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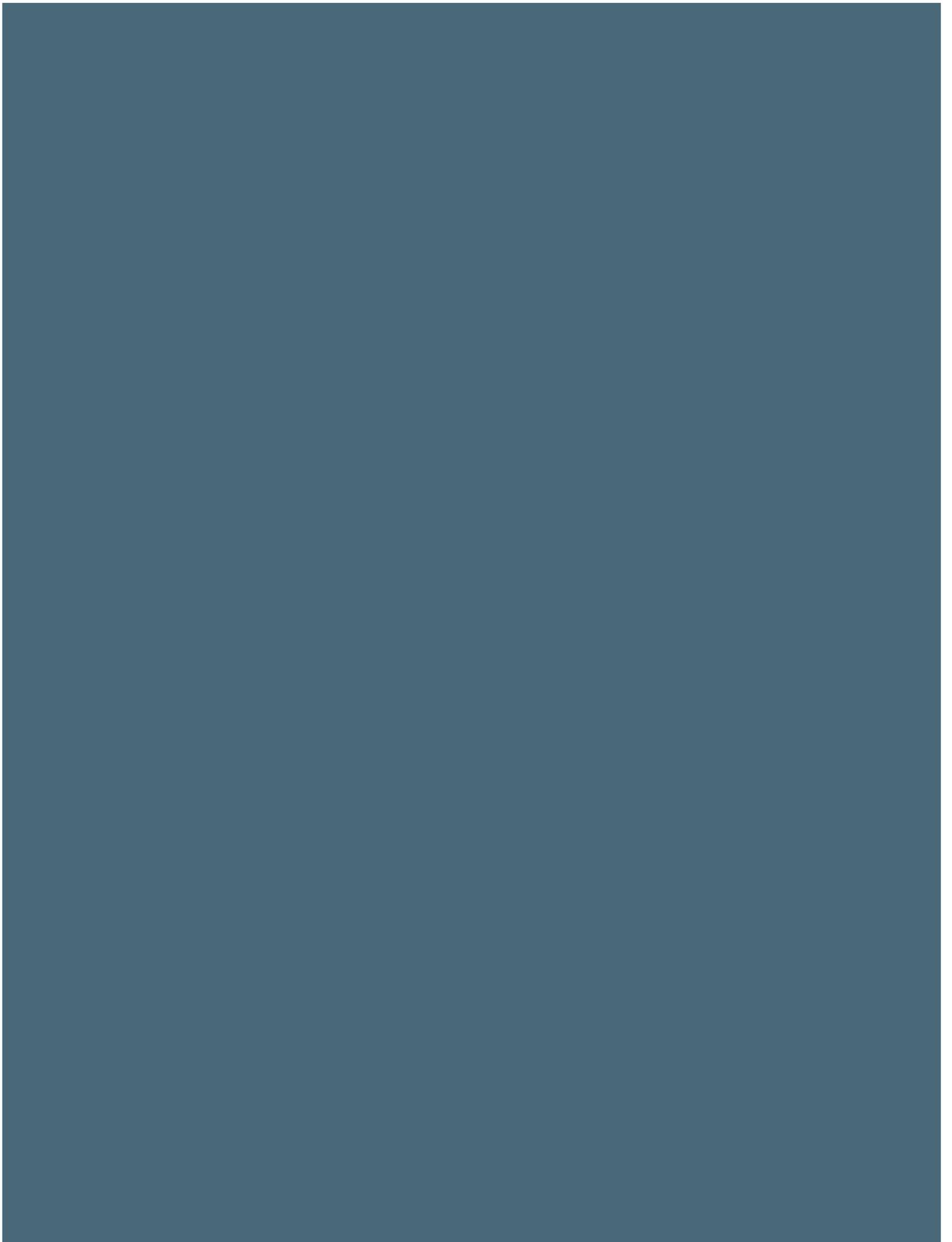
Guides and Toolkits Series

# Literacy for Out-of-School Youth: A Program Guide



Educational Quality  
Improvement Program 3

Engaging and Preparing  
Youth for Work, Civil Society,  
and Family Life



# Literacy for Out-of-School Youth: A Program Guide

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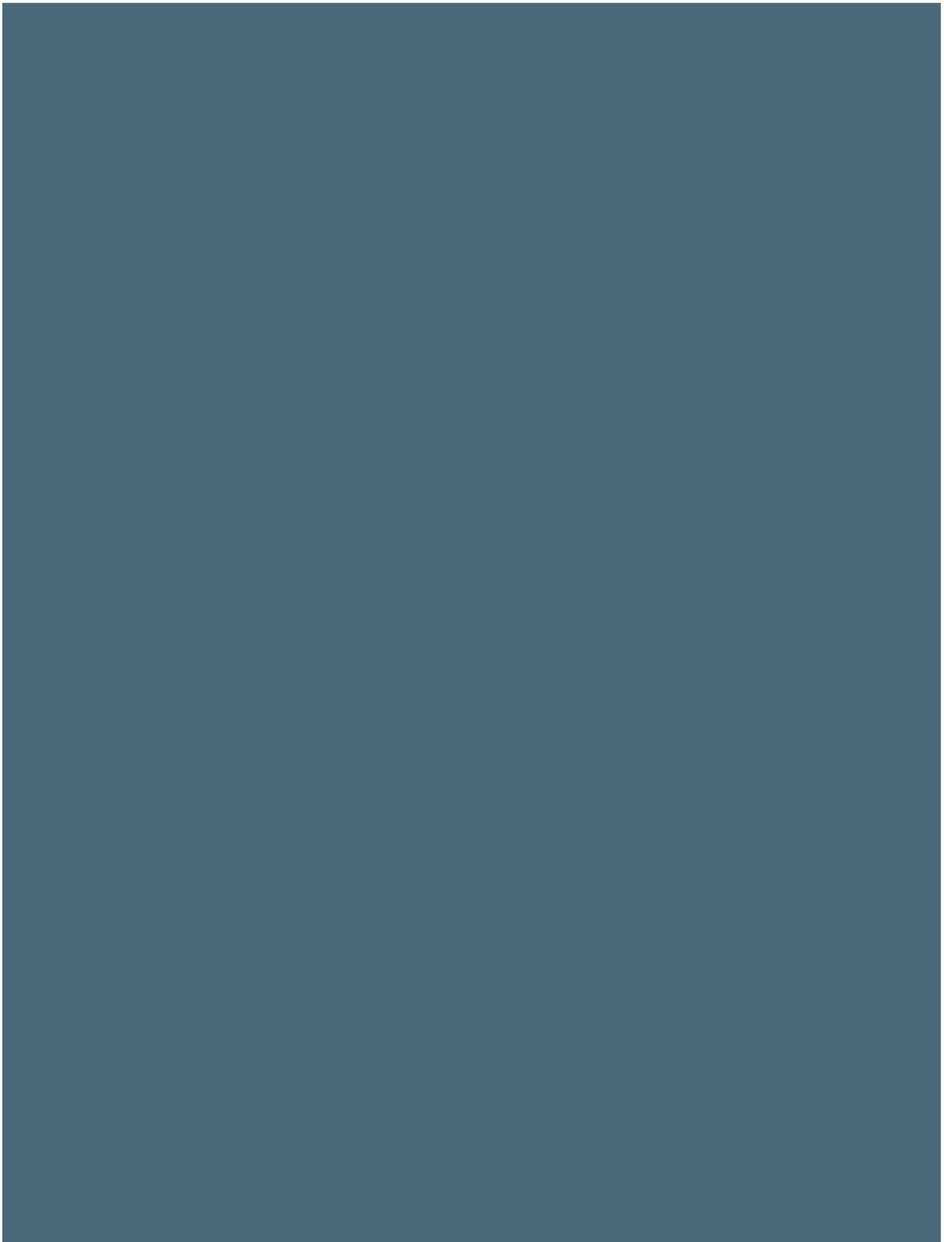
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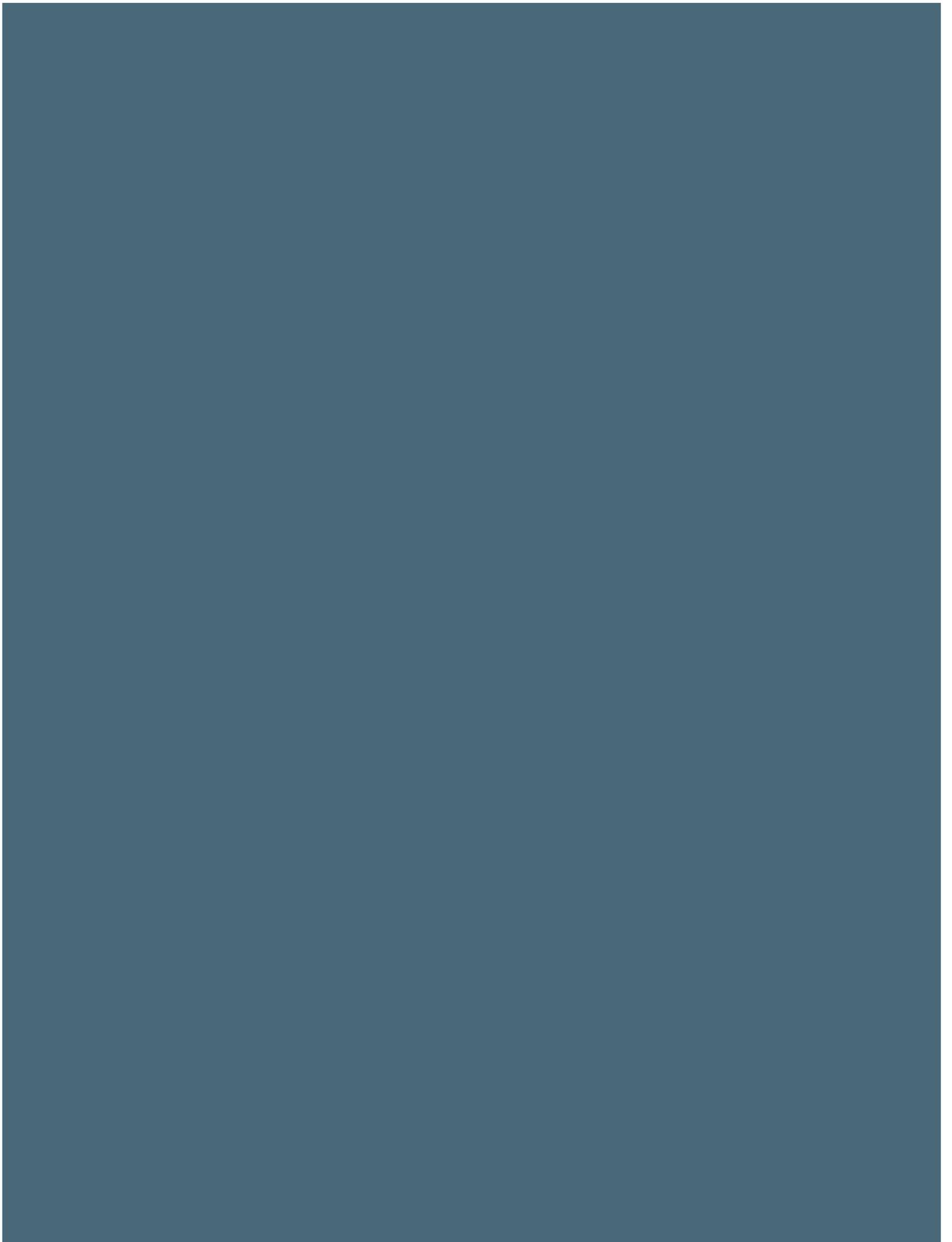
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# Acknowledgements

In country upon country in the developing world, the cliché that “youth are our future” is proving to be a reality. Workforce and education assessments predict the demand and supply dimensions of a generation poorly prepared for modernizing economies; companies and potential employers bemoan epidemic unreadiness for work; demographic analyses and projections show increasingly youthful populations; and political appraisals warn of potential unrest arising from young people lacking skills and livelihoods. Nonetheless, young people everywhere show remarkable strengths, often exhibit astonishing resiliency, and demonstrate optimistic responses to even the most daunting of circumstances.

Much has been learned about how to build on these attributes in initiatives and projects in many parts of the world. USAID’s Educational Quality Improvement Program 3 (EQUIP3) is designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. EQUIP3, a consortium of 12 organizations led by Education Development Center, is a mechanism through which these organizations can implement youth development programs, often working together. Perhaps more importantly, EQUIP3 provides the impetus and the platform for youth development organizations to learn from their experiences and share their lessons.

