REALIZING EDUCATION’S PROMISE
A WORLD BANK RETROSPECTIVE
Education is a human right, a powerful driver of development, and one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability.
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PART 1:
EDUCATION AND THE WORLD BANK

IV REALIZING EDUCATION’S PROMISE
A WORLD BANK RETROSPECTIVE

1 All numbers in this book are as of May 26, 2023, unless otherwise stated.
NAVIGATING EDUCATION THROUGH COMPOUNDING CRISSES

Five years ago, the World Bank published its World Development Report 2018, Learning to Realize Education’s Promise. It opened by affirming that “Education is a basic human right”—but that many children were not enjoying that right, in large part because “schooling is not learning.” One of humanity’s most critical development challenges is that still today, not every child and young person in the world is enjoying that right. But as this retrospective shows, we are making real progress in reorienting education toward fulfilling it.

The magic of learning happens in the interaction between students and teachers, between students and their peers. It happens when teachers and instructors internalize their critical role in the learning process and the lives of their students, and when they have the competencies and support they need to perform their highly complex job. It happens when children are in an environment where they feel safe and protected. It happens when schools have the minimum material for the teacher to foster an engaging experience. It happens when the principal has the skills to organize the activities of teachers, parents, students, and the community. Learning means that children and youth receive the digital and technical skills they need in the labor market. It means that their education experience fosters their creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. The work of World Bank teams looks at what happens in schools and classrooms, and how it can be improved.

But societies need to clearly recognize the magnitude of the crisis. In 2019, we launched the Learning Poverty initiative to facilitate that understanding. A simple and easy-to-grasp statement defines the Learning Poverty indicator: “the share of 10-year-olds that cannot read and understand a simple text.” If education were a right enjoyed by all, the global Learning Poverty rate would be zero. It is not. At that time, it was 57 percent.

And then, in 2020, the pandemic hit. The response and recovery periods have shown immense efforts to adapt and protect learning, but also revealed weaknesses in education systems. Despite efforts of remote learning, we estimate a substantial increase in Learning Poverty—to 70 percent.

In 2023, we are still in a learning crisis, now deepened by the pandemic. Unless we dramatically improve what is happening in the classrooms at schools, institutions, and universities, we risk huge human capital setbacks.

As we reflect back on the five years since that World Development Report, we now have a better understanding, more tools, more recognition of the policies that might work, and more data. And we see many countries, states, and provinces understanding well that schooling is not learning, and implementing interventions to improve what is happening in the classroom across the whole schooling system. Not everywhere, not for everyone. Yet. But our commitment to build on what we have learned, and continue supporting their efforts, continues strong.
Looking Forward: Embracing Opportunities in Education

We are at a time when education is so critical for the global development agenda. For children everywhere, education is the key to unlocking their potential. Three out of four countries listed education among their top three development priorities in the World Bank’s most recent Country Opinion Survey. The great demand for enhancing education reflects its vital role in shaping the trajectory of societies towards peace and prosperity, and in realizing all other development goals—from poverty alleviation to climate action.

As education systems emerged from pandemic closures, renewed commitments to education were declared at the highest political levels at the UN Secretary General’s 2022 Transforming Education Summit. These pledges are welcome, and what must now follow is action. We need to seize this opportunity to build strong and resilient education systems.

To make that happen, we have to first take stock of where we are. This retrospective spotlights the accomplishments the World Bank has supported over the past five years, in its goal to ensure that all children can access high quality lifelong learning in schools and beyond—highlighting successes and reflecting on gaps, to illuminate the path ahead.

The next few years will bring significant change: for example, advances in technology will revolutionize education delivery. Youth in school today will prepare for jobs that do not yet exist. Increasing conflict will cause disruption and movement. Despite significant change, the fundamentals of successful education systems remain constant: prepared learners taught foundational skills by empowered teachers, with quality learning resources, in safe schools, supported by capable school leaders.

*Learning for everyone, everywhere* means ensuring that the most vulnerable can access education and learn, in a safe and inclusive environment. In situations of fragility, conflict and violence, we must protect those impacted and recognize education’s part in promoting stability. There have also been remarkable leaps in equitable access to education for boys and girls, but gaps remain. We must further translate girls’ gains in education to successful labor market outcomes for women.

Shocks from climate change are interrupting education and impacting learning. Yet education is a powerful lever to combat climate change, by preparing youth for green jobs, producing scientists and innovators, and changing mindsets and behaviors.

Looking forward, the World Bank will continue to expand and innovate in our role as the largest external financier of education. We are dedicated to working with our partners and clients to bring together the commitment, financing, and technical expertise needed to fight Learning Poverty and strengthen education systems in countries all over the globe. Every child deserves a chance to gain the knowledge and skills needed to prosper in our rapidly changing world. I’m excited to be helping lead that journey.

Luis Benveniste
Incoming Global Director for Education, World Bank, 2023-
Globally, countries have made tremendous progress in getting children into the classroom, and more children and youth worldwide are now in school. However, we face a longstanding global learning crisis. Simply being in school does not guarantee learning, as the World Bank’s landmark 2018 World Development Report (WDR) on Education stressed.

The rate of Learning Poverty—a World Bank measure that calculates the share of children who cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10—is now estimated to have risen from 57 to 70 percent after the COVID-19 school closures.

**Now, more than ever, is the time for greater investments in education.**

The World Bank is strongly committed to education and human capital development globally. We are the largest external financier of education programs in low- and middle-income countries, and have continued to grow our portfolio of education investments each year.

Over the last two decades, we have committed more than **US$76B** supporting education projects, covering **160 COUNTRIES AND 25 REGIONAL STATES.**

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2 This includes the International Development Association (IDA), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), and Trust Fund (TF) commitments. IDA and the IBRD together are called The World Bank. They make up the majority of projects in the World Bank Group. All dollars are in US$ unless otherwise indicated.
Our Vision

To ensure that everyone can achieve their full potential through quality education. We envision a world where all countries prepare their children and youth to succeed as citizens, and have the tools to participate in their country’s development.

Our Approach

To guide our policy and operational support to governments, we focus on actions needed to accelerate learning. Our work focuses on catalyzing systemic change in five key pillars of well-functioning education systems: learners, teachers, learning resources, schools, and overall management.

We help countries apply innovative solutions to their education challenges, focusing on systemic reform at all levels in the education cycle—from early childhood through tertiary education, and beyond.
AN OVERVIEW OF OUR GLOBAL PORTFOLIO

The World Bank’s education commitments have consistently increased over time, particularly over the last five years, and in response to the COVID-19 crisis—highlighting the growing demand for support in this sector. In recent years, the World Bank’s annual new education commitments have reached $5 billion.

**WORLD BANK EDUCATION GLOBAL PRACTICE COMMITMENTS, IDA AND IBRD ONLY, 3-YEAR AVERAGE, IN $ BILLIONS**

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.

In addition to this, since 2002 the World Bank has managed 69 percent—totaling $5.46 billion—of the Global Partnership for Education’s (GPE) portfolio.

**We provide support across all levels of education**

*World Bank Education Financing by Level of Education, FY18-23*

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3 Data includes end-June 2023 projection data, gathered on May 26, 2023.

