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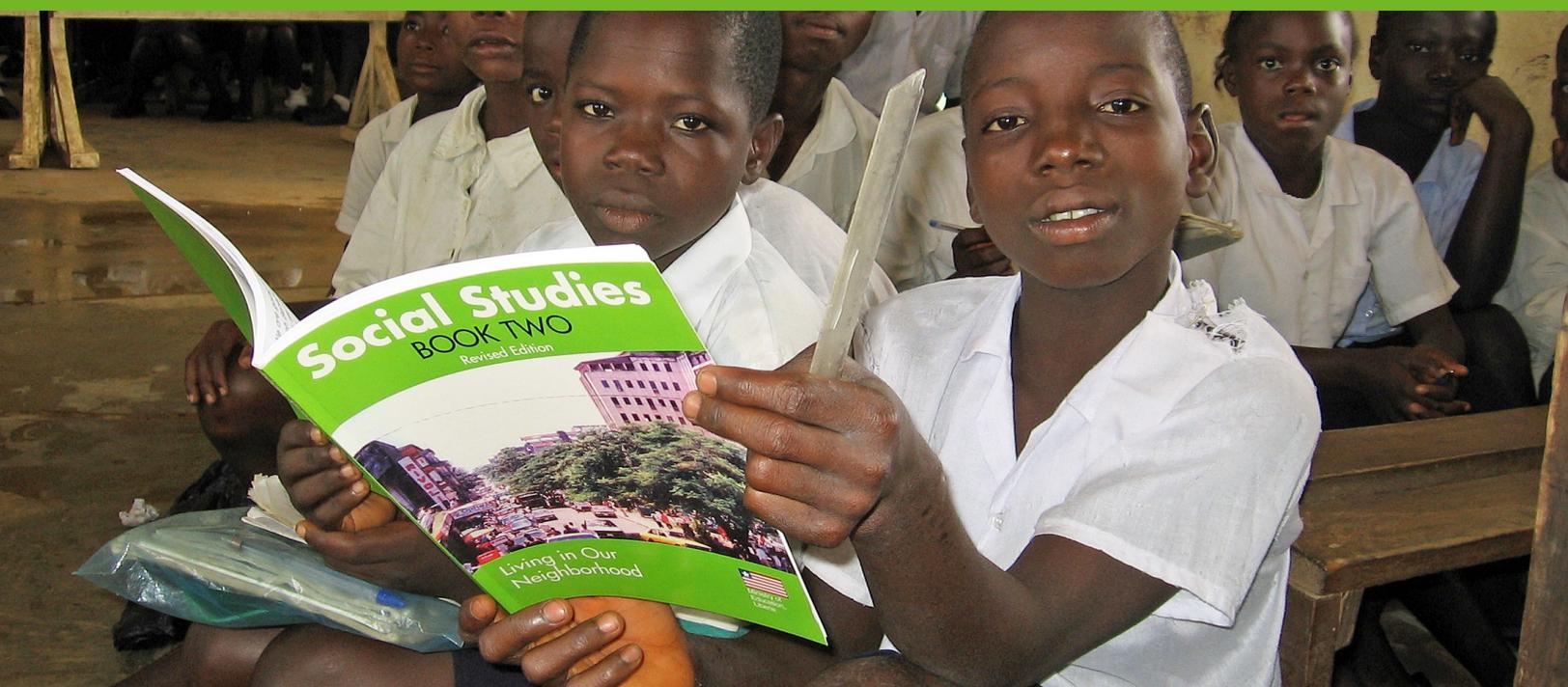
A REVIEW OF THE U.S. PLEDGE TO THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION

DISCUSSION PAPER 2 OF 3:

THE USAID EDUCATION STRATEGY

RESULTS
the power to end poverty

RESULTS EDUCATIONAL FUND

RESULTS Educational Fund (REF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit citizen's advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C., that is committed to educating the public, the media, and government leaders about issues related to poverty and hunger in the United States and abroad. It organizes public forums, trains citizens in being active participants in democracy, holds media conference calls to share the latest information, and conducts oversight research to determine the effectiveness of programs meant to address poverty and inequity. REF combines its advocacy efforts with its sister organization, RESULTS, Inc. (a 501(c)4 organization), and international affiliates in Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, and the United Kingdom for greater impact worldwide.