The correlations among educational attainment, cognitive growth, and developmental success are well documented, and at their core is literacy. This Guide is meant to be both a review of what is known and understood about the subject, drawn from experience in EQUIP3 programs and elsewhere, and a guide to policymakers and practitioners who seek to plan and improve the practice of literacy development for youth in international contexts.

As with all of EQUIP3’s work, this has been a team effort. John Comings, consultant to Education Development Center, was prime mover and the original author of this document, and William Diehl of Diploma Plus helped to sharpen its practitioner focus. Brenda Bell, Ron Israel, Barry Stern, and David James-Wilson of EDC all made significant contributions to early drafts. USAID’s Clare Ignatowski (who was the AOTR for the project), provided consistent and supportive guidance throughout, and her USAID colleagues John Hatch, Yolande Miller-Grandvaux, Jim Hoxeng, and Amanda Eichelkraut provided early feedback and help. Cristine Smith of the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Helen Sherpa of World Education, and Heide Wrigley of LiteracyWork International provided insights into working with youth. Extensive contributions from these colleagues expanded and improved this document in ways that would have been impossible without their help.

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# Acronyms

<b>ABLE</b>	Adult Basic Literacy Exam
<b>EDC</b>	Education Development Center
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EFF</b>	Equipped for the Future
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>GATE</b>	Girls' Access to Education
<b>GOBI-FFF</b>	Growth monitoring, Oral rehydration therapy, Breast-feeding, Immunization, Family Spacing (planning), Female Education, Food Supplementation
<b>GTZ</b>	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German government development agency)
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>IDEJEN</b>	Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative
<b>LCEP</b>	Literacy and Community Empowerment Program
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NFE</b>	Nonformal Education
<b>NGO</b>	Nongovernmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory Rural Appraisal
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>SEIGYM</b>	Somaliland Education Initiative for Girls and Young Men
<b>UIL</b>	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WEEL</b>	Women's Economic Empowerment and Literacy program

## About This Guide

Literacy can be an especially powerful motivator for young people, building a sense of empowerment, dignity, independence, and efficacy. Attention to youth literacy strengthens and adds stability to ongoing development initiatives supporting basic education, economic growth, health and family planning, and social justice.

Literacy programs for out-of-school youth complement formal school by providing new learning opportunities for young people aged 15-24 who do not have strong literacy skills. Support for these programs should therefore be an integral part of a basic education strategy. Youth literacy programs can build a strong foundation for achieving the goals of a country's basic education strategy; in addition to functioning as a complement to formal schooling, literacy programming for out-of-school youth contributes to the success of formal basic educational initiatives when the children of literate parents arrive at school better prepared to learn.

This program guide offers a resource for development specialists initiating or strengthening integrated literacy programs for youth aged 15 to 24 who are not involved in formal education. The guide is divided into three parts:

**Part I** makes the case for investment in integrated literacy programs for out-of-school youth, and explores how literacy skills are developed. Investment in literacy programming for young people strengthens basic education, enabling increasingly literate parents to prepare their children to enter and stay in school, and to achieve at higher levels. Such investments support economic growth as employers choose to invest in regions where workers have higher literacy levels, and an increasingly trainable workforce enables businesses to expand. Increased literacy has a positive effect on health and family planning, particularly as increasing mothers' literacy impacts fertility and child survival rates. Investing in literacy programs for out-of-school youth as an integral part of a basic education strategy yields powerful impacts on income, social justice, quality of life, and stability over the long life of a young person.

**Part II** describes the policy context necessary to ensure the success of literacy programs for out-of-school youth. Strong political support at the national and local levels should include explicit goals and target audiences, specific activities necessary to reach targets and goals, and assignments of responsibility and accountability for each activity. Once the political support for these components has been established, literacy providers can be identified from a wide range of government and NGO sources, and literacy programs and campaigns can build capacity and proceed to meet the established goals.



**Part III** includes a step-by-step process for designing, implementing, and evaluating effective literacy programs. Factors to consider include diversity among the elements of geography, gender, prior schooling, and youth culture. Components that effective literacy programs all share are noted, including recognition and validation of self-motivation, knowledge, and skills gained through personal experience; active involvement; acquiring information and skills in context; starting at the participants' level

of competence; drawing on indigenous knowledge and community assets; emphasizing interactive and informal relationships to encourage participation, discussion, and cooperative learning; and creating flexible learning schedules. This section includes examples of promising practices and guidelines for serving out-of-school youth in effective literacy programs around the globe.

## Notes on Terminology

To use this resource effectively, some shared terminology will be helpful:

**Out-of-school youth:** Young people who may never have attended school, or may have left school before they acquired strong literacy skills. In either case, an integrated approach to literacy programs can yield positive outcomes for youth participants in the realm of literacy and numeracy and in many other facets of their lives.

**Integrated literacy:** This guide draws from a wide range of literacy approaches, but will focus primarily on “integrated literacy” to emphasize the importance of linking basic skills to tasks that are important to participants and the government and NGO programs that seek to help youth succeed. Integrated literacy programs combine the acquisition and improvement of literacy and math skills with learning applied skills and knowledge that help youth improve their livelihoods and quality of life. As much as possible, these programs also incorporate key elements of youth development such as choice, voice, positive social interaction, and the development of self-confidence and self-efficacy. (These components of youth development are outlined in detail in Part III, Program Design.) Integrated literacy programs share similarities with both formal education and skill training programs, but they have their own unique design conditions. Literacy programs are delivered by both NGOs and government agencies; instruction is provided through modular, flexible formats that enable participants to acquire skills and knowledge

at their own pace, and program length may vary from several months to several years. Because many literacy programs serve youth within adult programs, this guide highlights youth programs when possible, and also draws from some adult literacy program experience and research when it is applicable to out-of-school youth.

**Related Terms:** Programs that integrate reading, writing, and math skills with skills and knowledge related to development strategies such as health, employment, entrepreneurship, or civic engagement have been referred to as integrated literacy programs. Decades ago, such programs were referred to as functional literacy. When teaching and learning take place outside of formal classroom settings, they are often termed nonformal education, or NFE. Since these programs provide a basic education outside the formal school system, they are sometimes referred to as complementary education. This guide respects all of these terms and the history they represent, while focusing primarily on the importance of linking basic literacy skills to tasks that are important to young people who are not participants in school and are determined to succeed in life.

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**Overview**

There are nearly 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 today, and more than 1 billion live in developing countries. Youth currently comprise almost a fifth of the world's population (UN World Youth Report, 2007). Because the cohort aged 0-14 in many developing countries is between 30% and 40% of their total populations (and close to 50% in some countries in the Middle East and Africa), the youth cohort will continue to grow for the next few decades.

Unfortunately, the majority of these young people lack a strong basic education. This contributes to high levels of unemployment or underemployment. Being under-educated or out-of-school places young people at high risk to become victims of violence, crime, unwanted pregnancy, and HIV infection. When youth transition to adulthood before obtaining at least a basic education, they are unable to help their own children succeed in school, and are much less likely to be able to address community problems and take advantage of new opportunities as they arise.

Low educational achievement adversely affects young people and their families. It also limits economic growth and undermines the stability of their countries in several ways:

- **Basic education**  
Initiatives targeting children in formal school are less effective because illiterate and low-literate parents find it difficult to prepare their children to enter school, help them to achieve in school, and encourage them to stay in school.
- **Economic growth**  
Initiatives are less effective because the lack of a trainable workforce undermines the ability of business to expand, and employers choose not to invest in regions where workers have low literacy levels.
- **Health and family planning**  
Initiatives are less effective because low literacy among parents—particularly mothers—results in higher rates of fertility and lower rates of child survival.
- **Social justice and stabilization**  
Initiatives are less effective when youth grow into adulthood without the ability to earn sufficient income to support their families, take political action to secure civil and other rights, and maintain the social infrastructures needed for political and economic stability.

Literacy is key to building a sense of empowerment, dignity, independence, and efficacy. These are powerful motivators—especially for disenfranchised youth. Initiatives for basic education, economic growth, health and family planning, and social justice are all strengthened and stabilized through attention to youth literacy.

## Literacy Skill

UNESCO (2005) estimates that more than 115 million children of primary school age are not in school. A study by the World Bank in Peru (Abadzi, Crouch, Echegaray, Pasco & Sampe, 2005) also suggests that a significant proportion of children attending primary school in some countries may not be acquiring strong literacy skills, even after several years of study. The World Bank (2006) estimates that more than 130 million youth (15 to 24 years of age) are illiterate, but even this huge number probably understates the problem. Literacy skill is one of the most important outcomes of a basic education. Most countries use self-reporting in census or household surveys to estimate illiteracy; unfortunately, a high percentage of those who claim they are literate are unable to pass a simple literacy test.<sup>1</sup> While access to literacy is nearly always affected by gender or other status, some literacy measures neglect to differentiate between levels of male and female literacy. Many respondents in these surveys have been to school as children and therefore self-identify as literate. The length of participation in schooling, or the quality of that schooling, may, however, have left them with literacy skills too low to pass a simple test and insufficient to be able to continue building literacy skills independent of formal schooling.

The total number of out-of-school youth in the 15 to 24 year-old age range who could benefit from literacy programs will therefore remain in the hundreds of millions for many years to come. While this number is daunting, research has demonstrated that youths' literacy and

numeracy levels can improve with intensive, comprehensive help (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). Research in both developed and developing countries has identified a range of successful frameworks and initiatives to promote literacy for in-school and out-of-school youth.

A key framework for literacy development involves grouping students and using materials and instruction according to developmental stages of literacy acquisition (Chall, 1983). For youth programs, four stages are often used (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004; Diehl, 2008):

1. **Building decoding skills and basic word recognition.** The first stage of literacy is sometimes called “breaking the code.” A person has to learn the “code” of written language (what symbols are used for what sounds) and how to integrate those symbols into language. In most languages, the basic “code” has two different types of words—those that can be solved and understood through phonics (for example, “stop,” or “jazz”) and those that are not spelled phonetically and must therefore be learned by sight (for example, “you,” “could,” or “right”). This stage is typically associated with 1st grade through the 3rd grade reading levels.
2. **Building fluency and increasing word recognition.** At this stage, a learner is building speed and accuracy, both of which are needed to make meaning from written language. Typically, young people at this stage have basic decoding and

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1. Studies that compare these self reports with direct assessments using literacy tests suggest that the traditional methods for determining literacy rates may overstate the extent of literacy. UNESCO's (2006) *Global Monitoring Report 2006: Literacy for Life* notes that 45% of a sample of respondents in Morocco reported being literate but only 33% demonstrated basic competence in literacy, and in Ethiopia, 59% of a sample of women with one year of schooling were considered literate in a household assessment, but only 27% could pass a simple reading test. A similar pattern was found in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

word recognition skills, but their oral language is more sophisticated than their written language. At this stage, learners know many words in spoken language that they do not know or recognize in print. This stage is typically associated with 4th grade through the 6th grade reading levels, or the span of most elementary programs. As fluency and word recognition increases, youth become increasingly able to use reading independently to achieve many other goals.

3. **Building more sophisticated vocabulary and meaning.** At this stage, a young person has mastered the basics of reading and writing, with verbal language skills and written language skills at about the same level, and with youth reading more widely and for a variety of purposes. Learners are able to use literacy as a means to learn other information; at this stage, integrated literacy can be especially effective. This stage is typically associated with the 7th and 8th grade levels.
4. **Building comprehension and application of literacy skills.** At this stage, the learner has mastered the basics of reading, writing, and learning new concepts from text, and written language skills are as strong or stronger than verbal language skills. The youth no longer focuses on the mechanics of reading, but can focus solely on understanding and using written language. This stage is typically described as at the 9th grade level and higher. At this level, youth will be able to continue to learn and progress independently, and will be able to adapt to changing demands in their country or culture.

The first two stages are typically the focus of literacy programs for out-of-school youth. At the first stage, a young person “**learns to read.**” Following the development of this minimum literacy skill, reading becomes a tool, and the young person is increasingly able to “**read to learn.**”

There are many methods and practices that help youth through the stages, especially decoding and developing fluency. Because the focus on building literacy skills for out-of-school youth is relatively new, these methods should be considered promising practices, rather than proven methods. Part III of this guide describes some of these promising practices, and includes illustrations of many effective components of integrated literacy programs.

