EDUCATION OVERVIEW

CONTEXT

Education is a powerful driver of development and is one of the strongest instruments for reducing poverty and improving health, gender equality, peace, and stability. Although there has been great progress in the last decade—many more children attend schools and girls’ education has markedly improved—[59 million children are still out of school](2013) and 250 million cannot read or write although many have been to school. Education has large, consistent returns in terms of income and counters widening inequality, but this potential is too often unrealized due to alarmingly low learning levels. Providing all children with a quality education that teaches them skills for work is critical to end poverty by 2030.

STRATEGY

In recent years, the World Bank redoubled efforts to help countries meet the education MDGs, with an increased focus on learning, as outlined in the Education Sector Strategy 2020, “Learning for All.” The strategy emphasizes that the knowledge and skills youth gain through learning help lift them out of poverty and drive development. Countries are encouraged to “invest early” because foundational skills acquired early help lifelong learning, “invest smartly” in efforts proven to improve learning, and “invest for all” children and youth.

World Bank support to education focuses on areas that matter to developing countries:

- Increasing innovative Results-Based Financing in responding to country demand.
- Ramping up Early Child Development investments to enable a lifetime of learning and raise future productivity.
- Ensuring that children who are in school are actually learning foundational skills.
- Lowering barriers to quality education for girls and children from disadvantaged communities.
- Fixing the wide disconnect between skills development, higher education and the labor market.
- Addressing systemic issues at all levels, to increase efficiency and transparency.

It is important for education systems to provide students at all levels with the skills necessary to promote productivity and growth.

Investing in young children (from birth to age 5) before they even enter primary school—ensuring they have the right stimulation, nurturing and nutrition—is one of the smartest investments a country can make to address inequality, break the cycle of poverty, and improve outcomes later in life. The “Stepping Up Early Childhood Development” report is a practical guide for policymakers and practitioners about how to invest in young children.

Quality education can only be achieved with excellent teachers. A 2014 report, “Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning in Latin America and the Caribbean”, distills the latest evidence and practical experience with teacher policy reforms.

To help increase labor market productivity, the World Bank examines how education can play a role in addressing the skills mismatch present in many countries around the world. The Skills Toward Employment and Productivity (STEP) skills measurement survey is shedding light on skills gaps and

The World Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) platform has been widely used around the world, producing over 100 reports that help countries assess their education policies and identify actionable priorities.

Achieving learning for all also means moving beyond financing the inputs that education systems need, to strengthening these systems to deliver results. There is growing demand from countries for Results-Based Financing, which is a promising set of tools to help achieve better alignment of incentives and desired outcomes by making financing contingent on the achievement of pre-agreed results. This approach has shown promise and could help countries leverage the financial resources needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. In May 2015, the World Bank committed to double its Results-Based Financing support for education to US$5 billion over the next 5 years.

Finally, the World Bank conducts and supports rigorous impact evaluations to generate stronger evidence about what works in education under different conditions. In Africa, Service Delivery Indicator (SDI) surveys track performance and quality of service delivery in education and health across countries and over time. At a global level, the World Bank’s EdStats website features more than 2,500 internationally comparable education indicators on access, completion, learning outcomes, expenditures, and more.

RESULTS

During the period 2000 to 2015, the World Bank invested US$40 billion in education. Over the period 2000-2015, the share of education in World Bank lending has doubled from 5 percent to about 10 percent, showing the importance of education in the overall portfolio.

The World Bank’s lending for education for fiscal year 2015 was US$4.3 billion, as compared to an average of US$3.3 billion a year over the past 10 years. The Bank’s current active education portfolio is US$14 billion. In many countries, World Bank funds are also helping to crowd in much larger resources from governments, as well as other development partners, resulting in harmonized education programs and lower transaction costs for governments.

These are some of the World Bank’s education results at the country level:

In the three Ebola-affected countries (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone), approximately 18,365 schools are benefiting from World Bank support as they reopen after the crisis.