4 Data covering six years, from World Bank Fiscal Years 2018 to 2023, as of May 26, 2023. Does not include amount allocated to ‘Public Administration in Education’ or ‘Other Education’ categories. The World Bank Fiscal Year (FY) runs from July 1 to June 30 of the next year.
$23.8 BILLION ACROSS 166 ACTIVE PROJECTS OF WHICH:

IDA
107 projects
$14.84 BILLION

IBRD
43 projects
$8.47 BILLION

Trust Funds
16 projects
$0.50 BILLION

Our investment is in all regions of the world, with our largest portfolios in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where the greatest number of students are out of school, and learning levels are the lowest. The Education Global Practice (GP) also works with multiple teams within the World Bank—including Health, Social Protection, Jobs, Governance, and Water—to maximize impact.
THE GLOBAL REACH OF OUR PROJECTS

OUR CURRENT PORTFOLIO

- 94 countries and territories
- 432 million students reached
- 18 million teachers reached
- 300+ Education Global Practice Staff representing 92 nationalities
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
GLOBAL ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND PRODUCTS

The World Bank is a global leader in producing analytical work and conducting cutting-edge research on national, regional, and global development agendas.

Our experts have significantly contributed to advance knowledge across all themes in education, and provide actionable, relevant, global, and local guidance on the largest education challenges the world faces. We have ongoing Advisory Services and Analytics (ASA) that we provide to countries, and the global community, by conducting comprehensive research and analysis on a wide range of topics within the field of education.

Since World Bank Fiscal Year 2018, we have delivered 360 advisory services and analytical work to 101 countries, and an additional 31 regional and 35 global ASAs.
Schools close globally due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the peak of the crisis, more than 1.6 billion children were out of school.

World Bank annual education lending surpasses $5 billion, with emergency COVID-19 response funding.

The first World Development Report on Education—Learning to Realize Education’s Promise—rings the alarm on the massive global learning crisis.

The World Bank launches TEACH, a core classroom observation tool piloted in over 1,000 classrooms. It is a key tool for understanding and improving teaching practices.

The World Bank launches the Learning Poverty indicator, creating a harmonized statistic that measures the share of children around the world who cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10.

EdTech Hub is launched by the World Bank, the UK’s Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), creating a research partnership focusing on harnessing the potential of technology to improve learning.

The Early Years Fellowship goes global—25 future leaders are recruited to work on early childhood education in 36 countries.

The Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel is launched, along with the first ‘Smart Buys’ report: Cost Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning.

Read@Home is launched to support 20+ countries to connect with hard-to-reach families, by providing storybooks in the languages spoken at home.

The EdTech approach paper, “Reimagining Human Connections: Technology and Innovation in Education at the World Bank” is released. It advocates for attention to five key principles when education systems invest in EdTech, and for maximizing human engagement.
2021

The Foundational Learning Compact is launched, to fund global initiatives and tools that help countries pursue systemic and sustained learning improvements.

Invest in Childcare is launched, with work in 100+ countries. It is a $100 million+ effort to scale-up investments in childcare to help build human capital.


The World Bank and key partners launch the Accelerator Program, working with governments in 10 partner countries, to accelerate progress on reducing Learning Poverty.


Delegations from 19 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region endorse the global Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning to ensure learning for all, at a conference hosted in Bogota, Colombia.

A high-level roundtable discussion among a group of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Education was hosted at the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings for the first time, on effective public spending on education.

Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning is launched—26 countries are signatories to date.

The Tertiary Education and Skills Trust Fund is launched. It focuses on improving access for youth and adults in low- and middle-income countries to relevant, quality, equitable, and resilient education and training.

The Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP) launches their updated “Smart Buys” report. It outlines how cost-effective interventions that support teachers and parents can lead to significant learning outcomes.

2022


The World Bank’s Western and Central Africa Education strategy is launched, with more than 40 ministers in attendance. It provides a roadmap to improve learning and skills development for children and youth in the region.

Transforming Education Summit held at the sidelines of the 77th UN General Assembly (UNGA). It is a landmark event calling global leaders to action on the education crisis.

The Tertiary Education and Skills Trust Fund is launched. It focuses on improving access for youth and adults in low- and middle-income countries to relevant, quality, equitable, and resilient education and training.

PART 2:
OUR GLOBAL IMPACT
EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

AT A GLANCE

CURRENT PORTFOLIO:

35 PROJECTS
$6.33 BILLION
IN EDUCATION FINANCING

Home to nearly 60 percent of Africa’s population, the diverse Eastern and Southern Africa region comprises 26 countries, stretching from the Red Sea in the north to the Cape of Good Hope in the south. The past decades have seen significant gains in access to education, but gaps persist, especially for girls in secondary school. Expansive demographic growth is creating a demand for more schools and teachers. The World Bank supports countries in building infrastructure, recruiting and training teachers, and developing teaching and learning materials to improve education quality. Equipping youth with relevant skills, and empowering girls to stay in school are also priorities in the region.

FINANCING FREE PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

Until the 2019 school year, the DRC was one of the few countries where fees were still charged for public primary school. The World Bank’s $800 million Emergency Equity and System Strengthening in Education project, running from 2020-2024, was integral in supporting the reform for primary school. Now, 3.7 million more children in the DRC have been able to go to school, increasing enrollment in public primary schools by 25 percent. The project also supports strengthening the accountability of the salary payment system for teachers.
Fifth grade primary school student Kandindi Kengela is a beneficiary in the city of Kananga, DRC.

“Studying is what makes me happy. It will allow me to become a driver, a pilot or who knows, even the President of the Republic,” he says. His mother Victorine Tshibola, added, “I want my children to finish school because school opens up their minds, makes them independent, and helps them fulfill their potential in life.”

IMPROVING EDUCATION IN TANZANIA THROUGH RESULTS-BASED FINANCING

The World Bank’s first Program-for-Results financing in education was through a $202 million project in Tanzania, that ran from 2013-2021. The project linked funding to results, and aimed to improve education quality. It helped build capacity, and enhanced effectiveness and efficiency in the education sector. Through the project, learning outcomes significantly improved alongside an unprecedented expansion of access to education for children in Tanzania. From 2013-2019, an additional 1.8 million students enrolled in primary schools.

In 2019, the average reading speed for Grade 2 students rose to 22.3 words per minute, up from 17.3 in 2017. The project laid the foundation for the ongoing $500 million BOOST project, which supports over 12 million children to enroll early, develop strong foundational skills, and complete a quality education.

“I am going to school to become a productive member of society.”
— Tshitenge Merveille, DRC, aspires to become a doctor
Home to approximately half a billion people, the population in Western and Central Africa has multiplied 4 times in the last 50 years, creating more demand for education services, as populations remain young. There have been great gains in schooling in the 22 countries that comprise the region, though gaps remain. The World Bank’s Western and Central Africa Education Strategy 2022-2025 envisions a region where all girls and boys arrive at school ready to learn, acquire real learning, and are ready to enter the job market with the right skills to become productive and fulfilled citizens. The strategy is structured around three domains: 1) Strengthening strategic leadership for long-term impact; 2) Investing in high impact interventions around three pillars: a) improving teaching and learning; b) widening opportunities; c) building job-relevant skills; and 3) Enhancing implementation capacity for long-term impact.

