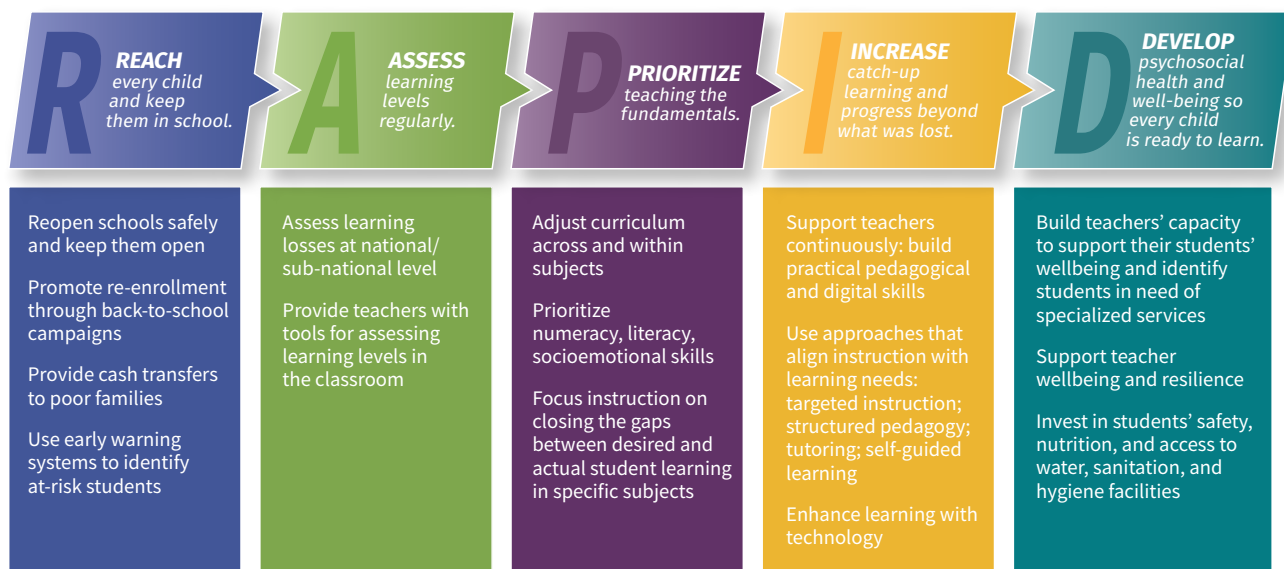


There is an urgent need for a society-wide commitment to invest more and better in people. Eliminating Learning Poverty is as important as eliminating extreme monetary poverty, stunting, or hunger. To achieve it in the foreseeable future requires far more rapid progress at scale than we have yet seen.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the worst education crisis in a century.

A RAPID Framework for Learning Recovery and Acceleration

A contextually-adapted learning recovery and acceleration program, consisting of a package of evidence-based policy interventions, can help countries get back to—and surpass—pre-pandemic learning levels.



Source: World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, FCDO, USAID, and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2022).

How did we support countries during the pandemic?

The World Bank has provided operational support and technical advice to countries during and post-pandemic. We have helped clients finance and effectively design and implement programs such as:

- > **Distance learning systems** to safeguard learning continuity in [Sierra Leone](#), [Turkey](#) and [Egypt](#)
- > **Early Warning Systems** to identify students at risk of dropout in [Romania](#), [Zambia](#), and [Guyana](#)
- > **Continuous learning assessment** to inform classroom teaching in [Mongolia](#), [Togo](#) and [Bangladesh](#)
- > **Targeted instruction programs** to match instruction to student needs in [Brazil](#), [Nepal](#) and [Morocco](#)

The World Bank has also made available a suite of global public goods that can be used to guide decision making and improve learning, and which have been used as part of operations:

- > **Remote learning resource packs** with guidance on how to use key delivery technologies (TV, radio, mobile, etc.)
- > Guidance on **remote learning assessment solutions** including phone-based assessment
- > Resources on how to **bring reading materials to homes**
- > **Professional development solutions for teachers** to improve the quality of instruction
- > A classroom observation tool to **measure the quality of teaching practices in the classroom**





Applying the
RAPID
Framework



GHANA

The \$150 million Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes (GALOP) project is supporting a series of interventions to address the impacts of the pandemic on education and accelerate learning:

- **Targeted instruction:** The project is supporting a remedial program that provides instruction aligned to student learning needs by grouping students by proficiency levels during dedicated hours. The operation helped to train 70,000 teachers and produced new teaching and learning materials.
- **E-learning:** The EdModo Ghana learning management system serves as a platform for distance and hybrid learning, and ongoing communication between students, parents, and teachers.
- **Accountability systems for learning:** This project supports the design and implementation of a new *Accountability Dashboard* that integrates different levels of monitoring, reporting and inspection, in order to promote data-driven management



GUJARAT, INDIA

The \$500 million Gujarat Outcomes for Accelerated Learning (GOAL) project is supporting efforts to improve education outcomes through decentralized planning and management, improved teacher capacity, and measures to address the impacts of the pandemic on learning.

