



BASIC EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND

Life-long learning begins with the mastery of reading and extends upward into higher skill areas that are a “must have” for individual and national development. High illiteracy impedes economic and social progress. In Mozambique, 40% of adults over 15 cannot read and write and female literacy lags far behind male literacy at 33%. With half the population under 15, education is important to continuing gains in peace and well-being and to enable the country to attract investment.

KEY CHALLENGES

Quality of primary education: A rapid increase in access to schooling and student enrollment put pressure on the primary school system. Teacher absenteeism, high student/teacher ratios, limited instruction time result in poor learning and exacerbate high drop-out rates. The mean number of years of schooling for males is 4.6 and for females is just 2.5. (HDI 2016). A minority Muslim population was found to have higher numbers with no formal schooling at all. Mozambique has made tremendous progress in terms of access to primary school but the quality of basic education is a challenge.

Acute learning crisis: An Early Grade Reading Assessment (2010) sponsored by USAID in 49 schools showed that 59% of third grade school students could not read a single word nor recognize any letters per minute and 33% could only read from one to five words per minute (international benchmark for most languages is 60 words per minute by grade 3). Data from a 2016 national learning assessment indicate that only 4.9% of grade 3 children can read and understand grade level text.

USAID closely collaborates with the Ministry of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) to measurably improve early grade reading outcomes. This approach includes training teachers and administrators, improving learning materials, using reading diagnostic tools, and involving parents and communities in the promotion of reading. USAID provides national policy and planning support to the government and delivers assistance in two large, highly populated, low-income provinces where other U.S. health and development assistance programs allow for synergy with the education interventions for greater effectiveness.

PROMOTING EARLY GRADE READING

USAID's *Aprender a Ler* (Learn to Read) pilot activity (2012-2016) demonstrated significant evidence-based progress in improving reading outcomes in the challenging environment of northern Mozambique. The project trained teachers in reading instructional methods in over 1200 schools, tested newly developed materials and worked with School Directors on management approaches and tools to reduce teacher absenteeism. USAID's impact evaluation demonstrated that across all

measures, students in *Aprender a Ler* treatment schools outperformed counterparts in control schools. Based on lessons learned from this pilot project, USAID worked with the MINED to institute new policy changes for more effective early grade teaching and learning.

In 2016, USAID launched **Vamos Ler!** (Let's Read!), which is focused on improving early grade reading outcomes in approximately 2,800 schools, 800,000 pupils and 11,000 teachers in Nampula and Zambézia provinces. Children in grades 1 to 3 are taught to read in their mother tongue while acquiring skills in Portuguese as a second language. Global evidence has shown that most children who attend school in resource-deprived contexts, learn to read more efficiently and effectively in languages they speak and understand. With better learning outcomes, they are motivated to learn and less likely to drop out of school. *Vamos Ler!* also engages families, communities and local civil society organizations in promoting the importance of early grade reading.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

USAID partners with the Peace Corps and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve student learning and strengthen parental and community engagement in literacy activities.

Over 33 **Peace Corps Volunteers** in nine provinces promote reading by providing after-school tutoring and establishing community libraries.

Eu Leio (I Read) trains district networks in the use of Community Report Cards and other tools to identify gaps and advocate for better school service delivery. Eu Leio also works with teachers to produce teaching and learning materials and improve their teachings skills by using complementary reading books.

Associação de Fortalecimento Comunitário (UATAF-AFC) promotes community engagement in support of early grade reading in selected districts of Nampula and Zambezia by working with PTAs to improve teacher accountability and advocate for more reading instruction.

Special Focus on Girls: With additional support from PEPFAR, a USAID grant to the local NGO **Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo para Povo** (ADPP) enables over 2,500 adolescent girls to complete primary school and go on to secondary school. Some 250 teachers, school council members and community leaders are trained in gender-responsive pedagogy, gender-based violence preventions and child protection, mentoring, and improving school infrastructure and social conditions that enable and encourage female students to attend and stay in school.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Approximately one million children in reading programs and nearly 3,500 schools receive administrator and teacher training.
- USAID is supporting multi-disciplinary teams in the development of effective instructional approaches and engaging reading materials in local languages and Portuguese.
- Over three million new high-quality teaching and learning materials have been distributed in recent years throughout the primary school system.
- Many education sector actors are adopting USAID's school management, early grade reading assessment instruments and project materials across Mozambique resulting in increased oversight and accountability for improved school governance.