The $75 million Edo Basic Education Sector and Skills Transformation (EdoBESST) project, running from 2020-2024, is focused on improving teaching and learning in basic education. Under the project, which covers 97 percent of schools in the state, there is a strong focus on incorporating digital technologies for teachers. They were equipped with handheld tablets with structured lesson plans for their classes. Their coaches use classroom observation tools to provide individualized feedback. Teacher absence has reduced drastically because of the initiative. Over 16,000 teachers were trained through the project, and the introduction of technology has also benefited students.
IMPROVING THE ACCESS AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN THE GAMBIA

Through the $26.8 million Results for Education Achievement and Development (READ) project in the Gambia, access to basic education services was significantly increased, and there was a notable improvement in the quality of teaching in primary schools. In total, the project benefited over 330,000 children and teachers between the years 2014-2018. Almost 80,000 additional students enrolled in public schools and early childhood education, and through a mass distribution of textbooks for grades 1-9 in public schools, the ratio of students per textbooks dropped from 4:1, to 1:1. With the deployment of a new classroom observation tool, teachers improved teaching practices, and the number of grade 1-3 teachers who demonstrated good teaching performance, reached 83 percent by the end of the project.

“Every child wants to answer a question in class.”

Agho Amenze Gift, a primary school teacher, says that through the project, “We are seeing improvements in our children, their eagerness to learn. With new technologies, every child wants to answer a question in class.”
One-quarter of the world’s school-age children live in the 15 countries of the World Bank’s East Asia and Pacific region. Although it is home to some of the highest-performing education systems in the world, there are still countries and areas that face the persistent challenge of low learning levels. Our approach varies by country, and where education systems are still in lower stages of development, we focus on meeting basic education needs for learning in primary and secondary education. In the most developed education systems, we provide tactile support to teacher training systems, building capacity, and focusing on early childhood education and tertiary education.

TRANSFORMING HOW SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE RUN IN CAMBODIA

The $40 million Cambodia Secondary Education Improvement project, which ran from 2017-2022, focused on strengthening school-based management, upgrading teacher qualifications, and building classrooms in Cambodia, to improve learning outcomes, and reduce student dropout at the secondary school level. The project has directly benefited almost 70,000 students in 100 target schools, and approximately 2,000 teachers and 600 school administrators received training.

For example, Ngiem Sidara is a high school principal of a beneficiary school in Sihanouk province. Together with teachers from the school, he now makes home visits to students who miss school or have poor grades, helping them stay in school.
SUPPORTING LEARNING RECOVERY IN INDONESIAN SCHOOLS AND MADRASAHS

The $250 million Realizing Education’s Promise—Madrasah Education Quality Reform project has helped support learning recovery in schools and madrasahs (religious schools) across Indonesia, directly benefiting 11 million students. This project helped the Ministry of Religious Affairs respond to the pandemic by improving school sanitation facilities, integrating EdTech into schools, providing teacher training through peer working groups for learning recovery, and conducting a student learning assessment following school closures, to understand student needs.
Unprecedented shocks have hit Europe and Central Asia in recent years: from the catastrophic human tragedies caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye. These require a pivot towards improving resilience, and the World Bank works with countries to safeguard vulnerable populations and strengthen institutions. We support the 23 education systems in the region in expanding access to early childhood education, improving quality of basic education, and increasing access to higher education, linking it to the labor market.

EXPANDING ACCESS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Zafar, a six-year-old boy, confidently says he will become a doctor when he grows up. He is off to a good start. Through a $49.9 million grant from the Global Partnership for Education and implemented by the World Bank, he was able to engage in quality early childhood education activities, and join a preschool in Mallaboy village. Zafar enjoys the preschool because he can study, play and have fun; but it will also help prepare him with the knowledge and skills required for primary school which he will enroll in right after.

Through the Improving Pre-Primary and General Secondary Education project, 100,000 children have been beneficiaries of quality, stimulating early childhood education access in 2,420 rural kindergartens. That’s 49 percent of all preschool institutions in the country.
HOW HIGHER EDUCATION INVESTMENTS HELPED MONTENEGRO IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

The Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness (HERIC) project, which ran from 2012-2019, focused on strengthening innovation, research, and development—vital for economic development and job creation. Through the project, seven laboratories were created, and existing equipment upgraded. Beneficiary universities received state-of-the-art equipment for 3-D printing, scanning, and modeling. Crucially, this technology was used during the pandemic to produce face shields—key protective equipment—which were used by medical staff who treated COVID-19 patients across the country.

The $16 million project also strengthened Montenegrin participation in the international research community: 132 students received scholarships for graduate and post-doctoral studies abroad.

“Two out of eight HERIC project-funded academic centers are directly contributing to the fight against COVID-19 in Montenegro.”

— Sanja Damjanovic, former Minister of Science, April 2020

“Our pupils demonstrate various talents... We are proud of their achievements, and put our hearts and souls into their development.”

— Kholida Amonova, Director of Zafar’s preschool in Mallaboy, Uzbekistan
The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has proved resilient in the face of rising debt stress, inflation, and uncertainty. It was one of the regions with the longest school closures during the pandemic, and experienced high learning losses and increased risk of dropout. The World Bank’s response for the 30 countries in the region is focused on recovering the pandemic-related learning losses, ensuring children return to school, having key data on their learning levels, and providing support and remedial education to help them catch up. Additionally, the Bank has a strong focus on supporting higher education in the region.

**STRENGTHENING AND PROMOTING EQUITY AT UNIVERSITIES IN CHILE**

From 2017–2023, the $50 million Strengthening of State Universities in Chile project has made strides to improve the quality and equity at state universities. The project helped reduce dropout: the third-year dropout rate fell by almost 10 percent from 2018-2022, keeping more students in school.

**Rosa Devés, Dean of Universidad de Chile**, said the project also has helped the university system establish itself and overcome challenges. "We have worked on gender inequality, equity and inclusion, the quality of education, and the creation of common indicators and information for the entire system. We have learned a lot from this program, and, above all, we have changed," she said.
The $87 million Providing an Education of Quality in Haiti project supported approximately 380 schools in the Southern region of Haiti from 2016-2023. Despite a highly challenging context of political instability and recurrent natural disasters, the project successfully supported access to education for students. The project provided textbooks, fresh meals, and teacher training support to 70,000 students, 3,000 teachers, and 300 school directors. It gave tuition waivers to 35,000 students in 118 non-public schools. The project also repaired 19 national schools damaged by the 2021 earthquake, which gave 5,500 students safe access to their schools again.
Recent international data results show that the Middle East and North Africa region made progress in learning in the past five years. Yet, in parts of the 19 countries and territories that make up the region, political instability, fragility, and conflict compounded the challenges faced, as governments tried to handle the pandemic. The World Bank’s strategy focuses on tackling the learning crisis, lowering Learning Poverty, and raising learning levels for all children, including boys, who are lagging girls in learning outcomes across the region.

**INVESTING IN PEOPLE: AN ONGOING PARTNERSHIP WITH EGYPT**

The ongoing Supporting Egypt Education Reform project, 2018-2025, supports transformational reforms of the Egyptian education system, by improving teaching and learning conditions in public schools.

The World Bank has invested $500 million in the project focused on increasing access to quality kindergarten, enhancing the capacity of teachers and education leaders, developing a reliable student assessment system, and introducing the use of modern technology for teaching and learning. To date, over three million students have benefited from interventions to enhance learning.