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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In November 2011, the United States made a pledge to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the world's only multilateral institution exclusively devoted to ensuring that all children everywhere receive a quality basic education. The United States pledged to:

- *Contribute $20 million to the GPE Fund in 2012.*

- *Improve the reading skills of 100 million children and increase equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015.*

- *Improve its aid effectiveness through the USAID Forward initiative, which aims to reform and revitalize USAID's strategic policy, planning and evaluation capabilities, and how it engages with partner countries.*

A year later, RESULTS conducted country visits to Liberia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia to explore the status of the U.S. pledge. The following paper reflects on what RESULTS learned about the USAID Education Strategy — the second component of the 2011 U.S. pledge to GPE outlined above — and concludes that:

- ***Country ownership*** *must be the logical starting point for USAID's Education Strategy if the agency is to achieve sustainable development in education that responds to national needs.*

- ***The Education for All Act of 2013*** *can assist USAID in fostering country ownership, supporting national education plans, and maximizing collaboration with institutions such as GPE.*

- ***The Global Partnership for Education*** *provides a necessary complement to USAID's targeted education work and extends the reach of U.S. assistance.*

To learn more about the other components of the 2011 U.S. pledge to GPE, see "Discussion Paper 1 of 3: The U.S. Commitment to the GPE Fund" and "Discussion Paper 3 of 3: USAID Forward."

INTRODUCTION

The Global Partnership for Education

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) is the world's premiere multilateral partnership for basic education. Originally established as the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) in 2002, GPE brings together donor country governments, developing country governments, multilateral agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and private foundations to combine their financial and technical assistance to support education development in 58 countries.

Since 2002, GPE has allocated $3.1 billion in financial aid to education through the Global Partnership for Education Fund, which manages partners' pooled contributions (GPE, 2013). GPE channels the Fund through a country-led systems approach to education development. At the national level, Local Education Groups (LEGs), consisting of the government of the developing country partner, donors, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civil society organizations (CSOs), coordinate around the development, endorsement, and implementation of a national education plan.

Within each LEG, a member is designated as the Coordinating Agency, which acts as the primary communication link between the developing country government, other members of the LEG, and the GPE secretariat. One multilateral agency or donor in the LEG also takes the role of the Supervising Entity, which acts as the fund manager at the national level. The Supervising Entity receives grant funds from the GPE secretariat and transfers them to the government to implement activities called for by the national education plan.

The U.S. government has been part of GPE for over 10 years. The United States — represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) — has been on the GPE Board of Directors since its beginnings as the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative, helped relaunch it as the Global Partnership for Education, and remains on the Board today.

The 2011 U.S. Pledge to GPE

In 2011, GPE embarked on a three-year replenishment campaign to secure resources for 2011-2014. The campaign kicked off with a pledging conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark on November 8th, 2011. Representatives from 52 countries came together and committed $1.5 billion to the Global Partnership for Education Fund.

At the 2011 GPE pledging conference, the United States made a series of commitments — some financial, others programmatic:

> The United States of America pledged a contribution of $20 million to the Global Partnership Fund, following a grant of $2 million to support monitoring

GPE vision:
A good quality education for all children, everywhere, so they fulfill their potential and contribute to their societies.

GPE mission:
To galvanize and coordinate a global effort to deliver a good quality education to all girls and boys, prioritizing the poorest and most vulnerable.

and evaluation by the Global Partnership Secretariat. The United States also pledged to improve its aid effectiveness through the USAID Forward Initiative, which aims to reform and revitalise USAID's strategic policy, planning and evaluation capabilities and to redefine how USAID will engage with partner countries. These reforms are key to implementing the aid effectiveness principles while ensuring more effective programming and closer collaboration with local actors in education and other sectors. The United States pledged to focus particular support for early learning outcomes and education in fragile states. In the first case, the United States pledged to improve reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015 and in the second case the United States will increase education access for 15 million learners in conflict-affected and fragile states by 2015 by strengthening crisis prevention efforts, supporting learning opportunities for youth and developing partner country institutional capacity to provide education services. (GPE, 2012)

Not all of these commitments were new. Reading skills, access to education in conflict-affected and fragile states, and aid effectiveness are objective areas set out in the USAID Education Strategy and USAID Forward, plans which predated the November 2011 GPE pledging conference. In addition to reaffirming these previous commitments, the United States pledged to contribute $20 million to the GPE Fund in 2012.

RESULTS' Country Visits

With an interest in these commitments, RESULTS set out to explore the status of the 2011 U.S. pledge to GPE one year later. In October and November of 2012, RESULTS visited Liberia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia in an attempt to gain local insights and snapshots pertaining to the implementation of the U.S. pledge.

Liberia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia were selected on the basis that they (1) are in sub-Saharan Africa, the regional investment focus of USAID's Education Strategy, (2) have large, active USAID basic education program portfolios, (3) are GPE developing country partners, and (4) consist in part of conflict-affected or fragile states (Liberia and South Sudan).

Speaking with USAID missions, USAID implementing partners, donors, governments, international NGOs, local NGOs, CSOs, and GPE Coordinating Agencies, RESULTS met with a total of 49 representatives from across a range of development actors to discuss their views on USAID's Education Strategy, USAID Forward, and USAID's involvement with Local Education Groups.