Helping young people acquire and improve literacy skills will help them successfully transition into their adult roles as workers, parents, and citizens. Since primary school participation in developing countries has expanded dramatically over the last 20 years, out-of-school youth are likely to have some literacy skills, in the form of basic decoding skills, and a literacy program can build on this prior investment in education. In addition, two World Bank reports (Abadzi, 2003a and 2003b) suggest that learning basic decoding skills for the first time becomes more difficult with age. At the same time, research in the U.S. has found that 18 to 30 year-olds who have not finished high school do improve their skills, even when they are not in a literacy program (Reder, 2008). Out-of-school youth, therefore, are likely to acquire and improve their literacy skills if a well-designed program is available. Precisely because they are young, any investment in the education of out-of-school youth accrues a return over four or five decades, increasing the period over which the return on an investment in literacy can be compounded.

An investment in literacy for out-of-school youth builds on the investment already made by their governments in any primary schooling they have had. In addition, literacy programs can provide youth with skills and knowledge that will help them support the health and education of their future children, with these positive changes occurring early in their children's lives.

### **Impact on Children's Success in School**

A great deal of research has focused on the relationship between literacy levels for parents and the persistence and success their children will achieve in school. Many (but not all) of these studies specifically address the long-term value of investing in girls' education. In the developing world, women who complete adult literacy classes are more apt to send their children to school than women who have no education (Comings, Shrestha, & Smith, 1992). Once in school, children's (particularly daughters') participation and performance in school is connected to their mother's education; in fact, a mother's literacy level and reading practices are predictors of her daughter's level of school attainment. Adults who complete a nonformal literacy course are more likely than adults who had not attended the course to send their daughters to school, and children of women educated nonformally have been found to perform better in school than children of women with no education at all. A study of Save the Children's program in Nepal found that literacy class participants sent more of their school-age children to school than those who did not participate, and that the number of girls attending school increased in villages where the literacy program took place. (Abu-Ghaida & Klasen, 2004; Ballara, 1991; Bown, 1990; Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994; Herz & Sperling, 2004; Reinhold, 1993; World Bank Africa Region Human Development, 2007).

Research in developing countries found that mothers educated in school as children internalize an image of the role of teachers, which they subsequently take on when rearing their children. Through this acquired disposition, educated mothers interact more verbally with their children. Further research sheds greater light on how this increased communications might lead to success in school. This research found that oral language skills change in relation to literacy skill level. (Dexter, LeVine, & Velasco, 1998; LeVine, Uribe, Correa, & Miller, 1991; LeVine, Dexter, Velasco, LeVine, Joshi, Sruebing, & Tapia-Urbe, 1994; Lindebaum, Chakraborty, & Elias, 1989; Purcell-Gates, 1995.)

These findings parallel those in the industrialized world, where the OECD's International Adult Literacy Survey (OECD, 1995) found a strong relationship between parents' education and the literacy skill level demonstrated by their children upon reaching adulthood. A report of the National Research Council, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) found that success in learning to read in school is related to the preparation and support provided by parents before children enter school and while they are students in the first three grades. Parents are their children's first teachers and their prime support for success in school. A 1999 Department of Education study looked at six specific home literacy activities that mothers could conduct to prepare preschool children to learn to read in school. The activities included reading to children, telling stories, teaching letters, words and numbers, teaching songs or music, doing arts and crafts, and visiting a library. The study found that higher levels of mothers' education were related to greater likelihood that 3 to 5 year-old children had participated in these activities.

A parent's literacy skills also affect the readiness of their children to learn sophisticated language structures. In oral communication, speakers with higher levels of literacy provide more of the details that a listener needs to fully understand a complicated situation. This form of oral language is characterized by the use of broader category names (using "furniture" when talking about chairs and tables, for example), prepositions (providing indications of relationships), and abstract vocabulary that provide the more precise information a listener might need to understand a situation that cannot be experienced directly. This is the language of school and of the written word, and children who have been hearing and learning this form of oral language are better prepared to do well in school. Even small amounts of parental literacy produce this effect; in fact, researchers have argued that the acquisition of literacy affects the way the mind processes, organizes, and understands the world, and this gets transmitted to the next generation. (See, for examples of this argument, Morais & Kolinsky, 2008; Olson & Torrance, 2001.) Providing out-of-school youth with an opportunity to acquire or improve their literacy skills should change the interactions they have with their children, and those children will be more ready for school and for acquiring literacy because of those changes.

### **Impact on Health and Family Planning**

Almost all research on the impact of education on health and family planning has looked at adults who gained their (reported) literacy skills as children in a formal school system. Few of these studies employed simple reading tests or any other measure of literacy skills; therefore, the positive relationship between education and these development indicators is understood by some to be the effect of years of schooling, not literacy skill levels attained.

Studies in rural Mexico, rural Nepal, and urban Zambia, however, found that positive health and fertility behaviors were related to the level of literacy skill retained in adulthood, not years of schooling (LeVine et al., 1994). The literacy skills gained by out-of-school youth in literacy programs may, therefore, have the same impact as skills gained by children in formal schools.

Furthermore, unlike primary school, a literacy class can offer a venue for health and family planning education with direct and immediate impacts. In Nepal, several evaluations found that women's health knowledge improved dramatically as a result of attendance in literacy classes that included health and family planning content in the course (Comings et al., 1992). In a review of 43 case studies of literacy projects that provided information about the effects of women's nonformal literacy acquisition, Bown (1990) concluded that participation in literacy classes increases the likelihood that women will use oral rehydration therapy and immunization services, follow better nutritional practices, and decide to have a longer interval between births. Similarly, LeVine (2007) reviewed studies and concluded that women's literacy and language skills have far-reaching benefits; he reported empirical evidence, for example, that the women who have such skills understand public health messages and are able to navigate complex bureaucratic institutions such as hospitals. In relation to family planning, Bown (1990) concluded that a nonformal literacy program for women can have an immediate and a sustained impact on both opinions and behaviors in relation to family size. UNESCO (2008) reported that "research has repeatedly demonstrated the direct correlation between people's level of literacy and their chances to maintain good health;" among evidence cited was a study in 32 coun-

tries that showed women with secondary education were five times more likely to be informed about HIV/AIDS than women who were illiterate. Helping out-of-school youth, particularly girls, improve their literacy skills could decrease infant and child mortality, lower fertility, and improve child and parent health.

Research has identified a strong relationship between levels of maternal education and lower morbidity, mortality, and fertility rates in families (Cochrane, O'Hara & Leslie, 1980), even after controlling for socioeconomic status and access to health services (Hobcraft, 1993). The economic and social gains resulting from the education of girls have been documented in multi-country studies (Subbarao & Raney, 1994). A review by Joshi (1994) of existing literature on a range of factors that impact children's health found that maternal schooling accounts for as much as half of the positive impact, while socioeconomic status accounts for the other half. Joshi's review also found that a mother's educational achievement is a predictor of her children's long-term nutritional status. An analysis of aggregate data from 62 low-income countries concluded that while growth in income lowers child mortality rates, it does not lower fertility rates (Schultz, 1993). Mothers' education was the dominant factor associated with a decline in fertility.

Youth literacy programs are also often integrated with health education. For example, in Niger, an adolescent reproductive health program strengthens young women's and men's life skills, with emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention. The program builds upon a 26-episode radio soap opera called *Les Clés de la Vie* and a comic book distributed through *Planète Jeunes*, a trendy regional youth magazine.

This strong relationship between literacy and health was addressed on International Literacy Day 2008, as UNESCO's Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura stated:

"Today's gravest health concerns cannot be adequately addressed unless literacy finds a central place in public health policies and strategies. An illiterate person is simply more vulnerable to ill health and less likely to seek medical help for themselves, their family or their community...Literacy is a powerful, yet too often overlooked, remedy to health threats, with the potential to promote better nutrition, disease prevention and treatment."

### **Impact on Income and Quality of Life**

Research also provides ample evidence to support the direct relationship between literacy skills and income. The most rigorous study on this relationship comes from the 23-country OECD study, the International Adult Literacy Survey, which found both a strong relationship between an individual's literacy skills and income (OECD, 2007), and a strong relationship between the equal distribution of a country's literacy proficiencies and the equality of its distribution of income (Tuijnman, 2001). A smaller World Bank study (Blunch & Verner, 2000) found that functional literacy was a prerequisite for entering the labor market in Ghana, and the UN-led Education for All (EFA) 2009 monitoring report found that a person's potential income increases by at least 10% for every year of education.

These studies suggest that a lack of strong literacy skills constitutes a barrier to entry into the modern sector labor force in less-developed economies. In addition, as these countries develop their economies, higher levels of skill should lead to higher incomes, and a more equi-

table distribution of literacy skills should lead to a more equitable distribution of income. Literacy programs for out-of-school youth may provide an opportunity to learn for very modest investments; furthermore, these investments could easily return not only increases in income, but also less tangible values in improving political stability, economic growth, school efficiency, and public health. Programs achieve higher success rates when literacy is pursued in an integrated fashion that combines acquisition and improvement of literacy and math skills with the learning of applied vocational and technical skills that directly help youth improve their livelihoods and quality of life.

With the help of private employers and curriculum experts, program developers can determine the level of literacy and numeracy skills students will need if they are to benefit from different types and levels of vocational training. There are many ways to integrate literacy and job-related instruction: literacy skills can be embedded into the teaching of vocational skills, and vocational or technical skills can be practiced in ways that reinforce literacy skills.

Research in the United Kingdom used a four-point scale to rate vocational courses as non-embedded, partly embedded, mostly embedded, and fully embedded. This provides a form of quasi-experimental design with a treatment group (fully embedded) and three comparison groups. The authors reported that, in the embedded courses, retention was 16% higher. The embedded courses also had higher success rates than the non-embedded courses. For learners on the fully-embedded courses, 93% of those with an identified literacy need achieved a literacy/ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualification, compared to only 50% for

those in non-embedded courses. In fully embedded courses, 43% more learners achieved literacy qualifications. For learners on the fully-embedded courses, 93% of those with an identified numeracy need achieved a numeracy/maths qualification, compared to 70% for those on non-embedded courses. On the fully embedded courses, 23% more learners achieved numeracy qualifications (Casey, Cara, Eldred, Grief, Hodge, Ivanivc, Jupp, Lopez, & McNeil, 2006).

In the United States, investigators compared three models: (1) a class that integrated electronics assembly vocational training and ESOL (English language) training, (2) a vocational class in electronics assembly class with no ESOL instruction, and (3) a conventional ESOL class, not vocationally related. In all three courses, pre- and post-test data were obtained on a vocational vocabulary test related to electronics training and a general literacy test (the Adult Basic Learning Exam-ABLE). The data showed that the integrated program had greater gains on the vocational vocabulary test than either of the comparison groups. It also had a gain rate per 100 hours of instruction that was some 65 percent higher for general reading (ABLE) than the conventional ESOL program, and over 300 percent greater than the vocational-only program. Other data also indicated that placements of students in the integrated program into electronics jobs was high, almost 100 percent, and many were placed by the ninth week of the course. This reflects the importance of helping students transfer new knowledge and skills from the classroom to the world of work (Stitch et al., 1998).

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Ensuring that all children complete primary school, and learn how to read well while in school, should be every country's first priority. However, millions of children do not learn to read in primary school because they do not have access to dependable schooling, they do not complete the formal schooling that is available, or schooling is not sufficiently robust to produce for all students the level of literacy necessary for ongoing learning. Many developing countries are at least a decade away from solving this problem.

Youth literacy programs can build a strong foundation for achieving the goals of a country's basic education strategy. Literacy programs for out-of-school youth complement formal school by providing a first or second opportunity to learn for those people aged 15-24 who do not have strong literacy skills. Support to these programs should therefore be an integral part of a basic education strategy. In addition to its function as a complement to formal schooling, literacy programming for out-of-school youth contributes to the success of formal basic educational initiatives when the children of literate youth arrive at school better prepared to learn.

### Developing and Supporting Literacy Programs

Investment in out-of-school youth literacy programs will be more successful if the government has developed a policy that supports such programs, and if implementation of that policy is a priority for the government. An effective policy for an integrated literacy program for out-of-school youth must have strong political support at the national and local levels, and explicitly include:

- A specific **goal** and target audience;
- A list of **activities** that must take place to reach that goal;
- An assignment of **responsibility** and accountability for each activity.