The project contributed to Egypt ranking in the top 3 of the 57 countries and territories that participated in the 2016 and 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Specifically, the share of Egyptian 10-year-old students, who could read and comprehend at the global minimum proficiency level, increased from 31 percent in 2016 to 45 percent in 2021.
SUPPORTING EDUCATION FOR YEMENI STUDENTS DURING A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

For years the poorest country in the region, Yemen is also suffering a tragic humanitarian crisis. A third of all education facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and at least two million children are out of school.

The World Bank is co-financing the $152.80 million Yemen Restoring Education and Learning Emergency project, running from 2020-2024, which is implemented through UNICEF, WFP, and Save the Children. It is helping to maintain access to basic education for many students, improve learning conditions in schools, and is working to strengthen overall education sector capacity. In the time of crisis, the project is supporting teacher payments and teacher training, school meals, school infrastructure development, and the distribution of learning materials and school supplies. To date, almost 600,000 students have benefited from these interventions.
South Asia has a huge youth population—more than 1 in 3 of the world’s children under 18-years-old live there. The region’s eight countries have made considerable progress in increasing school attendance, but learning levels remain low, especially now due to the pandemic-related school closures.

The World Bank’s focus in South Asia is its learning recovery and acceleration strategy, aimed at the long-term objective of making education systems more resilient. The following actions are central to improve education in South Asia: start early by investing in early childhood education, align goals and actors in education systems, support girls and young women, capitalize on technology for education, and leverage the power of non-government actors in the education system.

**Improving Higher Education in Odisha, India**

The World Bank-funded $69.62 million Odisha Higher Education Program for Excellence and Equity is supporting equitable access to higher education, and improved institutional quality. The project, which runs from 2017-2024, is focused on 13 districts in the state which experience higher poverty, lower education and health outcomes, and significant disparities in access to quality higher education. The project has created seven Centers of Excellence, and 147 higher education institutions have received grants to upgrade their infrastructure and quality of teaching, with more than 500,000 students benefiting.
INNOVATING WITH SERVICE DELIVERY DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES IN NEPAL

Through the $235 million School Sector Development Program in Nepal (2017-2022), the number of children staying in school until Grade 12 nearly tripled, and the number of out-of-school children fell by almost seven percent. During the pandemic, innovative approaches were needed to continue education. Mobile phone penetration is high in the country. More than four in five households in Nepal have mobile phones. The project supported an educational service that made it possible for children with phones to connect to local radio that broadcast learning programs.

“I used to connect with my friends through a mobile phone, and now I actually use it to connect to the radio school program regularly.”

— Shikshya Kafle, who lives in Banke, Nepal, when interviewed during school closures
PART 3: SUPPORTING EDUCATION FROM EVERY ANGLE
Investing in the early years of a child’s life is one of the smartest things a country can do. Early childhood experiences have a profound impact on brain development—affecting learning, health, behavior and ultimately, lifetime opportunities.

The World Bank has substantially increased investments in early childhood education in the last five years, in response to countries’ demand. From 2019-2023, the percentage of early childhood education as a proportion of the World Bank’s education portfolio has increased from 8 percent to 13 percent, with a doubling in the actual amount from $1 billion to $2 billion.

High-quality early childhood education can help children develop the cognitive and socioemotional skills, self-regulation skills, and motivation for success in school and in life.

We work with countries to build capacity, deliver impactful operations, high-quality research, and innovative new approaches, including:

- **Measuring** early childhood outcomes in over 30 countries.
- **Delivering** storybooks to hard-to-reach families in the languages spoken at home, through our Read@Home program.
- **Investing** in more and better-quality childcare.
- **Building** capacity by recruiting young professionals for the Early Years Fellowship, who advocate for early childhood education in their countries. There are more than 50 graduates so far.
- **Catalyzing** change in 75+ countries through 157 grants totaling $28 million. These have generated more than $3.8 billion in new and more impactful finance for early childhood through the Early Learning Partnership.
- **Coordinating** across sectors to promote holistic early childhood development in countries and through our global work.
In Senegal, the $75 million Investing in Early Years for Human Development project is reaching 2.5 million children and parents, through integrated community-based nutrition and early stimulation programs. Key outcomes:

- More than 210,000 children enrolled in pre-primary education
- 220 preschool classrooms constructed
- Increased birth registration from 46 percent to more than 70 percent
- 50 percent of all children in Senegal aged 0-6 years provided with storybooks
A COMMITMENT TO FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL

Foundational learning provides the essential building blocks for all other learning, knowledge, and higher-order skills, and is at the heart of the World Bank’s work in education. It includes reading, writing, and numeracy, together with socioemotional skills. But too many students cannot read and write with understanding.

To shed light on this challenge, we introduced the concept of Learning Poverty—the percentage of children unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10. The rate of Learning Poverty is estimated to have risen from 57 percent in 2019 to 70 percent in 2022 in low- and middle-income countries—an alarming number. These estimates have created a shared understanding of the magnitude of the learning crisis, and fostered global commitment to combating it.

Over the past several years, we have advocated for strong, urgent global action to end Learning Poverty. The World Bank has directed significant global attention to the magnitude of the Learning Poverty crisis. In September 2022, the World Bank, the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, launched the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning—a mechanism for countries and organizations to demonstrate a commitment at the highest political level to foundational learning for all children.

Through their endorsement, signatories commit to taking urgent action to reduce Learning Poverty by half by the year 2030.

As of March 2023, 26 countries and 35 organizations have endorsed the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning.
In addition to advocacy, World Bank education projects have increased their focus on Learning Poverty reduction, through direct and targeted interventions on curriculum, literacy instruction and teaching practices, student assessment, and more. Projects are guided by the Literacy Policy Package, a framework of interventions that successful countries have followed to achieve fast and sustained improvements to foundational literacy at scale:

1. Assure political and technical commitment to making all children literate
2. Ensure adequate amounts of effective instruction by supported teachers
3. Provide quality, age-appropriate books and texts to children
4. Teach children first in the language they speak and understand best
5. Foster children’s language abilities and love of books and reading

MOBILIZING REGIONAL ACTION

Sierra Leone: Foundational Learning Exchange

With the World Bank as a partner, Sierra Leone launched the first Foundational Learning Exchange in 2023, where representatives from eight African countries shared their experiences, challenges and ambitions on the path to make learning a reality for all children.

“Education is not a cost, it is an investment.”

— President Bio of Sierra Leone

Colombia: A Call to Action to Reverse Learning Losses

Delegations from 19 countries in the Latin America and the Caribbean region met in Bogota, Colombia in April 2023, to endorse the global Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, to ensure learning for all.
The COVID-19 pandemic created the worst shock to education on record, and exacerbated what was already a deep learning crisis. About one billion children saw their education interrupted for more than a year. Ineffective remote learning strategies and a wide digital divide led to massive learning losses that disproportionately affected children from disadvantaged households.

The World Bank moved swiftly to support learning continuity during school closures, and since then has supported governments in addressing learning losses, accelerating the pace of learning, and building resilience to future shocks.

Through our operations, technical assistance, and global tools and solutions, we have promoted integrated, at-scale, and long-term strategies.

Our RAPID Framework for Learning Recovery and Acceleration—published with UNESCO, UNICEF, UK FCDO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and USAID, organizes a menu of evidence-based policy options for countries to return students to school and combat learning losses.

