THE EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP:
Delivering quality early learning for children around the world

What is the Early Learning Partnership?
The Early Learning Partnership is a multi-donor trust fund managed by the World Bank. Our goal is to improve early learning opportunities and outcomes for young children. We work with countries to build programs, policies and research that deliver an impact on a global scale.

World Bank finance and analytical work are driven by the government priorities in each country. Once a request is received from a government, World Bank staff will work with the government to design projects or research to address priority areas. In this context, our ELP team works with World Bank staff and governments to promote early learning and to meet countries’ needs through research, policy planning, project design and project finance.

With our cost-effective investments, we influence early childhood programs and policies around the world. The ELP has two streams of work:

- Direct funding for country level activities through a competitive process helps countries achieve their early learning goals. Our first $2 million in grants has leveraged more than $53 million in new funding for early learning and ECD in 14 countries. We’re expanding rapidly, with more than 30 country programs approved to date.

- Global analytical work and action research improve existing programs and identify innovations to fill knowledge gaps. We work with partners to identify information needs and opportunities to contribute to the global evidence base of what works to scale access to quality early learning.

Partnering for Success and Building Capacity
Partnership is core to our approach. We work with governments, development agencies, academic institutions, civil society and, ultimately, communities and families. We work closely with other international agencies, including: UNICEF, UNESCO and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to coordinate efforts and share promising approaches.

We work with countries and partners to build the capacity needed to scale access to early learning and ensure quality.

Our Research Agenda
Our ambitious work program addresses pressing issues in early learning, including:

- Engaging the non-state sector
- Investing in early learning to build future skills
- Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO)
- Workforce development and teacher training
- Operational research and process and impact evaluations to help countries get to scale
How does the Early Learning Partnership work at the country level?

Our approach is simple. We invite World Bank colleagues and partners in countries to apply for funding to support early learning and ECD in their work programs. Through this competitive process, we respond to specific country needs and opportunities, stimulate creativity, and ensure that funding goes where it can be used most effectively. In some cases, the World Bank staff and government partners have a clear idea of what they want to achieve and just need funding to get the work off the ground. In other cases, they need help to consider the best approach to address the country’s early learning challenges—in these cases the ELP team works closely with them to identify possible solutions.

From 2012-2014, we invested $2 million in 14 countries, resulting in eight new projects developed and $53 million in new funding leveraged to support early learning and ECD.

From 2012-2014, the ELP invested $2 million in 14 countries to support early learning and ECD. This financing is being used to stimulate new approaches to early learning, conduct research to find approaches that work, support national planning and develop and launch new projects for ECD and early learning. The funding has played a catalytic role in a number of countries, resulting in eight new early learning and ECD activities within World Bank and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) projects. We include here examples from a few countries to illustrate the way we work.

## CASE STUDIES: Impact at the Country Level

### INNOVATION IN BURKINA FASO:

**Using technology to deliver preschool in rural areas**

**THE CHALLENGE**

Fewer than 4% of young children are enrolled in pre-primary education in Burkina Faso, and fewer than 25% of preschool teachers are trained.

In this context, how can the Government of Burkina Faso increase access to early learning and ensure programs are of high quality as they expand?

**THE APPROACH**

The ELP provided $35,000 and technical support. This collaboration resulted in the development of a unique $2 million early childhood education component within a new World Bank education project. Specific project activities include:

- Developing and launching an interactive audio instruction program for 3 and 4-year-old children
- Delivering continuous teacher training through the interactive audio instruction program, which is designed to provide untrained teachers with continuous guidance and reinforcement.

**THE IMPACT**

- Immediate impact: During the project lifetime, 15,000 new children will be enrolled in preschool and 600 teachers will receive training.
- Investing for the future: Interactive audio instruction can be delivered in very remote areas at a cost of a few dollars per child per year, making it highly scalable and affordable. The project includes a teacher certification system through interactive audio instruction, which will provide a cost-effective and feasible option to significantly expand teacher-training options in rural areas. The ELP team has developed a toolkit to provide guidance for other countries interested in interactive audio instruction for preschool. This resource is already being used in several countries.