**Goals.** While goals such as “ending illiteracy” or “increasing the national literacy rate” are important, these vague terms should be made more specific while still remaining clear and straightforward. More useful goal statements point to a specific number of out-of-school youth who will acquire literacy skills sufficient to pass a particular test. The number of youth is usually selected by first reviewing national literacy statistics, and then calculating the number of students needed to reach a specific national literacy level. Most often, this is the level that would raise a country's literacy rate to be equivalent to that of regional neighbors that have better-educated populations and are, therefore, more competitive in the global economy. Additionally, because access to literacy is nearly always affected by gender or other statuses, both gender and disadvantaged status should be taken into account when determining specific targets and goals.

The level of literacy skill promoted as the national goal is usually equivalent to that of the average of primary school completers, which is usually lower than the skill level set out in the school curriculum. To address this discrepancy between the school curriculum goals and average skill attainment, some countries set their goal as a literacy level equivalent to three years of primary school. Although the benchmark of grade 3 skills may seem low, it generally includes the ability to decode all the letters and letter combinations in the language, know a core group of sight words, and have a rate of fluency (speed and accuracy)

sufficient to read and understand simple sentences. With this basic reading level, youth can continue to increase their skills through use, particularly if there are opportunities to use skills in ways that are meaningful to them. In addition, grade 3 is usually a reasonable goal for a program that provides limited instructional time. Youth who are successful and motivated could continue to learn in additional, higher-level classes, if resources to provide them are available; alternatively, youth could come together to improve their skills through self-study by reading and discussing real-life materials.

**Activities.** Once the goal is established, the set of activities needed to reach the goal usually includes:

- a. Developing a curriculum;
- b. Creating a teacher training model and training those who will train teachers in the model;
- c. Producing and distributing learning materials;
- d. Selecting and training teachers (and, in some cases, mentors);
- e. Adapting materials for local effectiveness;
- f. Recruiting students;
- g. Implementing instruction;
- h. Assessing students' gains in literacy and learning;
- i. Connecting students' increased literacy skills to concrete certifications or other components of Education for All (EFA).

Some of these activities, such as curriculum and materials, benefit from economies of scale. A national design can be developed, with local organizations adding specific curriculum and materials to adapt the national design to their specific needs. Developing a standard teacher training model also benefits from national economies of scale, as do the creation of a framework for assessing program success and methods for certifying students' increased literacy through EFA.

On the other hand, selection and training of teachers and mentors, recruitment of students, and implementation all benefit from strong local capacity. In many cases, once teachers are selected, they are able to suggest specific adaptations to curriculum or teaching materials. At the local village, town, or city level, some teacher training can offer guided opportunities for local teachers to develop materials of local benefit and interest.

**Responsibility.** The standard program elements (usually a, b, and c) are often the responsibility of national governments or a national consortium of implementing agencies. The rest of the activities (d, e, f, and g) are usually the responsibility of local government agencies, local NGOs, and international NGOs, because they have strong connections and resources at the local level. Assessment of learning gains (h) is often a shared responsibility, with the development, production, and distribution of tests undertaken by a national entity and test administration, and the reporting of results undertaken by implementing agencies.

## Political Support

Strong political support provides both the resources and the motivation to overcome hurdles that might otherwise stand in the way of a successful program. Some of the literacy programs that are considered highly successful have taken place after a change in government from one that was not supported by its citizens to one that was. These moments of political change are often a time when government reaches out to provide services to all citizens, and a literacy program can build on the motivation for positive change among the poorly educated youth population, and the motivation to help among the educated youth population. Turkey, Cuba, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Indonesia, Thailand and several other countries mounted large-scale literacy programs after a change in government or the achievement of independence.

Although such changes in government or status are not a regular occurrence, a political leader, or the spouse of a political leader, can often provide the same political will. In addition, local political figures have shown the ability to mobilize government and nongovernmental resources within their geographic area of influence. For example, in the Burdwan District of India's state of West Bengal, the Chief District officer mobilized all government and nongovernment agencies to focus on a literacy program for two years. This effort raised the literacy level of the 6 million people living in the district and led to almost 100% primary school participation among school age children.

## Choosing an Approach

Literacy initiatives for out-of-school youth usually take one of three approaches, all of which help youth build a sense of empowerment, dignity, independence, and efficacy:

*Literacy campaigns*, such as those that took place in Cuba, India, and Nicaragua, are intensive, short-duration programs that provide participants with basic decoding skills and the ability to sight-read a small number of common words.

*Literacy programs*, such as those supported by the governments of Nepal, Egypt, Thailand, and Uganda, are of longer duration and provide stronger literacy skills, as well as an introductory knowledge about a range of life skills.

*Integrated literacy programs*, such as those developed by NGOs for women and girls in Nepal or South Africa, provide enough instruction to build literacy as a useful tool for learning and accomplishing tasks, and provide more in-depth learning on a set of life skills such as computer use or health issues.

To choose one of these three approaches to literacy programming, governments should first identify the goals they are trying to achieve with their investment in youth literacy. For example, if a country's goal is to increase the percentage of its youth population that has basic literacy skills, the government would choose a literacy campaign. If a country's goal is to provide its citizens with an opportunity to develop literacy skills equivalent to primary school completers and to gain knowledge about a wide range of development topics, the government would choose a literacy program. If a country's goal is to provide citizens with an opportunity to develop literacy skills and knowledge that lead to specific outcomes (employment, self-employment, improved health and family planning behaviors, or increased parental support to education, for example), the government would choose an integrated literacy program.

The goal of each approach is to place youth on a more positive life trajectory by building skills and knowledge that will have an impact on their ability to play the key adult roles of worker, parent, and citizen. Participation in a literacy campaign can have a positive impact on both youth and their children, but the depth of learning may be limited. Participation in a literacy program might develop skills and knowledge that demonstrate less immediate usefulness to youth, but would have long-term impact on their lives. An integrated program allows youth to develop a useful level of skills and knowledge that they can immediately apply to better their lives and to improve the lives of their family members.

### **Identifying Literacy Providers**

Literacy providers—the agencies and organizations that implement instruction—can be of a wide number of different types, including schools, local governments, faith-based organizations, NGOs, integrated rural development programs, health and family planning programs, and many others. Most often, governments identify a specific set of providers that have a presence everywhere in the country. These providers are generally part of one government ministry, for example, schools in the ministry of education, or local development offices in the ministry of the interior or home affairs. In this approach, the government takes on the responsibility of building the capacity of the identified ministry to implement the program nationwide.

Alternatively, the government may allow any agency, governmental or nongovernmental, including private for-profit businesses, to implement instruction. In this approach, the government takes on the responsibility of identifying the most capable institutions in each region of the country. With either approach, the government should have specific criteria for choosing implementing agencies, as well as specific qualities such agencies must have or develop to implement the program successfully. These criteria usually include knowledge and experience with the geographic area they will serve, a good reputation with both the leaders and the general population in the area they will serve, and the capacity to organize and deliver a social service.

### **Building Institutional Capacity**

Past performance is usually the source of information that identifies a local literacy provider, but even when local literacy providers have a history of successful past performance, they may need to develop their capacity to implement a strong literacy program for out-of-school youth. In fact, most literacy providers, even those with good past performance rating, will need some help to build their institutional capacity to deal with a larger, often more complex, effort than they have undertaken in the past. In addition, not all adult literacy providers will be equally prepared to work effectively with youth, as young people have different developmental characteristics and needs than adults. (Many of these needs and characteristics are outlined below in Part III: Program Design.)

Literacy programs often assume that the leadership, management, and administrative capacity of literacy providers is sufficient and it is only the training of teachers that need take place. However, all levels of a literacy provider organization's staff should receive training and ongoing technical assistance to ensure they have the institutional capacity to be successful. This includes training in working effectively with a youth population. Capacity-building activities should ensure that all levels of the staff understand the goals of the program, the way in which those goals are going to be achieved, and individuals' responsibilities for making the program successful. Groups of staff members will also need training and ongoing support related to specific responsibilities.

Training should consist not only of lectures. Some lectures are necessary, but training should also offer providers discussion among themselves, opportunities to ask questions, live demonstrations of specific aspects of successful programs, and opportunities to role-play behaviors they will need to exhibit during program implementation. By the end of the training, staff should be able to accurately describe the goals and activities of the program and to demonstrate their ability to take on their specific responsibilities.

### **Going to Scale**

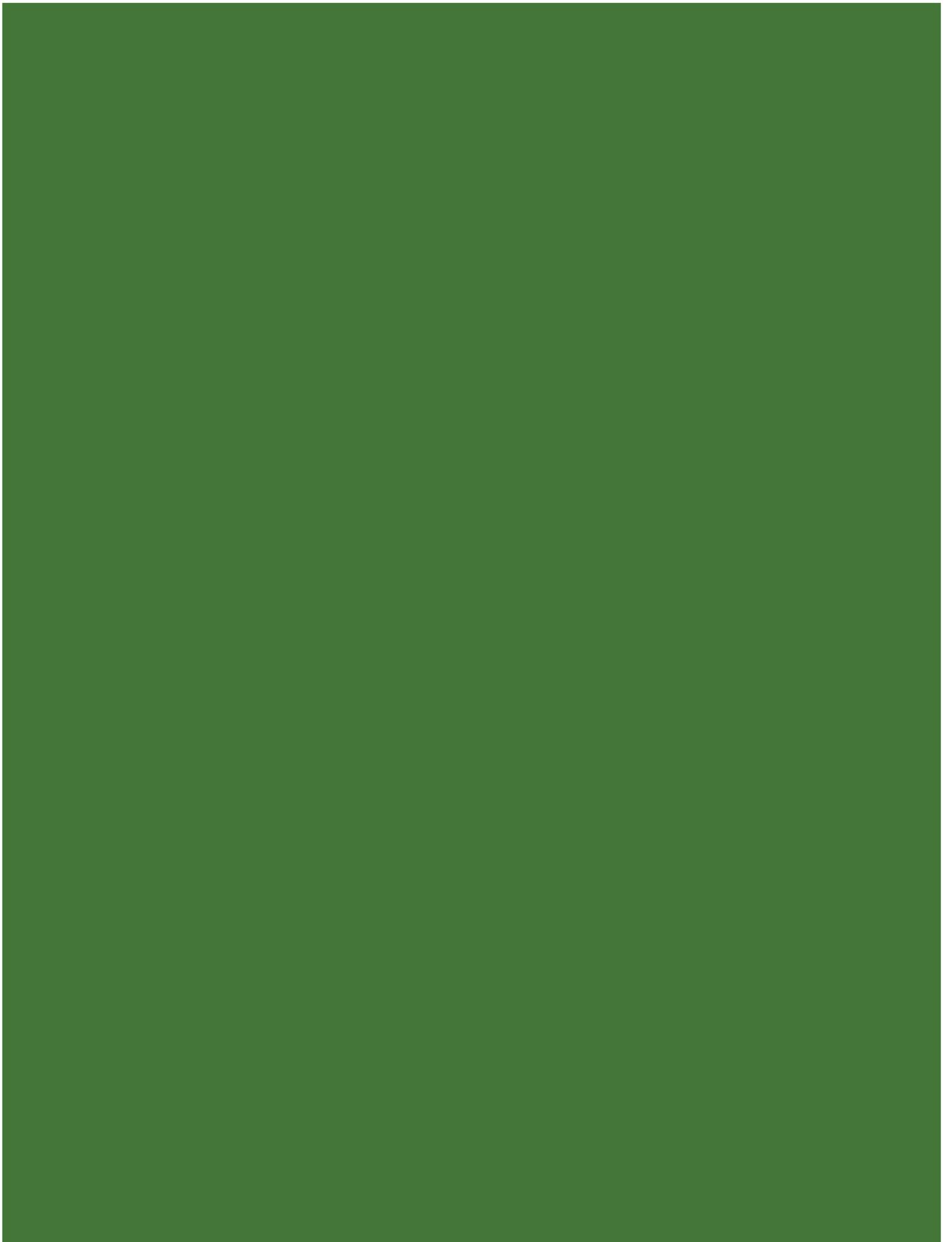
The youth cohort that needs services in most countries is large and diverse, and governments, therefore, often feel they should begin on a large scale. This too often leads to failure, when inadequate preparation produces poor quality services. One way to avoid this problem is to go to scale in phases. The first phase should always be small and geographically limited, as this allows program designers to identify and solve any problems before

spending large amounts of money on the program. After this initial phase, two approaches to going to scale have been used with success.