The following sections examine the U.S. financial commitment to GPE and what RESULTS learned in light of its country visits. For findings and recommendations in regards to the USAID Education Strategy and USAID Forward, see "Discussion Paper 2 of 3: The USAID Education Strategy" and "Discussion Paper 3 of 3: USAID Forward." For in-depth country profiles of Liberia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia, see the Annex, available online.

MAP 1: RESULTS' COUNTRY VISITS

LIBERIA

|	
Population:	4.2 million
GDP per capita:	$422
Primary school net enrollment rate:	41% (female: 40%, male: 42%)
Out-of-school children of primary school age:	385,726 (50% female, 50% male)
Primary school pupil-teacher ratio:	27:1
Percent of teachers trained:	56%
Textbook-pupil ratio:	3:1
Primary school completion rate:	66% (female: 60%, male: 72%)
Youth literacy rate:	77% (female: 82%, male: 71%)

SOUTH SUDAN

Population:	10.8 million
GDP per capita:	$862
Primary school net enrollment rate:	43% (female: 37%, male: 48%)
Out-of-school children of primary school age:	1,250,943
Primary school pupil-teacher ratio:	52:1
Percent of teachers trained:	43%
Textbook-pupil ratio:	1:5
Primary school completion rate:	18%
Youth literacy rate:	40% (female: 28%, male: 55%)

TANZANIA

Population:	47.8 million
GDP per capita:	$609
Primary school net enrollment rate:	98% (female: 98%, male: 98%)
Out-of-school children of primary school age:	137,123 (56% female, 44% male)
Primary school pupil-teacher ratio:	46:1
Percent of teachers trained:	97%
Textbook-pupil ratio:	1:3
Primary school completion rate, total:	81% (female: 85%, male: 77%)
Youth literacy rate:	77% (female: 76%, male: 78%)

ZAMBIA

Population:	14.1 million
GDP per capita:	$1,469
Primary school net enrollment rate:	95% (female: 98%, male: 96%)
Out-of-school children of primary school age:	71,036 (29% female, 71% male)
Primary school pupil-teacher ratio:	63:1
Percent of teachers trained:	unknown
Textbook-pupil ratio:	1:3
Primary school completion rate:	103% (female: 108%, male: 98%)
Youth literacy rate:	74% (female: 67%, male: 82%)
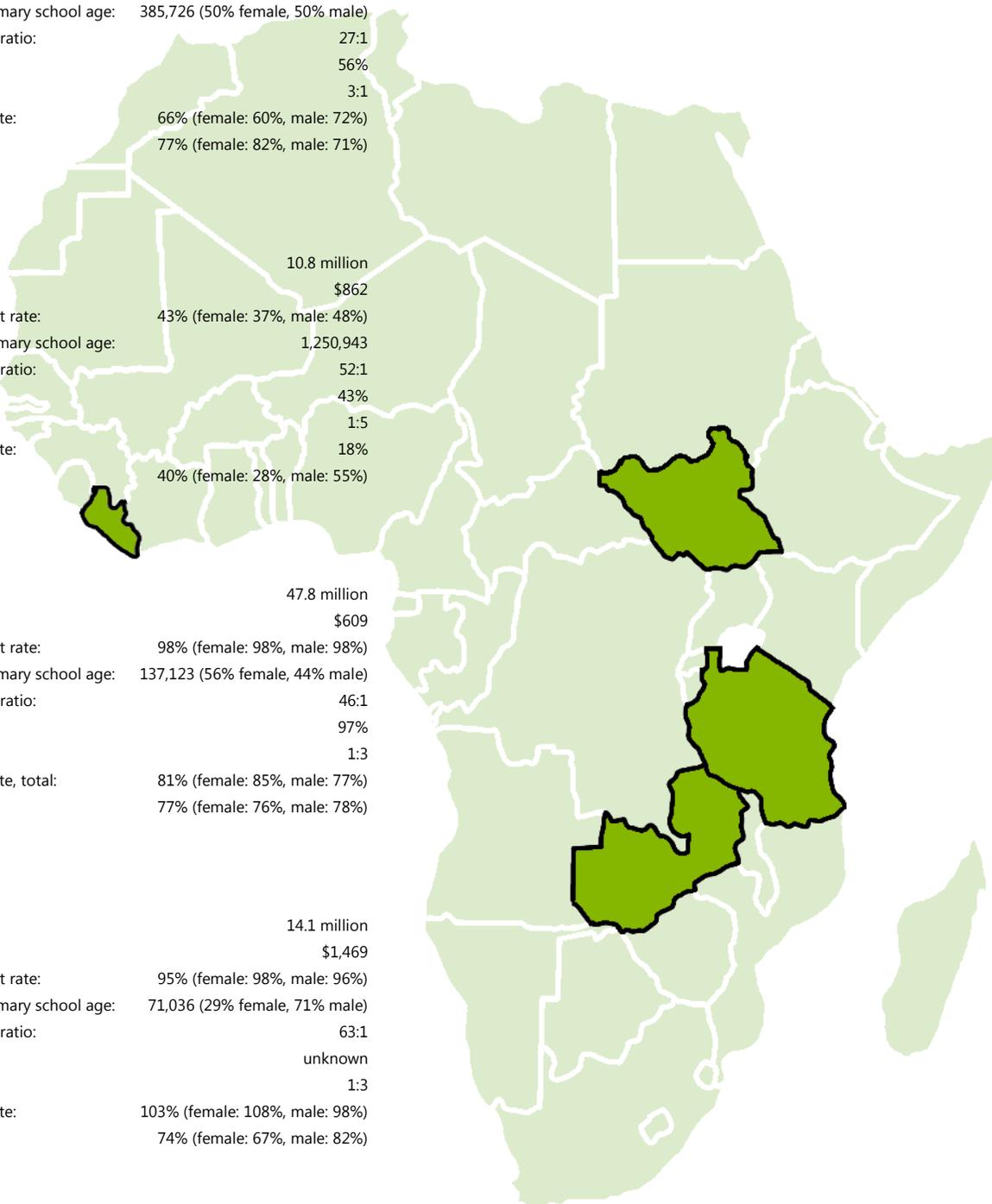
Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2013; World Bank, 2013; Republic of South Sudan Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012