Reach every child and keep them in school

Assess learning levels regularly

Prioritize foundational learning

Increase the efficiency of instruction

Develop psychosocial health and wellbeing
The $250 million Recovering Learning Losses from COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil project supports states and municipalities to recover from school dropouts and learning losses, and strengthen school management.

> **Student dropout observatories** proactively identify students at risk of dropout and re-enroll out-of-school students

> **Targeted instruction** groups students by proficiency during dedicated hours, and provides personalized instruction in schools with disadvantaged students

> **Integrated data systems** allow the interoperability of different national and state data management systems, and promote data-informed decision-making

Students in Brasilia complete formative learning evaluations to inform a new targeted instruction program.

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**Global Tools and Resources**

- **23 remote learning resource packs** provided guidance on how to use key technologies (TV, radio, mobile phones)

- **Costing tools** helped countries in planning, budgeting, and financing school reopening and mitigating learning loss

- The **Read@Home** program developed and delivered reading, learning, and play materials in hard-to-reach homes

- **Global estimates** on the state of Learning Poverty shed light on the magnitude of the crisis and prompted action
HOW WE HELP THOSE WHO INSPIRE: TEACHERS

To make sure that all students are learning, we must change what happens inside classrooms. Teachers play the most crucial role in driving children’s learning outcomes. Improving teaching quality is key to solving the learning crisis.

In fact, the importance of teachers is so great that the difference between a high-performing and a low-performing teacher on student test scores has been estimated to be equivalent to multiple years of schooling. Yet, many children do not have access to high quality teachers.

We know, however, that poor teaching is not the fault of the teachers, but the result of system-level policies that do not appropriately recruit, prepare, support, manage, and motivate teachers.

THE GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS

The extraordinary nature of the challenge calls for an equally powerful response. The World Bank launched the Global Platform for Successful Teachers to help countries enhance their teacher policies to improve teaching and learning. The platform is built around five key principles: 1) Make Teaching Attractive; 2) Improve Pre-Service Education; 3) Improve Selection, Allocation, Monitoring and Feedback; 4) Provide High-Quality Professional Development and School Leadership; and 5) Use Technology Wisely.

The platform drives change by supporting governments with technical advice, financial support, and tools and resources. The World Bank is currently supporting the work of more than 18 million teachers, about a third of the teacher population in low- and middle-income countries.

For example, in Edo State, Nigeria, the World Bank is supporting a whole-system reform approach to accelerate the improvement of the teaching and learning processes in basic education through technology and innovation. To improve professional development and school leadership, the program uses tablets to deliver scripted lesson plans, track attendance, and provide tailored feedback to teachers. Backed by the science of learning, and the real-time monitoring of learning inputs, attendance, and learning outcomes, the program aims to ensure that teachers are fully supported in their classrooms to deliver high-quality learning.
This operational support is complemented with tools and resources publicly available to policymakers, researchers, school leaders, and teachers, that can help in the implementation of the five principles.

**Understanding what happens in the classroom.** To advance professional development programs for teachers, the World Bank developed *Teach*, an open-access, adaptable, classroom observation tool designed to help policymakers understand teaching practices. *Teach* has so far been implemented in 67 countries and 42,500 schools worldwide, involving 180,000 teachers and more than 3.6 million students.

**Supporting teachers through professional development.** The World Bank has developed *Coach*, a global initiative that supports countries to shift from traditional, ineffective in-service teacher professional development systems, to ones that use insights from the fields of adult learning and behavioral science.

**Applying global tools in a regional context.** In Punjab, *Pakistan*, adapted versions of *Teach* and *Coach* were implemented by the Government, to provide tailored and personalized feedback to teachers to help them improve their teaching. This was carried out in three phases: first by collecting data from more than 800 schools to assess current teaching practices; second, by developing a teacher mentoring program; and third, by using the observation tool in all public schools in the province, to collect and provide timely feedback on teaching practices.
The world is in the midst of a technological revolution, and children and youth need to be adequately prepared to thrive in this rapidly changing world.

The COVID-19 pandemic offered us an opportunity to rethink, reimagine, and rebuild our education systems, particularly examining the role of distance learning and technology. Education Technology or ‘EdTech’ is the use of hardware, software, digital content, data, and information systems in education. Edtech supports and enriches teaching and learning, and improves education management and delivery.

The World Bank’s Vision for EdTech is to Reimagine Human Connections to Transform Teaching and Learning for All, and supports the appropriate, cost-effective use of EdTech at all levels of education. Investing in systems of EdTech can make education systems more effective and resilient to future shocks, and help reform and reimagine the way education is delivered.

We support countries in expanding access and improving the quality of EdTech, both inside and out of the classroom.

CROSS-CUTTING SUPPORT

The EdTech Policy Academy is a hands-on clinic to engage with partner institutions and public officers on a specific challenge or priority in their countries related to EdTech, with participants so far from Brazil, Cambodia, and Mali, among others.

The EdTech Hub is a global research partnership offering support to governments across 70 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, and with deeper concentrated support in six countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania.
In Türkiye, the Safe Schooling and Distance Education project is building future resilience in the education system, by creating a new hybrid learning model with access to digital resources, and improved connectivity and access to education data. The project is also supporting the development of new learning resources, and building the capacity of teachers to effectively use these digital resources to support their work.

Evoke is a World Bank project designed to support young people to develop relevant 21st century skills (such as creativity and collaboration), socio-emotional skills (such as curiosity and empathy), and gain the confidence to experiment, collaborate, and create innovative solutions to global challenges through a project-based learning platform. The project is currently being implemented in Honduras and Colombia.
LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL: TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, TERTIARY EDUCATION, AND SKILLS

Higher Education and Skills Development are instrumental in reducing poverty and fostering growth, benefiting not only the individual, but society as a whole.

Governments are increasingly understanding that the entire educational system—from early childhood through tertiary education—must reflect the new social and economic needs of the global knowledge economy, which increasingly demands a better-trained, more skilled, and adaptable workforce.

The challenge tertiary education systems face is to dramatically increase the quality of the technical education they provide, and to have much stronger links to the job market. Universities must continue to improve their quality standards in teaching, and reduce inequity in access. They must strengthen their research partnership with the public and private sectors, to contribute to solutions of critical development challenges. All tertiary institutions must be part of a single ecosystem, which provides people with many opportunities to build their skills during their lives.

The World Bank’s education portfolio is highly diversified across projects in higher education, which represent approximately 25 percent of total education investment. This amounts to an active portfolio of roughly $7 billion in tertiary education and skills investments, in over 50 countries.
The African Centers of Excellence (ACE) is an Africa-wide program that is financed by the World Bank and implemented by governments. The project’s investment of $580 million supports over 70+ centers in 20 countries in Africa. So far over 14,000 Masters and PhD students in sciences—30 percent of them women—have been trained. Focus areas of study range from phytochemicals and textiles to water, agribusiness, and renewable energy.

The $243 million Romania Secondary Education (ROSE) project supports 80 percent of Romania’s public high schools, and 85 percent of tertiary education faculties. The project addresses factors that prevent students from successfully transitioning to tertiary education, and completing the first year of university. The project includes a range of activities to support students, such as additional tutoring, counseling, extracurricular activities, and summer internships.