The most common approach is to provide each geographic unit with a quota for classes based on their population, and then increase that quota each year until the program has grown to serve a large population. The other is to choose one sub-unit within each geographic unit and pour the available resources into serving all youth in those small areas. Once that is done, the program may expand to two new sub-units, then four, and so forth until all youth are served. The former approach is the most common because it provides the program a chance to serve all parts of a country.

Within each country, some areas and populations are better prepared to be successful. Identifying those subgroups and beginning with them allows for a concentration of limited resources in the beginning of the program. It also allows for early and strong positive results, providing momentum for expansion. Similarly, the approach builds human capacity, as those involved in the first phase of implementation gain skills and knowledge they can share in other areas that go to scale later in the program's country-wide implementation.

Suggestions for reflecting USAID practices, in particular by considering differences in the geography, gender, experience, culture, skills, and interests of young people when designing literacy programs, are presented in the section that follows.



### Important Design Considerations for Working with Youth

While out-of-school youth often participate in adult literacy programs, adult programs are not designed to meet the specific needs of out-of-school youth, or to take advantage of their considerable strengths. Youth development programs should be organized to support the growth of participants by promoting positive relationships among peers, and providing opportunities for youth to learn and model healthy behaviors. Activities should connect youth with caring adults while challenging youth to build their own competencies. Programs should emphasize the strengths of the participating youth, and young people should be empowered to assume leadership roles in the programs.

A small group of professionals who have experience working with literacy programs for youth in developing countries were asked to provide their insights about the specific needs and strengths of out-of-school youth. Their insights and ideas about “the youth cohort” are summarized below:

**Fundamental Diversity.** Although youth may share some common qualities, they also have characteristics that assign them to subgroups. Some out-of-school youth speak the language of instruction; others do not. Some are living with their parents in their birth community; others are separated from their parents and community. Some have been the victims of violence; some have been the perpetrators of violence during civil conflicts. Some live in urban towns and cities, some in rural villages. National programs must take these differences into account by developing different sets of materials, or providing or adapting supplemental materials to address the needs

of each subgroup and by providing services in ways that meet the needs of each subgroup.

**Geography and Gender.** The worldwide cohort of out-of-school youth with little or no literacy skill is disproportionately concentrated in some countries, and in specific regions within some countries. In addition, gender disparities vary among and within different countries. For example, in Bangladesh, the male and female youth literacy rates are 70% and 72% respectively, while in Pakistan, the male youth literacy rate is 79% and the female rate is 58%, even though these two countries were once linked politically. In India, the literacy rate varies dramatically by state, with 91% literacy in Kerala, and 47% in Bihar. Although in most countries girls are less likely to have literacy skills than boys, a few countries (Lesotho for example) have a higher level of female literacy.

**Prior Schooling.** In relation to their previous formal school experience, out-of-school youth may require very different program services. Some have never acquired basic decoding skills (they may never have been to school, or attended primary school for a short period). Others have basic decoding skills, but have little or no ability to read (they may have attended school for a few years). Many out-of-school youth lack sufficient vocabulary and reading fluency to use reading as a tool for learning and accomplishing family life or work tasks (they may have attended school for any length of time). All of these youth groups may have low writing and math skills as well.

Most adult literacy programs begin with a focus on learning decoding, since most adults in these programs have never been to school, and this would be appropriate for youth who have never acquired basic decoding skills.

Others could skip the decoding phase, or go through it quickly. Many youth may not need training in decoding, but need instruction that builds vocabulary, reading fluency, and comprehension while also building basic math and writing skills.

**Responsibilities.** Despite their young age, many youth take on all the work and family responsibilities of adulthood. They may work outside the home or help their families with farming or a small business. They may have responsibilities for looking after younger siblings, cooking, or other household chores. Program designers must take into account the demands on the time of potential students. This might require flexible scheduling that segments learning into linked modules, each of which could be learned in episodes of short, intensive study.

**Work Experience and Life Skills.** Out-of-school youth typically have had little or no experience with work in the formal economy, and they may need to develop work readiness or entrepreneurship skills, as well as literacy skills. This provides a good opportunity for integrated literacy. Program developers and implementers should keep in mind that out-of-school youth may be facing health risks, such as sexual exploitation, that are different than those of adults, and they may face risks involved in migration to an urban area or even another country. Some life skills, such as managing money, may be new for young people, and these issues should be addressed by the programs that teach literacy skills to youth. Along with specific skills involved in reading, writing, and math, students may also need instruction that builds other valuable skills including the ability to use technology, solve problems, work in groups, and communicate effectively.

**Youth Culture.** Youth are interested in spending time with their peers, and usually have interests that are poorly understood by the adults who design educational programs. Some of interests are part of popular youth culture and may be of great concern to adolescents but of little concern to adults. Youth aged 15-24 are building their adult identities, seeking independence, and aspiring to a more important role in their families and communities. They are, therefore, likely to be interested in a program that offers them an opportunity to meet these goals. Literacy learning is especially attractive to young people when it is linked to skills that lead to employment or higher income, when it provides knowledge that benefits their families, or when it includes participation in community activities. Youth literacy program designers should involve youth in the design of programs and materials to ensure that they are of interest to youth. Literacy materials can focus on attributes of positive adult identity, and, if done well, these materials can lead youth to shape their still-fluid identities in positive ways.

**Mentoring.** Youth program professionals should also help find mentors who can help youth grow into adulthood. Although mentors can sometimes be older adults, youth may be more interested in mentors who are just slightly older than they are. Some countries have a large pool of educated but unemployed young adults seeking jobs that provide an income as well as some measure of prestige. Thwarting the desires of this group could lead to political instability, particularly in fragile states, or emigration to countries that provide better opportunities. Governments are often interested in ways to meet the needs of this group within the severe limitations of national budgets, and may find that recruiting these

young adults to become teachers or mentors for youth could address this important need.

**Special Interests.** Today's youth are also more likely than adults to have experience with, or at least a strong interest in, technology. Programs that employ technology or are able to teach the use of technology for employability may therefore be particularly attractive to and successful with youth. Additionally, some of the youngest participants in out-of-school youth literacy programs may seek to enter or re-enter the formal school system after participation, as would almost never happen with adults.

### Critical Design Questions

Before designing an integrated literacy program for out-of-school youth, program developers should spend some time discussing several critical questions:

- How will the program contribute to national policy goals?
- Which development agency is the appropriate place in which to situate the program?
- How will expertise from different agencies be used in the program design?
- What are the skills and knowledge that participants will need to master—both literacy and non-literacy?
- How will program materials be produced?
- Who will teach in the program?
- When, where, and for how long are youth able to participate in the program?
- How will outcomes and impact be measured?

- Can integrated literacy programs certify competencies obtained in nonformal education programs in order to help participants continue with their education or qualify for jobs? If so, how?
- Which existing or new institutions will implement the program?
- How will the implementation capacity of these institutions be built?
- How will the program be sustained over the long-term?
- Are there policies that need to be changed or put in place to support this effort? If so, what are they and how will that happen?

After considering these questions, program development staff should begin a process of program design. The rest of this guide follows a program development model that provides a step-by-step approach to design.

### Common Components of Effective Literacy Programs

A recent UNESCO study looked at successful innovative literacy programs, and found that their teaching and learning initiatives shared several common components (UNESCO, 2006):

- Recognize and validate knowledge and skills gained through local and personal experience;
- Recognize the value of self-motivation and active involvement;
- Do not focus on learning as the process of acquiring de-contextualized pieces of information;

- Emphasize the creation and re-creation of economic, social and cultural meaning;
- Start at the participants' level of competence and support them in defining and reaching higher levels of proficiency;
- Draw on indigenous knowledge and community assets;
- Emphasize interactive and informal relationships between teachers and participants that encourage participation, discussion, and cooperative learning;

- Is compatible with a flexible learning schedule so participants may continue to participate in household and work activities.

In addition to the above, successful literacy programs for out-of-school youth need to take into account specific developmental characteristics and needs of youth. Best practices in youth development include having choice, acquiring a voice, positive social interaction, and the development of both self-confidence and self-efficacy. These elements are detailed below:

## Promising Practices In Youth Development

Aspects of youth development are especially important to adolescents' growth in literacy:

<b>Choice</b>	Adolescents are more motivated to read and write when they have some choice. This includes choice about the goals they have that can be advanced through literacy; topics they want to focus on in reading or writing; the materials and books they use; the structure of their classes; and how and where to share their own ideas in speaking or writing.
<b>Voice</b>	Because voice is a critical marker of self-identity, building up one's own voice is a key developmental task for youth. Older adolescents often express themselves publicly and expect their voices to be heard and respected (except where cultural expectations do not allow it).
<b>Social Interaction</b>	The most powerful experiences for youth often are situations that involve interacting with other youth, listening to different viewpoints, and respectfully exchanging ideas.
<b>Self-Confidence</b>	Youth feel more valuable and confident when they have developed the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and math that let them present themselves to the world as capable individuals.
<b>Self-Efficacy</b>	Another key task for a young person is to develop the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals, and has power to act effectively in and on the world. The attainment of literacy skills, with the resultant ability to pursue information and skills independently, is a crucial part of self-efficacy.

## Program Development Model

These common components can serve as a guide to program developers. The graphic on the next page outlines a model for developing, implementing, and evaluating integrated literacy programs for out-of-school youth. The model has five steps:

<b>Step 1</b>	Develop relevant program goals by clearly defining the purpose and outcomes of the program and indicators to measure program effectiveness. The goals should go beyond literacy and math skills, and should include skills and knowledge related to improving the lives of participants and accomplishing the country's development goals. Tasks may be academic or related to the responsibilities of worker, entrepreneur, parent, and citizen.
<b>Step 2</b>	Segment the youth population by describing the cohort of out-of-school youth, disaggregating it into sub-groups with specific learning needs, and target the specific population(s) of out-of-school youth who will be served.
<b>Step 3</b>	Design effective and cost-efficient programs by (a) identifying learning objectives, (b) developing an instructional design, (c) developing a program budget, (d) organizing a supportive policy framework, (e) building the capacity of service providers, and (f) developing linkages with relevant organizations.
<b>Step 4</b>	Implement effective and cost-efficient programs, including revision and ongoing review of learning objectives, instructional design, budget, policy framework, capacity of service providers, and linkages with relevant organizations
<b>Step 5</b>	Monitor and evaluate programs by developing instruments and tools to measure program outcomes and impact, collecting and analyzing relevant data and information, and disseminating results to program staff.

The balance of this document provides guidance on how to implement each of the steps noted above, including illustrations and examples of effective programs components. Examples of effective practices are drawn from as many different countries as possible. A larger number of examples come from Nepal because USAID has invested in a continuing series of literacy projects in Nepal since 1977. Programs in that country have been especially well-documented for more than 3 decades as government, local and international NGOs, and integrated development projects have experimented with different designs and approaches to implementing integrated literacy programs.

Examples and illustrations addressing the many elements to be considered in program development are provided in the sidebars. Except where otherwise noted, these demonstration cases are drawn from Comings, J. & Soricone, L. (2005). Teaching adults to read. Boston MA: World Education.

**Figure 1: Program Development Model**

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Develop relevant program goals	Segment the youth population and target participants	Design effective and cost-efficient program	Implement integrated literacy program	Monitor and evaluate program
	Consider: Age Gender Responsibilities Background and other qualities and characteristics of out-of-school youth	Identify learning objectives	Recruit youth and group participants according to specific needs and interests	Monitor program success in meeting learning objectives
		Develop instructional design	Modify objectives to reflect the literacy levels, skill needs, and other interests of participants	Evaluate and adjust each component of Step 3 as necessary to maximize successful program outcomes
		Develop program budget	Develop materials that reflect local activities and schedule instruction during times available to participants	
		Organize supportive policy framework	Develop a budget that includes standard operating and monitoring costs and site-specific capital needs and training costs	
		Build capacity of service providers	Ensure policies are in place to support specific program components	
		Develop relevant organizational linkages	Organize and provide pre-service and ongoing training to address specific needs of the youth in the program	
			Link to relevant organizations in the development sectors and areas of interest that are integrated into programming	

### Step One: Develop Relevant Program Goals

Integrated literacy programs for out-of-school youth have goals that go beyond the mastery of basic skills by participants. Because these programs could serve the strategic objectives of many different development agencies, countries may consider and ultimately decide to select different agencies to manage implementation. The most obvious agency would be the Ministry of Education. However, the attention of education agencies is on increasing access to and improving the quality of formal schooling, and so they may not focus directly on the learning needs of out-of-school youth. Other development agencies have served as a home for literacy programs or supported them in collaboration with education agencies or NGOs.