USAID EDUCATION STRATEGY

The United States Agency for International Development, or USAID, is the United States' federal government agency that has managed U.S. foreign assistance programs around the world since 1961. USAID and the U.S. Department of State have a shared mission, which is to "shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere" (U.S. Department of State & USAID, 2010). Working in sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and environment, USAID has a field presence in nearly 80 countries worldwide (USAID, 2011b).

In late 2010, USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah commissioned a new USAID Education Strategy. "Grounded in the most current evidence-based analysis of educational effectiveness" and "aimed at maximizing the impact and sustainability of development results," USAID's Education Strategy, titled *Education: Opportunity through Learning*, debuted in February 2011.

Spanning from 2011 to 2015, the Education Strategy aims to strategically direct education resources towards sustainable outcomes through "enhanced selectivity, focus, country-led programming, division of labor, and innovation" in addition to its own principles of "enhanced evaluation practices, gender integration, and sustainability." As part of the strategy's principle of selectivity, resource flows to sub-Saharan Africa in particular are to increase, and education programming in countries where the combined cost is less than $2 million annually is to be generally phased out. This principle of greater focus for greater impact continues as the strategy seeks to achieve three concrete objectives:

- **Goal 1:** Improved reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015.

- **Goal 2:** Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development programs to generate workforce skills relevant to a country's development goals.

- **Goal 3:** Increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments for 15 million learners by 2015. (USAID, 2011a)

The targets set out in Goals 1 and 3 directly align with the commitments that the United States made during the 2011 GPE pledging conference. As such, RESULTS' inquiry only involved Goals 1 and 3.

USAID country missions were directed to comply with the strategy and gear all of their education programs towards these three goals by the beginning of fiscal year (FY) 2013: "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" (USAID, 2012a). FY12 would thus represent a "hard pivot" in which USAID missions would be responsible for transitioning the project design, monitoring, and evaluation of their entire education portfolios towards the three goals of the new Education Strategy.

Goal 1: Early Grade Reading

As explained by the strategy, recent successes in primary school enrollment across the developing world have not been met with improved learning. For instance, the strategy reports, "In Mali, Pakistan, and Peru more than 70 percent of children in the primary grades could not read at grade level," and "in Mali, 94 percent of children at the end of grade 2 could not read a word in a simple sentence" (USAID, 2011a). At the global scale, UNESCO (2012) estimates 20 percent of primary school students are in school but not learning the basics.

USAID is endeavoring to address these trends through a reading goal that seeks to improve reading skills for 100 million primary school children by 2015. This is to be achieved through:

1) **Improving reading instruction** by increasing instructional time for reading; reducing teacher and pupil absenteeism; training teachers; establishing school libraries and ensuring adequate reading materials; improving teaching/learning materials; and establishing and enforcing reading standards.

2) **Improving reading delivery systems** by establishing appropriate curriculum goals; developing and using sound assessment tools; ensuring the supply, distribution, and use of learning materials; and supporting information and communications technologies (ICTs) that improve reading.

3) **Greater engagement, accountability, and transparency by communities and the public** by establishing school management committees to include reading reports in school development plans; mobilizing and engaging communities to address reading issues; implementing media campaigns on the importance of reading; and mobilizing and engaging the private sector as partners. (USAID, 2011a)

Goal 3: Access in Crisis and Conflict Environments

As the strategy points out, half of all out-of-school primary school-aged children live in countries affected by armed conflict. Those in areas affected by natural disaster or fragile governance raise this number even higher. Conflict-affected countries are the target of nearly a third of USAID's education programming and more than 50 percent of its funds (USAID, 2011a).