“The ROSE project is innovative, as it brings together for the first time the challenges faced by both the pre-university and the higher education system in Romania in the broader context of access, quality and equity.”
— Adrian Curaj, Former Minister of National Education and Scientific Research, Romania

In Bangladesh, the $190 million Skills and Training Enhancement project improved training quality and employability of 700,000+ trainees, increasing female enrollment by 540 percent.

In the Dominican Republic, the $25 million Youth Development project trained 38,000+ at-risk youth (60 percent women) in vocational and life skills, producing positive impacts on formal employment and earnings.
Data on student learning is necessary to inform better policies and interventions in education. Without this, policymakers and stakeholders are flying blind in making decisions about students and education systems. One pillar of the World Bank’s mission to strengthen education systems has been to support countries to generate and use data on student learning outcomes. Many countries are not producing the data needed.

To address this challenge, the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF, established the Learning Data Compact to consolidate efforts to generate and use more accurate, actionable data on student learning worldwide, committing that all countries—especially low-income countries—have one quality measure of learning by 2025.

This global effort resulted in an increase in World Bank education projects incorporating large-scale learning assessments into core activities. Since 2019, 81 lending projects in our active portfolio have included financing for learning assessment activities. These projects cover all regions, and 61 are implemented in countries that receive IDA grants and lending.

Projects approved between FY19 and FY23 that finance learning assessments by region (Total = 81)

- South Asia 17%
- Middle East and North Africa 4%
- Latin America and the Caribbean 12%
- Europe and Central Asia 11%
- Eastern and Southern Africa 25%
- Western and Central Africa 24%
- East Asia and the Pacific 7%
Students taking part in an early-grade literacy activity in Ceará, Brazil, during a school visit. The state of Ceará has received international attention, given its effective implementation of integrated policies and interventions to reduce Learning Poverty, and focus on measuring student learning.
Despite enormous increases in education spending over the last 15 years, developing countries will need to almost double the share of national income devoted to education, to tackle the learning crisis and reduce Learning Poverty.

As the largest external financier of education in low-and-middle-income countries, the World Bank provides sustained and increasing investment for education globally, but also aids country governments in administering and improving efficiency of their domestic education financing.

Governments account for less than half of total education spending in low-income countries, with a significant amount still coming from households.

**Distribution of total education spending by source, year, and country income group, percentage and billions US$**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Group</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Assistance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower-middle income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Assistance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upper-middle income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>931</td>
<td>915</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Assistance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>466</td>
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<tr>
<td>high income</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development Assistance</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Interpolation was done to fill missing data and ensure comparable sample of countries in all periods.  
**Source:** Estimates stemmed from the Education Finance Watch (EFW) 2022 database.
To support national governments and ensure that education systems are adequately funded, and resources are used effectively, the World Bank launched the **Global Platform to Strengthen Education Financing Systems**. A number of innovative products have been developed under the platform and applied across our projects, including:

The **FinEd methodology and analysis** were created to identify key challenges and reform opportunities associated with financial management in education. It is an integral part of the $1 billion **Gujarat Outcomes for Accelerated Learning** program in **India**. The tool helped establish a clearer understanding of the linkages between public financial management practices, and education service delivery in the state of Gujarat.

The **Education Finance Watch** is a flagship annual report on the global state of education financing, jointly produced with the Global Education Monitoring Report, and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The report takes annual stock of global education financing, focusing on key changes and recent trends in government education budgets, Official Development Assistance, and household spending on education.

A new **Policy Academy on Education Finance** was developed in 2022 for practitioners and policymakers and focuses on: the importance of mobilizing adequate resources for education; approaches to improve efficient spending; measures to promote equitable resource use; and utilizing results-based financing in education. In **Papua New Guinea**, the Policy Academy is used for training government officials in education and finance at the national level, in order to strengthen capacity and analytical capacity across government for education financing.
Inclusive education is a critical strategy for ensuring learning for all.

Inclusive education brings a key focus to the diverse educational needs for all, including learners from poorer households and/or rural and remote communities, persons with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, refugees, sexual orientation and gender minorities, and other marginalized and/or vulnerable groups.

In the past five years, the World Bank has made huge steps towards strengthening inclusive education in its operational and analytical work, and collaborating with external stakeholders and partners at different levels. The World Bank is providing financing and analytical work to strengthen inclusive education regionally and in unique country contexts, particularly for students with disabilities. The growth of investments in inclusive education is remarkable, and by 2021 an average of 40 percent of World Bank projects in education were disability inclusive. In addition, at the Global Disability Summit in 2018, the World Bank made a strong commitment that all education programs and projects would be disability inclusive by 2025.

In Rwanda, there has been an explicit focus by the government on inclusive education, and the World Bank has supported Rwanda through a multi-donor Trust Fund Inclusive Education Initiative (IEI). This is aimed at strengthening the education sector’s ability to include students who require additional support. Key achievements of this initiative include expansion of inclusive school infrastructure, creation of audio-visual remote learning materials, expanding the capacity of stakeholders, running awareness campaigns, implementation of professional development for teachers, and development of teacher training modules, along with consistent advocacy and research for inclusive education.

The Rwanda Inclusive Education Policy Academy was also carried out in 2022-2023, and involved current and future policy makers and practitioners from the Ministry of Education, other line ministries, academia and civil society.
“…When it comes to students with disabilities, they need their special equipment, so more focus should be put on buying that equipment, getting them available for our children.”

— Rose Baguma, Director General of Education Sector Policy and Analysis, Ministry of Education, Rwanda

The Vietnam Quality Primary Education for Deaf Children project helped integrate deaf children into schools by training parents, caregivers, teachers, and deaf mentors, and creating a support community for the children. Through the project, a 4,000 Vietnamese-signs catalogue and 150 video lessons for students in grades 1–5 were developed. Almost 2,000 deaf children from 20 provinces across Vietnam were impacted through this project. The test scores of deaf students in the schools supported by the project improved significantly, with 97 percent of students passing the exams for their grade levels.

When her teachers first met Lo Mu Du Ly-Et, she had no sign language skills. Now, at age 13 and thanks to learning the sign language and engaging with learning materials developed by the World Bank project, she communicates and attends school.

“We were lucky to be able to access a good set of sign language materials suitable for primary school students, so that Lo Mu Du Ly-Et and her friends could learn quickly.”

— Nguyen Thi Ngoc Minh, Headmaster of the Lam Dong Province School for the Deaf, Vietnam
Ensuring a safe environment for children to learn is more than a mission for the World Bank, it is an urgent imperative.

There are few spheres of development with so much potential to contribute to violence prevention and peace building. Schooling, therefore, has a critical role in developing the social cohesion for stability, as well as the skill base needed for our client countries to advance in their development and achieve economic prosperity.

The World Bank, through technical assistance, loans, and grants, works in collaboration with humanitarian actors and other stakeholders to minimize these disruptions and advance education in situations of fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV).

Our education portfolio in FCV settings has grown rapidly in recent years, responding to the changing nature of conflicts around the world. In fiscal year 2022, our investment in FCV settings stood at $5.2 billion, accounting for about 22 percent of the World Bank’s education portfolio, and representing 45 projects in 26 countries. An additional $2.7 billion in funding for education in FCV countries is expected to be approved through upcoming projects.
In Afghanistan, the $100 million *Education Emergency Response in Afghanistan (EERA)* project targets out-of-school children and youth, with a particular focus on adolescent girls, through a combination of community-based education and innovative approaches. The project also implements gender-focused rehabilitation of schools by constructing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities and boundary walls, which are considered key to improving girls’ participation.