For example, health and family planning agencies have supported integrated literacy programs as part of initiatives to improve the skills of community health workers; agriculture agencies have supported integrated literacy programs in agricultural extension services; some businesses have supported integrated literacy programs as a way to develop the labor force and improve productivity. Additionally, local governments have supported integrated literacy programs as a means to empower citizens to play a more active role in governance and economic development projects in their communities.

In addition, some programs are multi-sectoral and focus instruction on multiple goals of several agencies that provide support to out-of-school youth. In some cases, a literacy program is designed to address goals that are common to many agencies, and then different agencies add the particular skills and knowledge they are interested in developing in the form of supplemental materials or activities. In other cases, the literacy program agency modifies its basic design to incorporate the interests of each agency.

The goals of integrated literacy programs are often based on the goals of the development sector that is providing support and the youth who are served by that sector agency. When designing a literacy program, experts from the cooperating agency (for example, business, health, local governance, or agriculture) should work closely with educators to design, implement, and evaluate the program. For example, a program that integrates the teaching of literacy and numeracy with the learning of basic employability skills should have input from prospective employers, employability trainers, and potential participants. Similarly, a program that integrates the teaching of literacy and numeracy with a program that prepares young adults to take more active roles in community governance and building democratic institutions should have input from representatives of local and national government and community activists.

Participants join literacy programs to achieve an expanded vision of their lives. Therefore, program planners should ask potential participants to identify their personal life goals—in addition to literacy—and link those personal goals to government goals and the goals of development agencies.

- To illustrate, participants may wish to improve their literacy skills so they can:
- Enter or re-enter primary or secondary school (basic education goals);
- Gain a primary or secondary school certificate (school completion goals);
- Meet the requirements of local businesses for entry-level employment (workforce development goals);
- Build a sense of empowerment, dignity, independence, and efficacy, which links to motivation (positive youth development goals);
- Start a small business (economic development goals);
- Contribute to the economic and social well-being of their families (family support goals);
- Become a certified health worker or agricultural extension worker (health and agriculture goals);
- Be of service to their communities (community development and civil society goals);

### RELEVANT PROGRAM GOALS

In Senegal, the government implemented a program in partnership with civil society organizations that employed Participatory Rural Appraisal methods (PRA) to identify the goals of potential participants. A 2004 evaluation of the program by the World Bank showed high retention and achievement rates after the PRA identified income generation as the most important interest of the target population, and designed instruction that focused on both literacy and income-generating skills.

- Participate in local government (local governance goals);
- Reintegrate into normal family and community life after a period of conflict (post-conflict goals).

Youth are more likely to participate and persist in learning if they know it will lead to something they value. When conceiving relevant program goals, developers should note that successful participants may need certification to secure entry into education and training or into a job. If certification is to be part of the program, the program should be designed to lead students directly to a certificate or from the literacy program directly into a certification program.

## Step Two: Segment the Youth Population

The characteristics of out-of-school youth participants influence what is taught and how education and training is delivered. Program designers should consider a variety of target participant characteristics, including age, gender, previous education, development sector background knowledge, employment status, and links to learning resources.

Note that younger out-of-school youth may be more likely to transition back into formal school than older learners in the targeted range of learners aged 15-24. Older participants may be more interested in skills and knowledge that will help them in their adult roles as workers, parents, and citizens. In addition, younger and older participants may have free time at different parts of the day; this might provide an opportunity for one teacher to provide two classes each day.

### SEGMENTING POPULATION BY AGE

In Nepal, ActionAid adapted the government's national adult literacy materials to the needs of out-of-school youth. Older youth were free in the evening after work was finished, and their classes employed the government's materials. Younger learners and children were free in the morning, and materials for these classes substituted themes such as family planning with topics and drawings related to childhood. The government later adopted this program and added it to the government effort.

### SEGMENTING BY GENDER

When the Ministry of Education in Nepal could not find sufficient female teachers for classes of young women, they found—with the help of the NGO World Education—that well-respected older men were acceptable teachers, particularly if they had served in the military.

This effort also tested a successful “team teaching” strategy in which two women who had just finished the program taught a class as a team. While one woman alone may not have had the skills to teach, two were able to manage together.

Another successful strategy was to split the pay of a teacher into several smaller amounts and employ several literate girls or women to teach a few members of their extended families.

Depending on their culture, participants may expect to be in same-sex classes with a teacher of the same gender. However, some programs have overcome this expectation by providing instruction in an open, community setting with teachers who are trusted by the community. Same-sex classes and female teachers are not the only issues to consider. Distance of classes from a girl's home, the time of day of the class, and the themes covered in the materials can all have an impact on parental decisions about allowing daughters to attend learning programs. However, none of these issues should be assumed to be a barrier until the design is discussed with the parents of girls, as discussion may uncover ways to lower each barrier.

Some out-of-school youth may have had no formal or non-formal education and would benefit from a program that allows time to acquire and automate the process of decoding letters into words. Others may have some previous education, and would move quickly into improving literacy skills and learning how to use those skills to accomplish tasks. Participants with different backgrounds or literacy levels could be placed in two different classes, or participants could be paired to practice skills by acting as peer tutors and teaching others for part of their class time.

Some participants may not have skills or knowledge related to the non-literacy content or the development sector (i.e., health, family planning, small business development, or employment training) that is the focus of the literacy program, while others may have exposure to that content. As with literacy skills, participants can be placed in two different classes, or the more experienced participants could practice their skills and share their knowledge of the development sector by acting as peer tutors.

### **BACKGROUND IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR**

In Nepal, the Ministry of Health recruited women to act as health promoters in their communities, but most of the women had never been to school. After providing the women with training in the components of the GOBI-FFF (maternal and child health) initiative, each woman was asked to recruit others in their communities to form a literacy class. The project supported the literacy class and drew on the health knowledge of the trained woman to help convince and educate the other participants about the value of GOBI-FFF.

Most out-of-school youth are engaged in some form of employment or income generation. When some instruction is focused on tasks related to employment, participants will be able to practice new skills immediately and develop a better understanding of the value of literacy. In addition, places of employment are often good venues for instruction, since participants are already gathered in one place. Additionally, employers may provide space for instruction, particularly if the program provides them with new employees or trains their current employees.

### EMPLOYMENT

The government of Egypt, with help from GTZ, supported a program that developed specific curriculum for workers. The curriculum built literacy and math skills around the specific types of tasks that were important to their employers, and the employers allowed classes to take place during working hours (GTZ, 1999).

### LINKS TO RESOURCES

In Tanzania, the national literacy program included a radio broadcast component. Literacy classes helped learners acquire basic print skills and begin reading, the radio program helped them build their vocabularies around the same development topics that were the focus of the literacy materials. The radio broadcasts aided the classroom teaching, and evaluation found that students who continued to listen to the radio broadcasts were more likely to maintain and improve their literacy skills after classes ended (Semali, 1993).

In some cases, the literacy program may be the only learning resource. However, some youth now live in areas that have schools, government or NGO skill training programs, libraries, internet cafes, private sector education and training opportunities, and education programs broadcast over radio or television. Literacy programs can make these resources available to their participants, or form links that participants may take advantage of while they are learning or after they complete the program.

### Step Three: Design Effective and Cost-Efficient Programs

Designing and implementing effective and cost-efficient programs is itself a multi-step process, which requires (a) identifying learning objectives, (b) developing an instructional design, (c) developing a program budget, (d) organizing a supportive policy framework, (e) building the capacity of service providers, and (f) developing linkages with relevant organizations. A number of different stakeholders should be involved in these steps, including potential youth participants, host country government officials, donor agency officials, and NGO officials.

#### a. Learning Objectives

Establishing clear learning objectives for literacy programs is the fundamental step for success. These objectives are the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be gained by participants successfully completing the program. They should comprise new literacy skills and other skills and knowledge that are integrated into the program. Identifying learning objectives requires focusing on several major categories of objectives useful for out-of-school youth, including:

- **Basic Literacy and Math Skills**  
These include component reading skills—decoding, vocabulary, fluency (speed and accuracy), and comprehension—as well as the ability to apply literacy and numeracy skills to tasks in work and daily life.
- **Academic Literacy Skills**  
Academic literacy skills refer to the skills needed to achieve national (primary or secondary school) literacy standards. The demonstration of mastery of these skills usually takes place through standardized achievement tests, and a passing

score often results in the granting of a primary or secondary school completion certificate.

- **Employability Skills**  
Employability skills include workplace behavioral skills, group communication skills, problem-solving skills, and technology skills. The employability skills are often a motivation to learn literacy, and literacy skills help in the learning of employability skills.
- **Entrepreneurship Skills**  
Entrepreneurship skills are the competencies needed to start and sustain a small business, including accessing credit, keeping financial accounts, and making written records.
- **Vocational and Technical Skills**  
Vocational and technical skills refer to the competencies needed to perform specific jobs. As described in Part I, research has shown that vocational and literacy skills both improve more quickly when training is integrated rather than taught separately.
- **Civic Participation Skills**  
Specific competencies needed to engage in community service and local governance. Skills include making a presentation at a public forum, facilitating or keeping minutes of a meeting, and monitoring the effectiveness of local services.
- **Family Life Skills**  
Literacy and numeracy skills enable young people to help their families gain access to health, family planning, and social services, and to share this information to their peers. Specific skills include caring for children, siblings, elders, or those with HIV/AIDS.

## PROGRAMS ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Basic Literacy and Math Skills

In Nepal, the Ministry of Education's literacy materials begin by teaching words, syllables, and letters, but they also teach the conventions of a graphic story (a comic book format). Students learn that a story is told left to right and top to bottom, and that dialogue is placed in bubbles associated with different characters. Students then begin to read simple graphic stories, and proceed to explore materials with development content that include graphic stories, diagrams, and text. Students in the Women's Economic Empowerment and Literacy (WEEL) program (a World Education and Ford Foundation project) use their new literacy and numeracy skills and their ability to read graphic stories to learn about savings and credit, and eventually to participate in savings and credit groups.

### Academic Literacy Skills

The Ministry of Education in Indonesia has developed three NFE school equivalency programs. Packet A is equivalent to primary school; Packet B is equivalent to lower secondary school, and Packet C is equivalent to upper secondary school. Each program consists of a set of learning materials and a national test. Completing the materials and passing the test leads to a credential equivalent to a school diploma (Comings & Smith, 2008).

### Employability Skills

The USAID-funded Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) is helping out-of-school youth improve their income-generating prospects. The project has three components:

1. Literacy skill training (participants have either no schooling or just 1 to 3 years of primary schooling)
2. Vocational training
3. Work experience through employment or in the development of a small business.

At the end of the 18-month program, participants have improved basic skills, marketable vocational skills, and experience employing their skills in work or self-employment (EDC, 2008).

### Entrepreneurship Skills

In Nepal, the WEEL program helps women acquire literacy skills and skills that help them save, access credit, and start income-generating activities. The women study with the Ministry of Education literacy materials, but these classes are supplemented by instruction and reading materials on savings and credit. Each class starts a small informal savings and credit program among themselves, and after the class ends, the women stay together as a group to learn more about how to be successful at small-scale income-generating projects. Eventually, the two efforts come together so that women can access credit and begin a small income generating activity.

## PROGRAMS ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CONTINUED)

### Vocational and Technical Skills

The Somaliland Education Initiative for Girls and Young Men (SEIGYM) provided vouchers to urban youth, who could use the vouchers for any type of vocational training. Since most vocational and technical training programs require basic literacy and math skills, youth without those skills used their vouchers to acquire basic skills, and then joined vocational or technical training programs (Oxenham et al., 2002).

### Civic Participation Skills

In Afghanistan, a literacy curriculum employed by the Literacy and Community Empowerment Program (LCEP) community learning centers (supported by the Ministry of Education with assistance from EDC) includes a focus on the principles and activities of the village Community Development Council. It also provided opportunities for young people to be actively involved in the civic life of their villages by writing village newspapers, participating in council meetings, and contributing to social audits of community needs (Janke, 2007).

