

Global Education Fact Sheet

The global impact of the learning crisis is immense

COVID-19 related school closures interrupted learning for nearly all of the world's 1.5 billion school-aged children. And at all education levels, the most marginalized, especially those grappling with poverty, face the greatest barriers to accessing quality education.

Before the pandemic, 57 percent of children in low- and middle-income countries did not have access to the quality schooling they needed to gain basic literacy skills. The pandemic, global conflict, and climate emergencies deepened these learning gaps. Now, the global rate of students without support to acquire basic literacy is up to 70 percent. But this burden is not shared equally. **In the lowest-income countries, as many as 86 percent of children are not meeting foundational literacy and numeracy standards.**

Quality education is a human right with compounding benefits. Schooling helps children acquire the knowledge, skills, competencies, and networks to ensure a more just, prosperous, and equal future. Evidence shows that quality education is linked to broader social benefits—[gender equality](#), [economic development](#), and more. But COVID-era learning losses alone could result in this generation of students losing [\\$17 trillion](#) in lifetime earnings, the equivalent of 14 percent of global GDP.

We need to recover gains in access to quality education

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare inequities in education systems. Around the world, students from lower-income families were impacted the most. For example, at least [463 million children](#) could not access digital remote learning programs when their schools closed; 75 percent of those children came from rural and/or low-income households.

Students with disabilities were disproportionately excluded from distance learning. Schools lacked modalities and inclusive formats (e.g., sign language, braille) to reach these students. The international community must do more to help make foundational literacy and numeracy accessible and inclusive to all learners.

In many societies, girls and women face additional barriers to education, including child/forced marriage, gender-based violence, harassment, female genital cutting, marginalization due to menstruation, and a disproportionate share of household and unpaid work. Fortunately, the U.S. and the international community have prioritized gender equity and are taking bold steps to ensure that girls not only have access to foundational learning, but also the support needed to complete secondary education.

Opportunities to take action in 2023

Advocacy for fully funded USAID International Basic Education programs

Foundational literacy and numeracy programs in early education propel students to complete primary and secondary school. Research shows that universal primary and

secondary education would help lift more than 420 million people out of poverty, making foundational learning an indispensable lever toward ending poverty.

Backed by strong bipartisan Congressional support, USAID leads the U.S. government's [foundational learning efforts](#). In FY21 alone, their programs reached more than 33.4 million learners in 73 countries and assisted more than 113,000 schools. In FY24, our allies in Congress are calling for a **\$1.2 billion International Basic Education budget, including \$200 million for GPE**, to address the learning crisis. That money will empower USAID to support teachers, learners, school leaders, and policymakers to achieve localized system-wide improvements that are urgently needed.

U.S. Leadership and Support for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)

USAID bilateral and multilateral partners like GPE bring together technical expertise, political support, policy guidance, and financing to assist partner countries and governments in prioritizing access, equity, and impact in foundational learning. GPE has a successful track record. Since their creation, 160 million more children, over half of them girls, are in schools, and 67 million more children have access to quality teachers. Sustained U.S. support for [GPE's strategic plan](#) will serve as a multiplier for these efforts.

At the 2022 U.N. Transforming Education Summit, the U.S. pledged to address the global learning crisis by endorsing the [Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning](#) developed by the World Bank, U.N. agencies, and others. Through this shared commitment, USAID, low-income countries, and partners like GPE aim to cut the global share of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age ten in half by the year 2030.

Improving the Effectiveness and Impact of Foreign Aid

During the 117th Congress, the READ Act reauthorization bill received strong bipartisan support, and the updated legislation was reintroduced this year by bicameral, bipartisan leads. We aim to reintroduce and pass the bill this year. The bill ensures the U.S. government updates their strategy to improve foundational literacy and numeracy in basic education, requiring rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and reporting to Congress and the public on International Basic Education programs. Let's hold USAID accountable to ensure their money has the greatest impact on the children who need it most.

We must increase resources for basic education

With \$1.2 billion in International Basic Education funding, we can support millions of students around the world and greatly increase literacy and numeracy rates in low-income countries. **Will you support increasing funding for Global Education programs at USAID, including the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), in fiscal year 2024?**