The World Bank’s education support in Ukraine in the face of the current conflict includes financing of teacher salaries, support for a remedial online tutoring program for displaced students, and reallocating $100 million to support and protect academic scholarships for higher education students. The World Bank also supports Ukrainian refugees in education systems in neighboring countries, including Moldova and Romania.
THE BEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT: EDUCATING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

There is no better development investment than girls’ education. The costs of not investing in girls’ education are steep: a World Bank study estimates that limited educational opportunities for girls cost countries between $15 trillion and $30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings.

The World Bank is committed to seeing every girl prosper in her life. Our projects support the education of hundreds of millions of girls and young women around the world. That all girls and young women receive a quality education is their human right, a global development priority, and a strategic priority for the World Bank.
We tackle key barriers that girls and young women face when trying to obtain an education. Guided by evidence on what works for girls’ education, our projects use multi-pronged approaches across areas including:

**Removing barriers to girls’ schooling**
- Our $250 million *Girls Empowerment and Learning for All* project in *Angola* provides scholarships to adolescent girls to attend school.
- The $500 million *Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment* project in *Nigeria* is providing conditional cash transfers to households for sending girls to school.

**Promoting safe and inclusive schools**
- The $500 million *Tanzania Secondary Education Quality Improvement* project helps create safe learning environments for one million students through a comprehensive safe school program. The project provides counseling services, training for school staff in gender-based violence (GBV) issues, early identification and intervention for girls at risk of dropping out, as well as safe passage to school.

**Improving the quality of education**
- The $15 million *Girls Empowerment and Quality Education for All* project in *São Tomé and Príncipe* is creating girls’ clubs after school, where they are provided with life skills training, and counseling.

**Developing skills for life and labor market success for young women**
- The $60 million *Nurturing Excellence in Higher Education* project in *Nepal* is focusing on increasing access to tertiary education for young women from low-income groups, and providing scholarships, alongside advocacy campaigns for more female enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.
- The $100 million *Côte d’Ivoire Higher Education Development Support* project provides scholarships for women in higher education, and extra tutoring support for females pursuing STEM subjects.

“When a girl is included in society, society moves forward.”
— Alice Adja, Côte d’Ivoire, aspires to become a pastry chef
Education is critical for achieving effective, sustained climate action. At the same time, climate change is adversely impacting education outcomes.

As the largest multilateral funder of climate action in the developing world, the World Bank seeks to harness the power of education for tackling climate change, and enabling a smooth green transition.

Climate change education gives young people greater awareness of climate risks, and more access to tools and solutions for addressing these risks, and managing related shocks. Technical and vocational education and training can also accelerate a green economic transformation by fostering green skills. Greening education infrastructure can help mitigate the impact of heat, pollution, and extreme weather on learning, while helping to address climate change.

The World Bank is working on an ambitious agenda to explore the relationship between education and climate change, while also generating policy-relevant and actionable guidance and operational investment, on leveraging education for effective and sustained climate action.
HOW WE INVEST IN CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION PROJECTS

In Nigeria, the $500 million Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment project is supporting school-based life skills training that will cover issues on climate change, including supporting student-led community activities to increase climate change awareness.

The $301 million Vietnam University Development project is directly fostering scientific research in the areas of renewable energy, energy engineering, environment and climate change, and high-tech agriculture.

The $375 million Multipurpose Disaster Shelters project in Bangladesh is constructing and retrofitting schools to serve as cyclone shelters, reducing the vulnerability of coastal populations to natural disasters. The project has constructed or rehabilitated over 1,000 shelters and 550 kilometers of emergency access roads.

The $50 million Uzbekistan Modernizing Higher Education project includes the implementation of innovative sub-projects being undertaken by universities to boost research on environment and climate change.

“The classroom is where we begin transforming climate knowledge into action.”

— Mere Vadai, Team Leader, Education Quality and Assessment Programme of Secretariat for the Pacific Community, Fiji
PARTNERSHIPS AND TRUST FUNDS

The World Bank leverages key partnerships and donors to bring together targeted financing to research and initiate projects in education that require targeted focus.

Currently, we have two active Trust Funds that bring together key partners, focusing on all levels of education—early childhood, primary, and secondary—through the Foundational Learning Compact (FLC), and tertiary and higher education through the Tertiary Education and Skills (TES) trust fund.

Foundational Learning Compact (FLC)

The FLC is a trust fund dedicated to strengthening global and country-level efforts to improve foundational learning for early childhood, primary, and secondary education.

The FLC funds complementary education initiatives aimed at bolstering foundational learning, while simultaneously pursuing lasting systemic change to education systems, so that all children—everywhere—can achieve quality learning. Never has an objective been so mission-critical in global education.

Early Learning Partnership (ELP)

The ELP is an associated trust fund within the FLC that leverages World Bank strengths—a global presence, access to policymakers, and strong technical analysis—to improve early learning opportunities and outcomes for young children around the world.

The ELP is designed to dramatically increase and improve evidence-based investments to globally support young children’s development.

Tertiary Education and Skills (TES)

The TES Trust Fund aims to prepare youth and adults in low- and middle-income countries for the future of work and society, by improving access to relevant, quality, equitable, and resilient education and training.

The vision of TES is to move towards an integrated tertiary education and skills ecosystem—leveraging new technology, smart financing, and flexible pathways. The World Bank is uniquely positioned to develop new insights and innovative approaches combining country, regional, and global knowledge and data.
The GEPD builds on the 2018 World Development Report framework to help countries identify priorities for investment and policy reforms in education, by collecting comprehensive data on students, teachers, classrooms, management, schools, and systems through surveys in participating countries. It uses the new data to build user-friendly dashboards for policymakers, highlighting throughout the system the areas of strength and weakness from the perspective of promoting learning for all children. The GEPD has so far been implemented in eight systems, with four more currently being finalized, and numerous others in the pipeline.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF AN EDUCATION LANDSCAPE DRIVEN BY EVIDENCE

The Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel (GEEAP), an independent expert panel co-hosted by the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UNICEF, USAID, and the World Bank, is made up of leading researchers and policymakers who have both contributed to and used evidence in education. Panelists have been drawn from multiple disciplines—including education, economics, and psychology—and countries. The panel provides guidance on all types of education interventions in low- and middle-income countries, so the panelists were selected because they have expertise in all areas of education. The panel is an independent body whose recommendations are based only on evidence, on a wide range of topics within the field of education.
The World Bank’s Accelerator Program supports governments to overcome and reduce Learning Poverty rates with focused, evidence-based action. It was launched in late 2020 by the World Bank and UNICEF, in partnership with the UK’s FCDO, USAID, UNESCO’s Institute of Statistics, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The program is working with an initial cohort of 10 states and countries with strong commitment to reducing Learning Poverty, and expects to add more countries in the coming year. Accelerator countries have made key commitments in the following four areas, which include:

**Instruction**
To provide lessons to students explicitly for developing reading skills, that are aligned with science, and are taught in languages students can understand.

**Teaching in the classroom**
To prescribe reading lessons for at least 90 minutes a day, with a focus on phonics. Teacher training to be aligned with “science of reading”, and have observations and feedback for teachers built in. To create a safe learning environment for students.