### Family Life Skills

In Nepal, the Girls' Access to Education (GATE) program, supported by World Education, serves female out-of-school youth who have never entered the formal school system or were forced to drop out due to household responsibilities or other social and cultural constraints. The goal of the program is to provide girls with the opportunity to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, with a particular focus on competencies that keep them safe and prepare them for adult responsibilities. While girls learn literacy and math skills, they also learn about nutrition, reproductive health and the consequences of early marriage, early pregnancy, unsafe sex, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and the dangers of prostitution and other forms of abuse. An evaluation found that GATE raised the number of participants who were aware of girl trafficking from 70% to 94%, and increased the number of participants who could indicate specific ways to prevent girl trafficking from 3% to 59%. Participants also made gains in knowledge in the areas of HIV/AIDS, family planning, caring for children with pneumonia, and knowledge of newborn and prenatal nutrition.

### b. Instructional Design

Once a program's learning objectives have been identified, developing an instructional design involves choosing an effective service delivery model that removes constraints to participation faced by most out-of-school youth. The instructional design should establish a schedule that provides sufficient time on task, identify appropriate skill standards the program will help participants

achieve, determine what kinds of teaching and learning strategies are most appropriate for target participants and teachers, and outline both the content of learning materials and the format to guide materials design. Instructional design considerations are linked to the segment of youth to be served by the program, which are outlined above, in Step 2 of this section of the guide.

### SCHEDULING INSTRUCTION

The Health Education and Adult Literacy (World Education and the Ministry of Health) project in Nepal runs for 2 hours per evening, six evenings a week, for a period of six months, providing a potential 312 hours of instruction. However, most classes do not meet for all of the days, and most participants miss some classes. Most participants receive 150 to 250 hours of instruction during those six months. At the end of the six months, the monsoon agricultural season is so busy that participants do not have the time to learn. Once the three months of monsoon season end, the women again meet several times a month to read and discuss simple materials focused on health and family planning topics. In the beginning of these nine months of learning, the sessions are led by their teachers, and over time students are empowered to meet and learn on their own.

Program designers should build considerable flexibility, individualization, and relevance into the service delivery model when providing literacy instruction for out-of-school youth. The service delivery model is unlikely to be effective if it is modeled on formal schooling, as program participants are, in part, defined by their absence from formal education. Additionally, out-of-school youth are likely to have a much wider range of skills and learning ability than children in a school classroom, since they generally have larger vocabularies and greater general knowledge. Furthermore, out-of-school youth may be able to participate in a program that is far more intensive than most adult literacy programs.

Noting that a minimum number of contact hours between participant and teacher are necessary to master core literacy skills, Comings (1995) reviewed data from nine program evaluations in five countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe) and found that between 200 to 300 hours of instruction are needed to acquire a level of skill sufficient to use and retain over time. Evaluations showed that greater skill levels are attained when additional hours are spent in class or in organized group or self-study; this added impact appears to be especially true for math and writing, which are generally more difficult skills to master.

Out-of-school youth often have responsibilities that take precedence over study. During some times of the year, agricultural demands prevent program attendance, particularly in rural areas. In most rural communities, youth can find a few hours each day to study during the half of each year that is not dominated by agricultural activities. In urban communities, youth may have less time each day, but may be able to participate during most months of the year. In both urban and rural areas, festivals, holidays, marriage seasons, and other traditional times of celebration may close down classes for a month (or even two) each year.

Designing instruction with specific populations in mind, program planners will find that approximately 250 hours of instruction could take place in a rural area on a schedule of 2 hours per day, 6 days a week for 5 months. Alternatively, in an urban area, 250 hours of instruction could take place on a schedule of 2 hours per day, 3 days a week, for 10 months. Additionally, some out-of-school youth might be able to attend an intense course of study for several months.

How best to configure the necessary hours of instruction is a topic of emerging inquiry.<sup>2</sup> A consistent effort that includes both classroom instruction and individual practice is probably best, but there is insufficient evidence to determine whether instruction that takes place 8 hours a day over 30 days might achieve the same result as 2 hours of daily instruction over 120 days.

Effective educational improvement initiatives are guided by skill standards that provide a benchmark against which teaching, learning, and assessment take place. Developed through a consensus-building process with all key stakeholders, skill standards define what participants should know and be able to do by the end of a specific period of instruction, or in order to move on to the next level of instruction. Standards guide the development of teaching, learning, and assessment activities, and ensure that teaching, learning, and assessment are aligned.

### COMPONENTS OF A FLEXIBLE DESIGN

In Afghanistan, EDC employed an instructional model that ensured flexibility by:

- Offering instruction in a flexible manner that enabled youth to pursue learning at their own pace without interfering with their work, family, or community responsibilities;
- Using literacy and numeracy to support broader development objectives;
- Addressing the specific and differentiated learning needs of different sub-groups, (for example, female/male, rural/urban, beginning literacy/some literacy);
- Offering out-of-school youth the opportunity to gain a formal school credential or re-enter formal education;
- Providing well-designed, interesting, and relevant learning materials and instruction for participants, and ongoing professional development for non-traditional educators and administrators;
- Empowering participants to participate more fully in the economic, political, and social development of their communities by focusing instruction on real-life tasks in these three domains;
- Building on the assets and strengths of all participants (Janke, 2007).

2. Several communities in Michigan, California, and Alabama have replicated an intensive, computer-assisted, team-taught employment training program for young adults that integrates the teaching of reading, math, oral, and written communications with the learning of computer, career selection, and employability skills. The program usually runs 6 to 8 hours a day for 8 to 12 weeks. Preliminary evidence from Focus:HOPE, a major non-profit agency in Detroit that has employed this model since 1989, as well as other communities that have replicated it, indicates that participants gain 2 to 3 grade levels or 1 or 2 WorkKeys (a test of workforce basic and employment skills) levels in reading and math in this short period.

Many countries have developed or adopted standards for their formal education system, and some have created standards for adult literacy programs as well. Both can be adapted for use in integrated literacy programs for out-of-school youth. To ensure their relevance, standards should be built on a broad definition of the outcomes of learning skills as defined within the needs of work, family, and community, including:

- Literacy and communications skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, observing);
- Problem-solving skills (numeracy, planning, decision-making, critical thinking);
- Interpersonal skills (cooperation, conflict resolution);
- Life-long learning skills (research, taking responsibility for one's own learning, using information and communications technology).

The scope, scale, resources, and time frame of an integrated literacy program may influence whether new standards are developed or existing standards are adapted. Standards developed for use in some countries (even more highly-developed countries) may be adapted for use in developing countries, but the process of adapting standards must include consultation with appropriate in-country stakeholders, including teachers, and participants. Usually, the general categories of skills might transfer from one country to another, and some specific skills might be generic enough (the component skills of reading, for example) to transfer easily from one country to another. However, as skills and knowledge become more specific, they must be re-worked and adapted into the target context.

### DEVELOPING OR ADAPTING STANDARDS

The Equipped for the Future (EFF) initiative has developed a set of curriculum standards based on what people must know and be able to do in their roles as workers, parents, and citizens. These standards identify generic skills (for example, reading for understanding) that are then specified around a particular role. Additionally, EFF has developed a test of workforce readiness for the worker role.

Once the standards are agreed upon, they must be turned into learning objectives. Learning objectives define—in very specific terms—what a successful student will know, understand, and be able to do. To illustrate, if one of the standards is *to develop the literacy skills needed to participate in community governance*, then the learning objectives might include *Recording of the minutes of a meeting, Forming and expressing opinions, Group problem solving, Making public presentations, or Reviewing public accounts*. Clear objectives make designing a program easier. Once the learning objectives have been identified, program designers can develop an instructional approach that enables participants to practice new literacy and numeracy skills within specific tasks meant to improve participants' lives.

## APPROPRIATE TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

ActionAid's Reflect approach to literacy begins with a facilitator helping community members develop their own learning materials. These materials might include maps, calendars, matrices, and diagrams. The process might also include drama, story-telling, and songs that focus on social, economic, cultural, and political issues in their community. The learners decide what they want to learn, and the facilitator helps them learn it.

Rote learning is still the norm in much of the world, but it is not the most effective way to teach. Many out-of-school youth may expect that learning will follow this strategy, but there are more appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Good instruction employs a range of learning techniques that may fall along a continuum from highly-structured programmed instruction to open-ended learning based on solving real-life problems from the lives of the learners. In structured programmed instruction, curriculum and materials are based on standards and learning objectives. Learning is directed by the teacher, and although participants may be active learners, the curriculum dictates the learning activities and specifies formal standardized assessments. In open-ended problem-based instruction, teachers and participants develop the curriculum. The teacher is a facilitator or guide, and participants take an active role in shaping and managing their own learning. Assessment may be less formal and often offers students a variety of different ways to demonstrate their progress in mastering skills.

In countries where resources are low and teachers are inexperienced, literacy materials usually consist of just one or two books that carefully build from a few letters to full paragraphs, although some may start with meaningful and familiar words in the context of full sentences. Some workbooks (or primers) are short, as few as 24 pages; others may extend to more than 150 pages. Along with workbooks, a class might have a set of instructional aids such as charts, word or syllable cards, and games that help teachers to present and review content and help participants practice skills.

It is important that literacy programs invest in designing and developing materials to support the teaching of both basic and more sophisticated literacy skills. The collection of teaching materials should be extensive and robust enough that participants can reach self-sufficiency. The content should be relevant and of real interest to participants. Materials should have an appropriate number of words on a page, starting with few words in the beginning and slowly increasing as skills develop. The size

## CO-DEVELOPING PROGRAM MATERIALS

In Uganda, the Reflect program trained teachers to develop literacy learning materials with students. A World Bank evaluation (Okch et al., 2001) looked at the performance of Reflect and the traditional government literacy program and found that, when differences between the two student populations were taken into account, the two programs produced about the same tested learning gains. While the Reflect program was twice as expensive because of its investment in teachers, it was still inexpensive at around \$9 per student.

of letters and words should be sufficiently large, and the choice of font style sufficiently clear, for low-level readers. A good set of materials provides an empowering framework within which teachers and participants can create way to learn together.

Most literacy programs employ materials that participants and teachers can use both within and outside of instructional settings. The need for technical skills to design materials, and the economies of scale that drive down the cost of materials when they are produced in large numbers, suggest that materials should be developed at the national level. However, locally produced materials are often more interesting and valuable to students. Literacy materials can also be developed more informally by teachers with their students. Producing such materials requires a well-trained teacher, but the results may be significantly more relevant and interesting for students. A combination of nationally-developed materials supplemented by materials developed locally can balance these two approaches.

To ensure that the materials are well-designed, program staff must field test and revise those materials several times to ensure that participants' learning rates are acceptable. Each field test requires a full class cycle, usually a year's duration. Developing a complete set of effective literacy materials, therefore, requires between two and three years of testing. During the first year, the number of participants must be kept low so that the curriculum development staff can focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the new materials. After the first year, the program can serve a larger number of participants while simultaneously refining the materials.

### c. Program Budget

Developing a program budget begins once the program is designed. Literacy programs for out-of-school youth have four kinds of costs: (1) research and development, (2) one-time program start-up, (3) recurring or operational costs, and (4) monitoring and evaluation costs. Once a cost structure has been developed, program providers should develop measures of unit cost and cost effectiveness.

1. **Research and development (R&D) costs.** These are usually one-time expenses related to the conceptualization, design and pre-testing of program teaching and learning materials. These development activities are hugely important to the eventual success of the program, and, to be done well, usually require significant investments of time and funding. However, quite often the costs and resources associated with development activities are under-appreciated and under-funded.

Program managers often assume that materials are not important or that materials from another context can be easily adapted. However, the quality of learning materials is a key element that supports program success. Well-designed materials can greatly facilitate learning, especially in a self-paced learning environment or where the quality of instruction is sub-standard. R&D to develop, field-test, and improve materials can be costly, but that cost is spread over many years.