USAID plans to channel its educational support in conflict-affected and fragile states into ensuring equitable access to primary school. USAID is to do this by developing safe learning environments, preventing further crises, and rebuilding education systems:

1) **Safe learning opportunities for children and youth** provided by restoring access to learning and providing safety from violence, including for marginalized populations; establishing formal and non-formal programs; supporting teacher recruitment, training, and deployment to address shortages; and repairing/rebuilding structures.

2) **Crisis prevention efforts strengthened** by engaging communities and advancing institutional and policy changes to support crisis prevention; supporting peace education

and violence mitigation programs; preparing disaster response plans; providing psycho-social support to teachers and students; and developing life-skills for youth.

3) **Institutional capacity to provide services strengthened** by strengthening school systems; monitoring and evaluating programs; developing systems to ensure transparent recruitment, qualification, and compensation of teaching corps; and establishing accreditation and examination systems. (USAID, 2011a)

THE STRATEGY IN MOTION:
POSITIVE RESPONSES FROM THE GROUND

High Mission Alignment

As the U.S. pledge to GPE reiterated Goals 1 and 3 of USAID's Education Strategy, one of the key questions driving RESULTS' learning visits was the status of on-the-ground alignment of USAID basic education projects with the new strategy. All missions were to have their programs aligned to the strategy by October 2012, the beginning of FY13.

During RESULTS' visits in October and November 2012, all twelve active basic education projects surveyed fell within the purview of Goal 1 or Goal 3, with reading as a core focus of projects in Tanzania and Zambia and access as the priority in Liberia and South Sudan (see Annex, available online, for the full list of basic education projects and country contexts).

The work required to align programs to the new strategy varied mission to mission. Some programming hardly needed modification as the new education strategy was already in line with pre-existing work. In Liberia, for example, basic education projects already focused on access, whether through increased girls' enrollment or the provision of trained teachers. Moreover, having piloted and now rolled out USAID's Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), USAID/Liberia's historic focus on reading has allowed it to essentially pursue both Goal 1 and Goal 3 targets.

Similarly, while the 2011-2013 South Sudan Transition Strategy primarily guides USAID/South Sudan's education portfolio, its development objectives for education focus on developing and sustaining the systems needed for effective service delivery, with indicators similar to those of Goal 3. When USAID issued a global education strategy that sought to increase the number of learners enrolled in primary and secondary schools (and/or equivalent non-school-based settings), little work was required by USAID/South Sudan to align its education portfolio. Rather, the Education Strategy was reported as an advantageous directive, as it gave the mission even more reason to move toward focusing on enrollment and retention, which were widely agreed to be the most critical educational needs of South Sudan.

Projects initiated after the introduction of the Education Strategy likewise demonstrated a clear response to it. While true of all projects reviewed, USAID/Zambia exhibited a particularly ambitious take-up of the strategy, launching three flagship reading projects in 2012: Time to Learn, Read to Succeed, and Strengthening Educational Performance (STEP-Up) Zambia.

Significant Levels of Awareness, Except in Civil Society

Awareness of the USAID Education Strategy in the countries visited indicates some successful conveyance of the strategy from Washington to missions and on to implementers, governments, and other partners. All missions, contractors, sub-contractors, development partners (donors), and Ministry of Education personnel interviewed were aware of the strategy and its priorities. Contractors and sub-contractors were most familiar with the strategy through indicator reengineering exercises (more below), while development partners and governments were made aware of it in donor meetings.

The exception to this was in South Sudan, where not all government officials and donors consulted knew about the strategy even though USAID had shared it at the National Education Forum. This is not an indication of the impact of the mission's information sharing efforts however. While it is fully aligned to the access targets of Goal 3 of the Education Strategy, USAID/South Sudan's education programming is predominantly guided by the development objectives of the South Sudan Transition Strategy as discussed above.

The more notable exception was local civil society's almost complete lack of awareness of the strategy. The Education Strategy Implementation Guidance speaks at length of the importance of local leadership and coordinating efforts with civil society to achieve the goals of the strategy. For Goal 1, the Implementation Guidance even offers an 11-point list of topics with which to engage civil society to complete effective needs assessments for upcoming projects. Nevertheless, almost none of the civil society organizations consulted had heard of USAID's Education Strategy. When informed of the strategy's goals, however, several confirmed these priorities as being evident in USAID's recent education programming.

High Approval Rating and Alignment with National Plans

The goals of USAID's Education Strategy fit the educational needs of the countries visited, complement national education plans, and support the education activities of other organizations and donors. Even those civil society representatives who had not previously heard of the USAID Education Strategy immediately identified its goals as appropriately aligned with national needs and as complementing their own missions.

