



OLA is part of EDC's toolkit for early reading programs for children and youth. For more information on ReadRightNow!, go to <http://rrn.edc.org/>.

# Meet OLA: EDC's Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment

**The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history. In low resource countries, it is vulnerable youth—including girls, persons with disabilities, refugees, and youth living in poor or rural areas—who are feeling these disruptions most profoundly.**

As educators and policymakers in these communities begin to create equitable and inclusive pathways back to school, they will need reliable tools to assess the literacy

skills of returning youth, to place them at the appropriate levels, and to measure learning gains.

EDC's Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment (OLA), is a robust tool that quickly measures the foundational literacy skills of older youth and adults. Backed by evidence, OLA has been approved by experts in international assessment, psychometrics, adult literacy, and second-language acquisition. USAID has also selected OLA as a suggested reading assessment tool for measuring youth reading skills.

## WHAT DOES OLA DO?

OLA assists with data collection for evaluation, accountability reporting, and program management and implementation, providing educators with an effective way to assess participants' literacy skills and to build appropriate benchmarks into literacy initiatives. OLA:



**Orally assesses foundational reading skills**, including letter naming, word recognition, and connected text reading and comprehension



**Is designed for older youth and adults**, particularly those who are living in extreme poverty or post-conflict environments



**Incorporates real-life reading items**, such as locating words or information on medicine labels, into assessments, allowing for the assessment of youth's functional literacy skills



**Builds on reading research and best practices** in adult literacy instruction



**Can be modified** for different alphabetic languages and cultures

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**How is OLA used?** OLA is used as a diagnostic and evaluative tool with youth enrolled in literacy and non-formula basic education programs. It also provides data that can be used to inform development and revision of instructional approaches, curriculum, and materials. Demographic data allows for the analysis of literacy skills among subgroups, such as male/female learners, language groups, and youth from different school completion levels.

**How is OLA administered?** OLA is administered individually and takes approximately 15 minutes per respondent. During the testing, each respondent is provided with print stimuli with text and pictures, and

the test administrator records responses on a tablet, laptop, or mobile device.

**Where has OLA been used?** OLA has been used to collect data in Liberia (in English), Sierra Leone (in English), Rwanda (in Kinyarwanda), Mali (in Bambara and Songhai), Guyana, and Ethiopia.



For more information, contact EDC's International Basic Education Team at [intl-basic-ed@edc.org](mailto:intl-basic-ed@edc.org).

## PRAISE FOR OLA

"It's a strong tool for assessing literacy skills, in particular the task that addresses real-life reading skills. Participants could instantly relate to images and texts sourced from their daily lives, for example, Liberia's \$10 bill, a bag of rice, a building's opening hours, etc. I think it provides a more informed picture of the learner's ability and skills based on their lived experiences."

-Pauline Tee-tee Browne,  
USAID Advancing Youth Project,  
Liberia

"At the beginning of Skye Guyana Work Ready Now, we quickly realized that many of our youth beneficiaries were struggling with reading course materials. Many of our participants were not starting from scratch, but we needed to pinpoint where they were at. Through using OLA, we learned the intricacies of assessing literacy, especially of youth. The OLA subtask results gave us an appreciation of how they had used their problem-solving skills to navigate literacy in their environment."

-Ann Hershkowitz,  
SKYE Program, Guyana

"Using OLA in Sierra Leone helped IRC assess participants' real world and prior knowledge. This is not always captured by standard literacy tests. OLA helped identify where the key competencies were, and where we needed to adapt our program to ensure our beneficiaries needs were met. The OLA findings helped inform ongoing research on alternative education practices and policies in Sierra Leone."

-Michelle Kearns,  
EAGER program, Sierra Leone



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