- **Improved classroom assessments:** The project is supporting the use of tablet-enabled classroom assessments that allow for immediate access to learning gap data at a student- and school-level, and are used to inform remedial programs.
- **Teacher capacity-building:** The project is strengthening needs-based teacher training, instituting teacher performance measures, and supporting DIKSHA, a platform that offers online training to more than 1.5 million registered teachers.



Key Thematic Areas

DATA



Data on Learning Poverty is missing for almost 2 in 5 school-aged children in low-income countries. The World Bank supports the development and use of data to measure, track, and use information for decision-making.



Highlight: UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have joined forces to close learning data gaps through the Learning Data Compact, a commitment to ensure that all countries have at least two quality measures of learning by 2030.

TEACHERS



The World Bank supports countries in shifting from traditional, ineffective in-service teacher training systems to tailored, practical, focused, and ongoing professional support informed by the fields of adult learning and behavioral science.



Highlight: Teach is the World Bank's open access classroom observation tool, designed to help countries track and improve teaching quality and inform professional development. Teach is available in 12 languages and has been implemented in 36 countries, reaching at least 200,000 students.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



All children deserve the opportunity to be in school and learn so they acquire the skills and knowledge to thrive—regardless of their diverse educational needs.



Highlight: The Inclusive Education Initiative (IEI) is a multi-donor trust fund overseen by the World Bank that invests in knowledge resources and technical expertise to support countries in making education progressively inclusive for children across the spectrum of disabilities.

ED TECH



Education is about human interaction, but technology can be a critical element to improve the effectiveness of teachers, principals, and schools. The World Bank works to discover evidence-based technology solutions, deploy solutions at scale, and diffuse this knowledge across policy makers.



Highlight: In **Turkey**, the Safe Schooling and Distance Education project aims to build future resilience in the education system, by creating a new hybrid learning model to support access to digital resources, and improve connectivity and access to education data.

EDUCATION FINANCE



We bring together multi-sectoral expertise to engage with ministries of education and finance and other stakeholders to develop and implement effective and efficient public financial management systems; build capacity to monitor, evaluate and project education spending needs (investment plan) in countries; and support countries to identify financial bottlenecks that impede effective spending in the education sector.



Highlight: The Education Finance Watch (EFW) is a collaborative effort among the World Bank, the Global Education Monitoring Report, and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics. It aims to provide an annual analysis of trends, patterns, and issues in education financing around the world.

GIRLS' EDUCATION



Our projects are aimed at eliminating barriers to girls' schooling, promoting safe and inclusive schools, improving the quality of education—including through gender-sensitive teaching—and developing skills for life and labor market success.



Highlight: In **Nigeria**, the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment is expanding access to secondary education for girls through conditional cash transfers and infrastructure investments, and is providing training on life skills (including health and safety), and digital literacy.

EDUCATION IN FCV SETTINGS



Our approach to education in fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) contexts starts with recognizing that education of displaced people and refugees is a development issue, not only a humanitarian issue. Our strategy is to (1) use education to prevent the occurrence of violence; (2) remain engaged in these contexts in partnership with humanitarian actors; (3) build resiliency in post-conflict settings; and (4) address the needs of impacted communities.



Highlight: In **Afghanistan**, the Education Emergency Response in Afghanistan (EERA) project helps safeguard access to learning through community-based education in areas with low school coverage; grants to support innovative, grassroots learning opportunities for excluded adolescent girls; and gender-focused rehabilitation and construction of school infrastructure.

ACCELERATOR PROGRAM



The Accelerator Program works with a set of 10 countries that have the political commitment to measure learning outcomes, set explicit learning targets, and implement a policy package of integrated interventions that can improve learning outcomes in the short and medium term, in a results-based approach.



Highlight: In **Rwanda**, the program is helping the ministry establish its National Strategy for Accelerated Learning, by working with senior government representatives on target setting, and building an investment case.

CLIMATE CHANGE



The World Bank helps: (i) harness the power of education for climate action, and (ii) assess and address the impact of climate on student learning. We generate evidence and implementation guidance to scale-up win-win solutions for achieving both Education and Climate goals.



Highlight: Three higher education projects in **India** are supporting 118 competitive research grants in climate change research and development projects, and 2 Research Centers of Excellence in fields addressing climate change issues.

SKILLS



The World Bank aims to prepare youth and adults for the future of work and society by improving access to relevant, quality and equitable secondary and post-secondary education, skills development and training.



Highlight: The Skills and Training Enhancement Project (STEP) in **Bangladesh** (\$88M) has provided re-skilling opportunities to over 240 thousand disadvantaged students in over 93 polytechnic institutions. Thanks to the program, the share of disadvantaged students who attained a technical diploma increased from 55% to 93%.



MOROCCO: IMPROVING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES IN RURAL POPULATIONS

The \$450 million *Improving Early Childhood Development Outcomes in Rural Morocco project* is supporting critical interventions to boost access to quality early childhood development programs for rural populations, encompassing education, health, and nutrition services.

- The project is creating and equipping preschools in select rural areas, with a target to enroll an additional 100,000 children in 6,000 new preschool units;
- Over 4,100 preschool educators have already been recruited and trained on appropriate pedagogical practices;
- To promote stimulation and early learning during COVID-19 closures, a new TV program was broadcast to promote home-based playful learning.