In Tanzania and Zambia, the strategy's Goal 1 on early grade reading targets critical needs in their education systems. In Tanzania, those consulted often referred to recent findings from Uwezo, an East African learning assessment initiative, that reveal worryingly low levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills in primary school students across the country. In 2010, Uwezo launched its first Tanzania assessment report with what became an often-cited statistic that only one in five children

who had completed primary school could read grade 2-level Swahili. The government is responding to these findings, even when at other times refuting them. Tanzania's new Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) III (2012-2016) contains a strong focus on the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training was even considering reducing the curriculum to teach only these three subjects in grades 1 and 2.

In Zambia, USAID's reading agenda directly aligns with the dire need to address the quality of education in the country. While access to basic education in Zambia is improving, the quality of that education is, as one person put it, "abysmal." The government, donors, and civil society organizations are working to inspire a culture of reading to improve the quality of learning, and USAID's new directions in the education sector are valuable complements to those efforts.

The Education Strategy's Goal 3 on access and enrollment in conflict-affected and fragile states is relevant in Liberia and South Sudan as well. In Liberia, access is a critical issue meriting priority attention, but there is also the need to address the quality of education. Access and quality are the twin pillars of Liberia's 2010-2020 Education Sector Plan (Republic of Liberia Ministry of Education, n.d.). While Liberia is strictly a Goal 3 country, USAID/Liberia's historic emphasis on reading has allowed this element to also be highly integrated into projects that have access to educational services at their cores.

While retention, completion, and the provision of quality teachers are also plaguing South Sudan's education system, Goal 3 of USAID's Education Strategy is critical to the development of the new country, where only half of school-age children are enrolled in primary school and only 17 percent of schools offer a full cycle of primary-level education. Increasing access to general education is the first strategic goal of South Sudan's General Education Strategic Plan 2012-2017 (Republic of South Sudan Ministry of General Education and Instruction, 2012).

SIGNS OF CONSTRAINT

At other times, aligning projects to the strategy was more challenging. Recognizing the potential "political, contractual, and practical problems in changing course, especially once projects or activities have been agreed or launched" (USAID, 2012a), the Implementation Guidance allows for requests for exceptions to alignment. Though an attractive option for some projects pre-dating the strategy, none of the missions visited had filed exception requests.

Retrofitting and "Future-fitting"

Projects pre-dating the strategy went through indicator re-engineering processes to align their outputs and outcomes to the new Education Strategy. For projects with activities in line with the strategy, this was merely a matter of ensuring that project implementation, indicators, and monitoring and evaluation were amended to capture the strategy's exact directives. For projects targeting barriers to a quality education

other than strictly literacy and access, more work was required to bring their operations into the folds of the Education Strategy.

For example, in Zambia, the Schools Promoting Learning Achievement through Sanitation and Hygiene (SPLASH) project and School Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Education (WASH) and Quality Education Project — both of which would typically be considered WASH projects, not literacy initiatives — face the challenging task of ensuring that their outputs (mostly the provision of water and sanitation facilities and hygiene education) translate into improved reading outcomes and literacy.

Likewise in Tanzania, while remaining true to its overall goal to improve instruction in reading, mathematics, and science through ICT, the Tanzania 21st Century Basic Education Program (TZ21) (launched in 2010) underwent modifications to more strongly align to the reading priority of Goal 1 of the Education Strategy. TZ21 redesigned the e-content of its program to concentrate on reading, and while its policy work previously focused on ICT in education, it has now shifted to early grade reading. Additional efforts were required to successfully carry out these transitions, as TZ21 operates through a partnership model in concert with 12 NGOs and businesses.

(De)Emphasizing

There were also reports of the simultaneous elevation of reading and de-emphasis of other learning areas. While TZ21 originally placed equal importance on the three subjects of reading, math, and science, reading was later elevated, as it is the sole priority for Goal 1 countries in the strategy. The project now centers on early grade reading in English for grades 1 and 2, "with math and science taught through reading" in the curriculum for grades 3 and 4.

Similar reports came from project leads in other countries visited. As one Chief of Party of a teacher training project put it, their pre-service and in-service trainings focus on reading and math — "with a big 'R' and a little 'm.'"

Discontinued Projects

While some projects had to be modified to conform to the Education Strategy, others have been discontinued. The discontinuation of the African Education Initiative Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program (AGSP) in Tanzania was particularly lamented. AGSP sought to break through the financial and socio-cultural barriers to girls' education by providing primary school and secondary school scholarships, mentoring, parent and community awareness-raising, and HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigation activities.

From 2004 to 2011, AGSP provided more than 550,000 primary and secondary scholarships to disadvantaged children, mostly girls, in 41 African countries (Morgan Borszcz Consulting, 2012). In Tanzania, the project resulted in the enrollment and graduation of thousands of girls over the years. While likely attributable to several factors, the discontinuation of AGSP was directly linked by respondents in Tanzania to USAID's new Education Strategy, presumably due to its focus on access rather than reading as required by Goal 1.