**Textbooks and Teacher Learning Materials**
Every teacher to have a lesson plan for their lessons, and every student a textbook, that are aligned with each other. Ample reading materials for students to be available.

**System Support**
The country to focus on foundational learning as a priority, develop capacity in the ministry, monitor progress towards reading targets, use the data for decision making, and ensure programs are designed to operate at scale.

The program is also facilitating knowledge exchange among governments through learning events and knowledge products, study tours, and forums.

In March 2023, delegates representing five Accelerator governments from Africa participated in a study tour of Ceará state in Brazil, to learn how it significantly improved its learning outcomes with limited resources, putting a hyperfocus on foundational skills. The African officials’ key takeaways were on the importance of the use of assessment data, merit-based recruitment, extensive in-service training and support of teachers, and incentives to ensure stakeholders are focused on the same goal.
RWANDA

With the support of the Accelerator Program, Rwanda has finalized its new Foundational Learning Strategy and implementation plan, and started to implement initiatives while its plan awaits Cabinet submission and approval. A main focus for the country is strengthening teacher performance.

The Accelerator Program is providing assistance toward reforming Rwanda’s teacher training model, supporting the design of a training program, and creating a roadmap for scaling-up the program. It is helping to improve the quality and language accessibility of textbooks and teacher guides, and carrying out improvements to the procurement process for teaching and learning materials.

SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone has launched its Zero Learning Poverty Plan and has prioritized improving literacy in its 2022–2026 Education Sector Plan. It has secured buy-in to promote foundational learning from the country’s president, signed a U.N. Commitment to Action, and hosted a high-level summit on the issue. It is also helping to establish a south-to-south learning platform to share data and research with other African countries.

The Accelerator Program partners are assisting the country to deliver a core foundational learning package, including ensuring that all students have their own text and workbooks, and all teachers their own teacher guide and lesson plan.
Investing in education is investing in the future potential of the world. No country will be able to succeed without an investment in its people, and education must remain an international priority to reduce poverty, and achieve meaningful global development.

Education is the great equalizer. It gives hope and inspiration for a better life. The current global landscape is characterized by a changing climate, shifting geopolitics, and lingering impacts of a pandemic on economies and societies. We need to put education front and center as a key tool for delivering a better, livable future for all of us, by investing in the people who will need to solve the world’s biggest challenges. Young people need the tools and knowledge to make this future happen.

We have an obligation to help them develop to their full potential, and to prepare them to contribute positively to their communities, their countries, and the planet.

While many countries have made great strides in boosting access to schools for children and youth, progress still needs to be made on what and how well they are learning in the classroom.

It is important for us to recognize how our spending and investments translate into delivering outcomes: how our funding will give more children the opportunity to receive an education; how much we will be able to improve foundational skills for our students; how we will prepare our youth for the jobs of the future, and give them the skills to better their lives and livelihoods; and how we will empower them to tackle climate change.

It is no exaggeration to say that the future of the world depends on how well we educate our children.

Education must remain an international priority to realize meaningful global development on a livable planet.
The World Bank will continue financing and advocacy for education, with a particular increased focus on:

**Foundational Learning**
We will continue to put learning at the center of all of our work. We have ambitious targets to reduce Learning Poverty and increase the number of children who attain foundational skills that are critical for all future learning, and enable them to reach their full potential.

**Skills Development & Tertiary Education**
In a changing world, we are committed to delivering programs that equip children and youth with skills they will need for their future. We will continue to work to improve and reform systems at higher levels of education to ensure they prepare students with job-relevant skills.

**Climate Change and Education**
Climate change will continue to be the biggest challenge of our lifetime. The urgency and scale of the crisis requires us to act quickly to mitigate and adapt. The education sector can play a catalytic role by reshaping mindsets and behaviors, and investing in skills and innovation. The World Bank will continue to provide financing and analytical work to ensure that catalytic role is realized.
We will continue to strengthen inclusive education that meets the diverse educational needs of all learners. Our focus will be on advancing commitment to inclusive education through country dialogue, promoting focused support for children with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities, and meeting our pledge to ensure all World Bank operations are disability-inclusive by 2025.

By 2030, more than half of the world’s extreme poor will live in FCV-affected countries. Our focus will be on meeting the educational needs of children and youth who don’t have access to traditional schooling, including refugees and other displaced youth, and capitalizing on partnerships with humanitarian and other organizations in hard-to-reach places.

Achieving gender equality through education is key to the success of any country. We will continue to work through our projects to ensure all girls and young women are given access to school through higher levels of education, and reduce the barriers they face that prevent them from realizing the gains of their education in the labor market.

Girls’ Education

Inclusive Education

Protecting Education in Fragility, Conflict and Violence
NOW I CAN DREAM...
The Stories behind the Stats

16-year old Folauhola (Folau) Fakatene is a Form 6 (Year 12) student at Mailefihi College, on Tonga’s island of Vava’u. Folau scooped several awards for the 2022 academic year including overall Dux award for Mailefihi College. Yet Folau’s education journey hasn’t always been smooth sailing.

"Mum always reminded us just to always do our best in school because our education is our future. That’s why I must study hard and that’s what motivates me.

It hasn’t been easy for me and my family; especially after my dad passed away when I was only two years old, leaving my mother to provide for me and my siblings.

I’d like to be a banker, but I also want to be a teacher, because I want to be able to help other students who may also be facing challenging times, in the same way my teachers have helped me through my own challenges too.”

— Folauhola (Folau) Fakatene, Student at Mailefihi College, Tonga

“My mother and grandmother never went to school because they got married too early. I am fortunate to have received a scholarship to pursue my studies. Learning to write is not easy, but I will get there.”

— Innayatou Souradji, Niger
Investing in Future Generations: the key to Progress

Durlabh Ashok is an award-winning youth leader recognized by the United Nations in 2019 for his grassroots climate action interventions.

“I have a vivid memory of my 5th grade science class where we learned about polar bears standing on thin, melting ice. At the time, I didn’t know this was connected to climate change. But that image has stuck with me ever since. Education can encourage people to change their attitudes and behavior. It also helps them to make informed decisions.

Education empowers all people but especially motivates the young to take action.”

— Durlabh Ashok, Founding Director, Youth Embassy

Cyprian Syeunda graduated with a Master of Science in Food Science and Technology from Kenya’s Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture & Agribusiness Management. Named “Best Master’s Student,” his next stop is Texas A&M State University, where he has won a scholarship to pursue a PhD in Food Science and Nutrition. Cyprian has benefited from the IDA-supported Eastern & Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACEII) project.

“We share in this excellence and grateful for the World Bank funding that has made this possible. If it were without the support, probably I would not have made it to this level.”

— Cyprian Syeunda, Kenya

“As a child, I dreamt of learning how to use the computer and graphic design. We never had a computer in our home. I first saw a computer and learned how to operate it after joining the Dhaka Mahila Polytechnic Institute.”

— Sadia Afring, STEP program beneficiary from Rajshahi, Bangladesh

“I came from a very small village to study at the Dhaka Mahila Polytechnic Institute. My father died in 2013 and I had to struggle to get by, to get here to study computer technology. My dream is to open a programming firm in the future to help kids who had to struggle like I did.”

— Kamrul Nahar Omi, STEP program participant, Bangladesh

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