### A WIN-WIN IN LIBERIA:

**Investing in young women while improving teacher training for early childhood education**

**THE CHALLENGE**

Conflict and poverty in Liberia disproportionately affect women and children. Liberia has a strong legacy of preschool education—however, fewer than half of all children are enrolled in preschool. Constraints to increasing access include costs of programs and low supply of trained preschool teachers.

In this context, how can we develop an approach that provides young women with professional opportunities while at the same time producing more trained preschool teachers?

**THE APPROACH**

The ELP partnered with the Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI), a global program that promotes the transition of young women from school into productive employment. With an investment of $40,000, we studied the feasibility of adding a new course for young women to become preschool teachers or to open a childcare center as a small business. ELP support also identified ways to improve the quality of childcare available to trainees with their own young children.

**THE IMPACT**

- Immediate impact: 240,000 households and nearly 2 million of the most vulnerable people in Niger are expected to benefit from the program. More than 95% of cash transfer beneficiaries participate in the parenting education and indicate high retention of messages and appreciation for the training. An impact evaluation is ongoing, which will provide detailed results in late 2015.
- Investing for the future: Parents coming to receive their cash transfer now attend community meetings with important and actionable information to improve children’s development—equipping parents with both knowledge and money to support their children. This program has served as a model and currently is being replicated in three other countries in Africa.

### WORKING WITH PARENTS IN NIGER:

**Educating parents to promote child development**

**THE CHALLENGE**

In Niger, just 6% of children are enrolled in preschool and families struggle with high levels of stunting and poverty. In 2012, the World Bank worked with the Prime Minister’s Office to develop a cash transfer program to support families most in need.

In this context, our colleagues saw an opportunity: could we incorporate parenting education into the cash transfer program to better support young children?

**THE APPROACH**

The ELP invested $90,000 to develop parenting education classes and train community workers to deliver parenting education each month when parents get their cash transfer.

**THE IMPACT**

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What’s next for the Early Learning Partnership?

Based on the ELP’s initial success, the program is expanding substantially to increase investments in early learning and ECD around the world. The Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) has committed $20 million to expand programming in Africa and South Asia. The United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DfID) has committed $7.5 million to expand ELP’s research capacity. This funding will generate high-quality research to support evidence-based decisions that will increase access to quality early learning. A heavy emphasis will be placed on actionable research and ensuring linkages to policies and programs. In addition to the global research program, three to five focus countries will be selected for in-depth work.

These are exciting new commitments and opportunities. The needs are immense and the ELP will continue to work with partners to leverage additional investment to increase scale, ensure quality and promote equity.

We recently approved 14 new proposals, allocating $1.8 million to finance exciting new early learning activities in Africa and South Asia. These new proposals take different approaches to address a variety of challenges, including:

- **Afghanistan**: ELP funding will be used to conduct a national early learning assessment and to support the Government to develop a national ECD strategy and costed implementation plan.

- **Mozambique**: Following a groundbreaking impact evaluation of ECD activities in Mozambique in 2012, the Government has decided to use World Bank funding for a $40 million ECD project. As this program goes to scale, we will finance a process evaluation to ensure that lessons learned are documented and widely available. ELP funding will also be used to support field supervision of joint nutrition and ECD interventions through the project.

- **India**: ELP financing will be used to work in several states to improve the quality and alignment of ECD and early learning services across different sectors and Government programs.

- **Tanzania**: The Government of Tanzania has just announced that one year of pre-primary school will become compulsory. The ELP team will work with the Government and partners to support this massive policy shift, including: developing a costed implementation plan, conducting a national survey of the early childhood teacher workforce and providing support to the country’s ECD Working Group to promote cross-Ministry and public-private cooperation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION about the Early Learning Partnership, please contact Amanda Devercelli (ELP, Task Team Leader) at adevercelli@worldbank.org. To be added to the Early Learning Partnership’s Mailing List, please write to earlylearningpartnership@worldbank.org