Box 1: The Need for Country Ownership: Lessons from the Global Health Initiative

In examining USAID's flagship reform agenda, USAID Forward, Discussion Paper 3 of this series includes a comparison between the education and health sectors that also yields implications for the Education Strategy. The examination centers on differences in performance between the two sectors towards USAID Forward's goal of channeling more resources directly to local institutions, including partner country governments and local NGOs. Some of these differences may be explained by the content-orientation of the USAID Education Strategy versus the much more process-oriented Global Health Initiative, an interagency program established to coordinate U.S. interventions in global health.

The Global Health Initiative (GHI) was first announced by the White House in May 2009. Over the following year, the Administration developed the principles and strategies governing GHI, and in August 2010, it began calling GHI a "new approach" to U.S. global health programs. GHI would later become a strong influence on USAID's 2012-2016 Global Health Strategic Framework.

While GHI seeks to achieve a variety of hard targets in global health, it turns the content-process conversation on its head when compared with the Education Strategy. GHI is governed by a set of seven principles:

1) Focus on women, girls, and gender equality.
2) Encourage country ownership and invest in country-led plans.
3) Build sustainability through health systems strengthening.
4) Strengthen and leverage key multilateral organizations, global health partnerships, and private sector engagement.
5) Increase impact through strategic coordination and integration.
6) Improve metrics, monitoring, and evaluation.
7) Promote research and innovation. (GHI, n.d.)

The Education Strategy has a similar set of principles (Selectivity; Focus; Country Ownership and Responsibility; Division of Labor and Donor Mix; Innovation, Science, and Technology; Enhanced Evaluation Practices; Sustainability; and Gender Equality). The Education Strategy covers all eight of these strategic principles in the space of two-and-a-half pages and moves quickly onto the three content-focused program goals, a discussion that takes up the vast majority of the document. The GHI Strategy Document on the other hand devotes itself to the strategic principles and how to operationalize them, with program targets only appearing in the annex.

This marked difference in attention to the "how" versus the "what" set the tone for subsequent implementation guidance, tools, and supporting documents of both initiatives. The 2011 USAID Education Strategy Implementation Guidance establishes the overall agenda, timeline, and procedures for aligning education programs to the strategy, designing projects goal-by-goal, and monitoring and evaluating progress against the three goals of the strategy. The accompanying Technical Notes provide a more thorough goal-by-goal guide to project design, monitoring, and reporting against outcome and output indicators, with tools on how to calculate the total number of learners with improved reading skills or increased access. USAID also produced a Reference Materials document, mainly a compendium of resources and studies supporting the strategy's recommended means of improving early grade reading and measuring learning outcomes.

The Guidance for Global Health Initiative Country Strategies on the other hand positions its strategic principles as the starting point from which the rest of the strategy and its implementation logically flows. The Guidance is not about what kind of projects are to be designed, implemented, and evaluated but how missions are to develop GHI Country Strategies.

One principle in particular — country ownership — seems to be the foundation of the entire strategy. It is the starting point of the logical narrative of the "Causal Relationship between GHI Principles and GHI Goals" section of the Guidance, leading to the focus on local partnerships and national plans. Ultimately, it is this principle that leads to the need for GHI Country Strategies, with each Country Strategy to articulate "a holistic approach for how U.S. Government investments in health and other development efforts will support national plans and move key GHI principles and objectives forward. Development of these strategies will be achieved through ongoing and continued dialogue with governments as partners, as well as through an inclusive whole-of-government process" (GHI, 2011).

This principle, and the application of it, was promulgated even further through GHI's U.S. Government Interagency Paper on Country Ownership in July 2012. The paper outlines four factors for strong country ownership: political ownership and stewardship; institutional and community ownership; capabilities; and mutual accountability, including finance. These factors include such characteristics as:

- Host country institutions (inclusive of government, NGOs, civil society, and the private sector) constitute the primary vehicles through which health programs are delivered and take responsibility for each program.
- Host country institutions manage funds.
- Host government is responsible for financing and financial stewardship over health. (GHI, 2012)

The paper provides a vision for transition from U.S. Government-driven programs to host country-driven and implemented health programs, with examples of what that might look like in countries with different capacities or health burdens. The paper also lays out broad guidelines for country offices to approach a transition to country ownership, with metrics including, among others:

- A shift and/or expansion of direct funding to government institutions.
- A shift and/or expansion of direct funding to non-governmental local institutions.
- Increase in the percentage of USG funding that is awarded to local partners through contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants.
- Number of new prime partners in fiscal year who were sub-awardees in the past. (GHI, 2012)

Finally, while the tools most immediately born out of the Education Strategy focused on how to count the "number of students reached by USAID reading interventions" and the "numbers of learners with increased equitable access to education in crisis and conflict environments," the GHI Strategy led to the development of the Country Ownership Assessment Tool (COAT), a tool to be "used by the U.S. team and national stakeholders led by government to assess a baseline of country ownership and use its finding to develop a thematic road map for country ownership" (GHI, 2011).