AFRICA: BUILDING CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE TO ADDRESS REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Since 2014, the *Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) Program* has become synonymous with delivering quality and relevant post-graduate education that meets the demand for skills in priority fields.

- Between 2014 and 2020, the International Development Association (IDA) invested over \$580 million to support more than 70 centers in 20 countries in West, Central, East, and Southern Africa;
- These investments have supported over 14,000 Masters and PhD students in agriculture, health, and other sciences;
- The program continues to expand across Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on improving teaching and learning, expanding access, and ensuring sustainability.



Trust Funds

While the COVID-19 pandemic posed huge challenges, the crisis offered an opportunity to transform and reimagine education, and to start realizing a vision for the **Future of Learning** where **all children learn with joy, rigor, and purpose in school and beyond**. The World Bank Group's Education GP is supporting this future through multiple initiatives.

BRINGING TOGETHER GLOBAL FUNDING TO MAXIMIZE RESULTS

The World Bank has launched two Trust Funds to streamline partner investments that support operations and amplify impact. The two funds are complementary—covering lifelong learning. Beyond these two trust funds, the World Bank receives support through partner-specific trust funds.

THE FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING COMPACT (FLC)

An umbrella trust fund designed to align partnerships, financing, and technical support around a few specific and measurable education outcome indicators: increasing Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling (LAYS) (a metric which combines quantity and quality of schooling), and decreasing Learning Poverty. The FLC's scope covers Early Childhood (including the **Early Learning Partnership**), Primary Education, and Secondary Education. It is designed around three pillars (measurement, policy, and knowledge and implementation capacity-building) with an emphasis on cross-cutting themes—financing; fragility, conflict and violence (FCV); inclusion; and technology.



TERTIARY EDUCATION & SKILLS (TES)

An umbrella trust fund that aims to increase system-wide and institutional capacity to enable access to relevant, quality, equitable, and resilient higher education, formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and youth and adult learning, which are aligned to labor market, economic, and societal needs. TES helps to align support for the development of global public goods and co-financing of implementation grants around tertiary education and skills training of the current or imminent workforce.



SELECTED GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS AND INITIATIVES

At the global level, the World Bank produces technical tools and analytical products to guide decision making on education issues, and engages with partners to promote shared commitments and advocate for more and better investments in education.

The **Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning (CtA)** is a multi-stakeholder initiative that provides a platform for countries and the global education community to demonstrate a commitment at the highest political levels to securing foundational learning for all children, and to implement policies that will help achieve targets under SDG4.



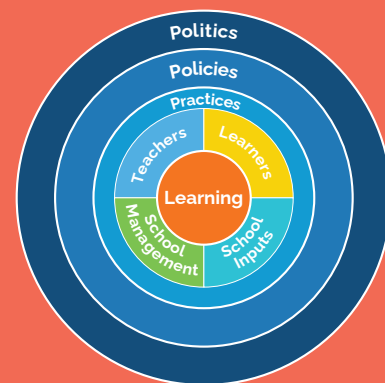
- By endorsing the CtA, countries and organizations commit to taking urgent and decisive action to reduce by half the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10, by 2030.
- The CtA has been signed by 22 countries and 30 organizations so far.

The **Global Education Policy Dashboard (GEPD)**, developed by the World Bank's Education Global Practice, can help countries reduce Learning Poverty. This tool offers a strong basis for identifying priorities for investment and policy reforms that are suited to each country context by focusing on the three dimensions of practices, policies, and politics.

GEPD

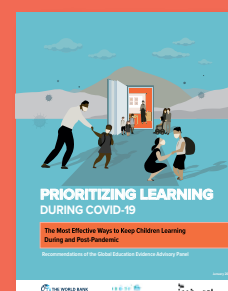
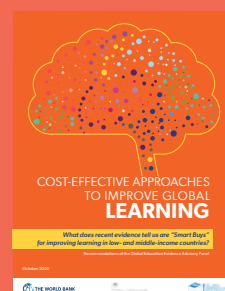
1. Highlights gaps between what the evidence suggests is effective in promoting learning and what is happening in practice in each system;
2. Allows governments to track progress as they act to close the gaps.

The GEPD has been implemented in seven education systems—Ethiopia, Jordan, Madagascar, Niger, Peru, Sierra Leone and Rwanda—and preparation is ongoing in eight more countries with expected completion by the end of 2024.



The **Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP)**, co-convened by the World Bank, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti, brings together a diverse group of leading researchers and practitioners to provide guidance for policymakers. It is chaired by Professor Kwame Akyeampong of The Open University and Dr. Rukmini Banerji, CEO of Pratham.

- The first GEEAP report focused on cost-effective policies to improve education access and foundational learning;
- The second report offers guidance on how to reverse the devastating learning losses caused by the pandemic.



“

One of the best chances for a better future is to invest in education today and make sure each dollar of education spending is put toward improved learning. A silent learning crisis is unfolding that has become a devastating shock to human capital. We need to work to prevent further damage and build more effective systems.”

— David Malpass

President, World Bank Group





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