In Bangladesh, incentives rolled out through our Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project in the poorest 125 sub-districts have included poverty-targeted student stipends, student financial awards for academic performance, remedial support, and better water and sanitation. Secondary enrollment among the poorest children has gone up by a net 27% and the secondary pass rate from 55% (2008) to 85% (2014) in the project areas.
In **India**, 78% of public school teachers working in elementary schools are now receiving improved in-service training, up from 50% in 2012. In addition, under the Third Elementary Education Project, 85% of schools now have separate toilets for boys and girls, up from 72% in 2012.

In **Indonesia**, more than half a million children aged 0-6 in poor, hard-to-reach districts received early childhood education between 2007 and 2013. Under the Bermutu project (2007-2013), over 1.7 million teachers have acquired the mandated four-year college degree.

In **Pakistan**, the first country to use Results-Based Financing in an IDA education project, the Second Sindh Education Reform Project has recruited 16,800 teachers through a test, merit and need based recruitment process.

In **Vietnam**, tuition subsidies were given to more than 8,000 poor students to attend non-public upper secondary schools and professional secondary schools. Using a results-based aid approach, the project linked the payment of a tuition subsidy with student performance. This helped increase access to upper secondary school education and reduce dropout rates among disadvantaged students in 12 provinces.

In **Jamaica**, Results-Based Financing has been used in the Jamaica Education Transformation Capacity Building Program, resulting in an improvement in Grade 4 numeracy from 45 percent of students in 2009 to 58 percent in 2014 and Grade 4 literacy from 70 percent to 78 percent. Going forward this approach is also being used to improve school readiness in four-year-olds, through the Early Childhood Development Program benefitting 300,000 young children.

In **Nigeria**, the World Bank supported government efforts to expand access to post-basic education, primarily through the Lagos Eko Project, which was completed in December 2015. Senior secondary school students’ grades in Lagos state surpassed expectations, and the proportion of students obtaining grade B and above in science and technology was more than double the expected result.

In **Bangladesh**, program interventions which have financing linked to measurable targets – have led to the primary level completion rate from 55% in 2011 to 79% today and are expected to enhance learning levels over the next few years.

In **Bulgaria**, nearly 80 percent of the vulnerable children (including ethnic Roma) who received early childhood education under the Bulgaria Social Inclusion project successfully passed the school readiness diagnostic tests, compared to just 40 percent before the start of the project.

In **West & Central Africa**, 19 “Africa Centers of Excellence” are supported at universities in 7 countries on science-related subjects that are critical for Africa’s development, e.g. crop science, water and sanitation engineering, communicable diseases, among others. These centers serve students from the entire sub-region, helping achieve cost efficiency.

**PARTNERS**

The World Bank collaborates closely with United Nations (UN) agencies and development partners and will strongly support countries as they work towards the news Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030).
The World Bank, a member of the Global Education First Initiative, organized and co-hosted several high-level Learning for All events. The World Bank was also a co-convener of the World Education Forum (May 2015; Incheon, Korea)—the most important global event on education in a decade.

The World Bank was instrumental in creating the multi-donor Global Partnership for Education (GPE), an important partner in basic education, in 2002. Efforts to better coordinate education financing from GPE and the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank’s fund for the poorest countries, are underway.

The World Bank partners with bilateral donors, for example, with Norway, the United States, and Germany for the Results in Education for All Children (REACH) program, which will support the efforts to build evidence on RBF in education. Through the Russia Education Aid for Development trust fund), the World Bank has supported activities to strengthen student assessment systems.

Other trust fund partners include Australia, the European Commission, Ireland, Korea, the Netherlands, Japan, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

The World Bank is also working with new partners including Teach for All, the Arab World Initiative, the Early Childhood Consultative Group, the Building Evidence in Education (BE²) Group, and the Global Compact on Learning Donor Network.