While the USAID Education Strategy and Implementation Guidance also identify country ownership as a strategic principle, speak of capacity-building and systems-strengthening, and state that missions are "encouraged to consider" direct support to local governments and NGOs, they fall far short of genuinely integrating this principle into project design and implementation when compared to GHI. GHI's commitment to country ownership and explicit reference to transitioning work to local systems is also reflected in USAID's 2012-2016 Global Health Strategic Framework.

In the end, the U.S. Government's approach to the two sectors emerge as radically different. On the one hand, the health sector strategy puts a strong emphasis on host government ownership of the health system, inclusive of NGOs, civil society, and the private sector, in regards to both the identification of needs and priorities as well as implementing health services. On the other hand, the Education Strategy's primary concern is project conformity to three specific outcome targets to be met by all missions worldwide. While more can still be done to ensure greater country ownership of U.S. global health programs, such differences may in part explain the varying levels of direct partnerships with local institutions demonstrated by the two sectors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While RESULTS' country visits to Liberia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia witnessed high alignment of mission education programming to USAID's Education Strategy and a high alignment of that strategy with national priorities, there were cases that demonstrated the restrictiveness of a top-down strategy with three education goals for all of the countries in which USAID is operating. Establishing country ownership as not just a principle in name but as an operational foundation in which program planning, design, and implementation are done in partnership with local governments, NGOs, civil society, and the private sector will be essential for USAID to more successfully meet national needs. Likewise, USAID's targeted education interventions highlight the need for the United States to increase engagement and support to multilateral partners, such as the Global Partnership for Education, which can complement U.S. bilateral efforts.

- **Country ownership must be the logical starting point and focus of USAID's Education Strategy:** While the basic education projects in the countries visited by RESULTS were aligned with national needs and education sector plans, there was still a loud cry for more genuine collaboration between governments and USAID. There were repeated claims that USAID missions were not involving governments in project planning. In 2012, of the 48 countries in which USAID committed new education funds, it provided direct government-to-government assistance for education development in only six of them (U.S. Department of State, 2013; USAID, 2013). While a narrowed strategy with specific outcome targets has its benefits, the reforming and discontinuation of some education projects suggest there may be additional national needs.

  If USAID wants to achieve sustainable development with its education programming, it must make country ownership the foundation of its next strategy. Country ownership in this case speaks to not only government-led development but also genuine participation by local NGOs, civil society, and the private sector. This is radically different from the current outcome-driven, top-down approach of USAID's education programming and cannot simply be laid on top of the existing strategy. Missions aligned their education projects to the Education Strategy only last year, most existing projects are due to run beyond its expiration in 2015, and country ownership begins at the planning stage. While at present USAID must continue to more fully operationalize its principle of country ownership, the onset of its next education strategy marks an opportunity for the agency to more comprehensively shift to country-owned education programming. At this time, country ownership should not act merely as a nominal strategic principle that is ultimately peripheral and nonessential to programming; rather, it should be the logical foundation on which project planning tools and indicators are built. This will help USAID's education sector channel more funds through partner country systems while increasing the sustainability of projects implemented outside of them.[1]

[1] For more on country ownership, see: Oxfam America, 2010; InterAction, 2011; MercyCorps, 2013; Save the Children U.S., n.d.-a, n.d.-b, & 2010; and Women Thrive Worldwide, n.d.

- **The Education for All Act of 2013:** Country ownership is a cornerstone of the Education for All Act of 2013. If passed, it would help the United States integrate bilateral assistance into nationally led planning processes and ultimately align it with national education plans. Moreover, the bill would authorize the United States to support multilateral education initiatives like GPE. GPE's innovative model brings governments, donors, NGOs, the private sector, and civil society to the table to develop and implement national education plans. This multi-stakeholder, country-led approach makes it an essential partner to U.S. efforts to increase country ownership with its education programming, and the Education for All Act would help ensure that the United States is benefiting from such partnerships to the fullest extent.

- **Support the Global Partnership for Education as a necessary complement to USAID's targeted education work:** The targeted approach of USAID's Education Strategy of channeling all programming towards three specific goals will help drive positive impact in those areas but can lead to constraint in others. Additionally, USAID is to phase out education programs in countries where they cost less than $2 million annually. While the United States concentrates its bilateral assistance towards these select areas and outcomes, it can avoid the negative consequences associated with this approach by increasing support to its multilateral partners, such as the Global Partnership for Education, whose country-led systems approach can address the additional education issues that USAID's programming may not be targeting at the moment. Likewise, U.S. support to GPE will extend the reach of U.S. assistance by enabling the United States to support plans and programs in countries where USAID education projects do not exist. As GPE is preparing to hold a pledging conference in June 2014 to secure the funds to facilitate the next round of its work, the United States will be presented with a significant opportunity to not only demonstrate its broad support to global education but also strengthen a partner whose work is an essential complement to its own.

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