2. **One-time start-up costs.** These include capital costs and one-time training and technical assistance costs for new instructors.
  - **Capital costs.** These include facilities and equipment that a program must procure to be able to launch a program. Capital costs include items such as classroom construction or remodeling, classroom and office furniture and equipment, computers, printers, telecommunications and audio-visual equipment, and initial purchases of books and courseware. Since capital equipment and facilities wear out, they are amortized over three to seven years in the recurrent or annual operating budget (see below).
  - **Training costs.** These include the expenses involved in organizing and sustaining a system that builds the skills of teachers, as well as other staff including assessment specialists, supervisors, and managers. In addition to initial pre-program training, these staff frequently need close monitoring and technical assistance over the first few months to ensure that the program is being delivered correctly. Since training and technical assistance occurs regularly over the course of program delivery, this category also appears in the recurrent or annual operating budget.
3. **Recurrent or operating costs.** These are annual expenses incurred by functioning literacy programs. They go down dramatically as the number of units (literacy classes) increases. The following are the types of cost categories that are normally included in the annual operating budget:
  - Salaries and benefits
  - Consultants
  - Travel
  - Communications (telephones, Internet access, etc.)
  - Supplies (office and classroom)
  - Training
  - Rent and utilities
  - Remodeling and facility repairs
  - Amortization of capital equipment (3-7 years)
  - Miscellaneous
4. **Monitoring and evaluation costs.** These customarily require 5% to 10% of a program's budget to support such costs as developing and pilot-testing skills assessment instruments, training service providers in assessment techniques, and data collection and analysis.

**Estimating Unit Costs.** Unit costs are recurrent costs, such as those listed above, divided by the number of participants:

$$\text{Unit cost} = \frac{\text{total annual operating cost}}{\text{number of participants}}$$

Unit costs are frequently calculated as part of the M&E process. However, analyses of cost data on literacy programs in developing countries are not generally available. Where these are reported, there is a wide range. Programs in low-income countries report an annual cost of as little as \$4 per person to as much as \$50 per person.

**Budget Strategy for New Programs.** Most integrated literacy programs start small and grow larger as the staff develops experience and the organizational collaborations become stronger. Since the population that could benefit from services is usually much larger than the resources of the literacy programs, new programs usually select participants from among those with the highest motivation and fewest barriers to success. As the program matures, providers can begin to serve more difficult populations such as migrants from rural areas, formerly incarcerated youth, homeless or street youth, and youth with learning disabilities. In some cases, high-achieving participants can become teaching assistants and teachers. The unit cost and, therefore, the total budget might increase as the more difficult to serve youth become a larger percentage of the total population served.

### CONNECTING TO A NATION'S POLICY FRAMEWORK

Indonesia has a national single language policy. The government of Indonesia developed standards for three levels of NFE education that formed the framework for developing learning materials and tests.

Ghana's Ministry of Education took a different approach. They established learning standards for an adult literacy program, but then developed materials in 12 local languages.

Literacy House, an Indian NGO, took a middle path. They developed literacy materials that used local languages to help students learn and automate decoding skills, but then the materials change to Hindi, one of the two most important national languages.

#### d. Policy Framework

Constructing a supportive policy framework, as outlined previously in Part II of this guide, is key to designing effective and cost-effective programs, as national governments are more likely to support literacy programs for out-of-school youth when the literacy program helps meet national policy goals. Below are some examples of the types of policies and national goals that can be supported by literacy programs for out-of-school youth.

- **Curriculum standards or frameworks**

Some national governments have established standards, or learning frameworks, for literacy and nonformal education programs. These are usually similar to the curriculum standards of the nation's primary and secondary schools. Increasingly, however, governments are developing standards and frameworks that cut across all levels and types of education.

- **Equivalency certificates**

Most governments have targets for school completion, and participants are often motivated by a desire to gain a certificate of formal school equivalency. A national literacy program for out-of-school youth could certify equivalency.

- **National language policy**

A literacy program can start out in a local language to help participants learn the basic components of literacy, and then switch to the national language. Choosing a language of instruction is usually a political decision, but learning a national language is often of real value, and something that participants want and even prefer.

- e. **Service Provider Capacity**

Building the capacity of service providers should occur both with teachers and with implementing institutions (NGOs, government agencies, private sector providers). The lack of sufficiently trained teachers has implications for a program's instructional design. The less skilled the teacher cadre, the more appropriate it is to employ a well-scripted programmed instruction model that eases the burden on these teachers. Instructional designers sometimes use electronic or broadcast media to supplement face-to-face teaching and learning activities. Similarly, electronic and broadcast media can supplement face-to-face teacher training and support efforts. Many countries lack sufficiently trained teachers to staff their primary and secondary schools adequately, and so find it difficult to recruit qualified teachers for literacy programs serving out-of-school youth. Some communities address this problem by identifying and training literate community members to serve as teachers; others use high school and university students to teach as part of a community or national service program.

### **BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF NGOS**

The Ministry of Education in Nepal was approached by international NGOs wanting to buy materials and teacher training for their programs. Over time, the Ministry began implementing more of its adult literacy services through NGOs, both international and domestic, and through local government agencies. The Ministry produced and distributed the materials and trained teacher trainers to carry on their work.

Effective teachers draw on a range of strategies, techniques, and methods to help participants learn. Best practices in teaching reading include working with text that participants create themselves or that is meaningful to them, developing a store of words that students can recognize and use on sight, and practicing recognizing and combining specific sounds.

Teachers must have instructional guides and curriculum materials that provide clear and specific guidance that will be helpful and accessible, even to inexperienced teachers. In addition to pre-service training that uses carefully developed materials, new teachers should receive in-service training and other services to build their capacity such as mentoring, peer support groups, exchange visits, and progressively challenging workshops.

Literacy programs offer an opportunity for collaboration among national government, local government, and NGOs. As detailed in Part II of this guide, some aspects of a literacy program are best directed at a national level because they benefit from the economies of scale that a national effort can provide. Most NGOs do not have the resources needed to develop and field test a comprehensive set of literacy materials or maintain a high quality teacher-training department. A major strength of NGOs and local government, on the other hand, is their direct connection to the communities they serve. They can usually make decisions more quickly than national governments and mobilize all of their resources to support a single effort. NGOs and local governments, therefore, are often especially efficient and effective at recruiting teachers and supervising classes.

### **BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF TEACHERS**

In Afghanistan, literacy teachers were given a substantial initial training and then provided with follow-up training once they were teaching. This allowed teachers to get started, and then to build their skills over time (Janke, 2007).

## f. Organizational Linkages

The integrated nature of literacy programs for out-of-school youth requires developing relevant organizational linkages with entities that deliver literacy and non-literacy elements of their program. Such linkages can take many different forms, including:

- **Co-construction of a curriculum**  
Experts from the cooperating agency can help develop the curriculum; one valuable contribution, for example, would be to integrate reading materials from its sector into the curriculum.
- **Engaging sector staff as teachers or trainers**  
Staff from the cooperating agency could serve as teachers or teacher trainers, while sector staff based in the communities being served could be trained as literacy instructors or to make presentations and lead reading and discussion exercises. Sector staff can also participate as teacher trainers, taking responsibility to build the trainees' knowledge about their sector.
- **Experience-based learning activities**  
Integrated literacy programs become more interesting and motivational when participants have opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they are developing. For example, if students are reading how to assemble a piece of furniture, they will learn the vocabulary and grammar better if they actually assemble the furniture, or if they are reading written instructions for playing a particular game, playing the game in the process will reinforce the literacy skills.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LINKS

The WEEL project in Nepal involved staff from agencies involved in small-scale credit and lending, and brought some local staff from these agency's to literacy classes to talk to learners. The literacy materials supported women to become involved in saving and credit groups. Later in the class schedule, students in these groups were able to use credit to begin income-generating activities.

Initially the project connected women to government agencies, but eventually some of the women who had participated in the classes started new local NGOs, which then established their own institutional relationships with the government agencies.

- **Income-generating activities**  
Most literacy program participants would like to improve their income. Sector staff in agencies that support development of entrepreneurship and employment can link participants to services and programs that provide these opportunities, and integrate activities and materials related to employment into the literacy program.
- **Governmental linkages**  
The most supportive organizational collaboration is between national governments and local governments and NGOs. The national government has the capacity to develop and mass produce high quality, low cost materials and training programs. Local governments and NGOs can identify participants and teachers, supervise and monitor program implementation, and mobilize local resources. When all partners focus on what they do best, the collaboration can lead to a more effective and less costly program.

### Step Four: Implement Integrated Literacy Programs

Strong design, as detailed above, lays the groundwork for effective implementation. All stakeholders, including potential youth participants, host country government officials, donor agency officials, and NGO officials should be fully involved in the design phase, allowing them to be familiar with the program's learning objectives, instructional design, budget, and policy frameworks. Regardless of what organization or sector oversees implementation, officials from NGOs, country governments, and donor agencies are all leaders as implementation proceeds, as these organizations will help build the capacity of service providers and develop crucial linkages among other relevant organizations.

Implementation usually begins by recruiting participants from the identified population. Because the population that could benefit from services is usually greater than the resources available for literacy programs for out-of-school youth, new programs will often select participants from among those with the highest motivation and fewest barriers to success. As the program matures, staff will develop experience and organizational collaborations will become stronger, enabling providers to expand and serve greater numbers and more difficult populations of out-of-school youth.

### PLACE YOUTH INTO APPROPRIATE GROUPS

In the Philippines, the Ministry of Education's Alternative Learning System provides two tracks. Young people with little or no education enter a basic literacy class, while those with sufficient literacy skills enter a primary or secondary school equivalency program. Those who enter the literacy program can eventually enter the school equivalency program. In the school equivalency program, students study printed modules at their own pace, while the teacher moves from one student to the other providing individualized help. Informal peer teaching naturally occurs among learners (Comings & Smith, 2008).

Once participants have been identified and recruited, they should be interviewed or otherwise assessed to determine their literacy levels, as well as their characteristics and needs beyond literacy. How old are the participants, and of what gender and educational history? Do participants need basic literacy and math skills, or are they considering a future that requires specific academic literacy skills? Is there a particular set of employability or entrepreneurship skills that would be valuable in the region, and are potential students seeking credentials in those areas? Are youth motivated by the possibility of increasing their vocational and technical skills, civic participation, or family skills? Is there interest among participants in a particular development sector, and is the implementing agency able to offer a depth of experience and relationships in that sector?

## REVISING PROGRAM MATERIALS

In Nepal, the Ministry of Education's materials are made up of two 120-page primers. The materials were first drafted after extensive consultation with literacy and development sector experts, and were tried out on a small scale and then revised. After the first tryout, the number of students served was in the thousands, but the materials were still being improved each year. Even while tens of thousands of participants were being served, the materials were reviewed each year and small or even extensive changes were made to improve them.

Investigating these questions in concrete (rather than abstract) terms, and for a specific set of potential participants, will enable implementers to identify additional goals that can be integrated into the literacy program. Depending on the size of the participant population, the number of teachers, and the size and geography of the region, it may be possible to place youth in groups based on their literacy levels as well as the motivating topics, skills, and sectors integrated within the literacy program.

Implementation should then follow the program design steps outlined above in Step 3, with a more specific focus on the characteristics of the targeted participants, their needs and goals for literacy, and the precise topics and competencies to be integrated into literacy instruction.

As the program proceeds, the implementing organization should continually monitor the program to:

- Modify instructional techniques and materials to ensure their applicability and impact;
- Assess student learning and make adjustments to instruction, materials, and teacher training to increase effectiveness; and
- Implement processes that celebrate any and all successes, and help keep youth motivated to persist in the program and reach their personal goals and program objectives.

In some cases, high-achieving participants can also become teaching assistants, teachers, and mentors as the program continues and expands.

### Step Five: Program Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of literacy programs for out-of-school youth takes place at three different levels:

- Observation and documentation of program inputs or activities;
- Measuring program outcomes, which include the skills and knowledge participants learn; and
- Assessing program impact, which includes ways by which participants use those skills and knowledge.

Measuring inputs and outcomes is usually not difficult. The program budget provides an estimation of the inputs, and the outcomes can be measured by simple tests that assess the skills and knowledge presented in the program's materials. Most programs, however, do not pre-test students, assuming that they come to the program without skills. Today, however, many youth, if not most, have attended school and have developed some literacy skills. Without a pre-test, the program has no way to know if a student has made progress.

Unfortunately, costly experimental studies are required to make the strongest case for impact. In these studies, youth who wish to attend a literacy program are randomly assigned to either the experimental group that receives program services or the control group that does not. In this way, there is a clear indication that the two groups were the same, except that one participated in the literacy program. If program services are rare—that is, most youth do not have an opportunity to join a program—then it is acceptable to establish a comparison or control group of youth who are identical to the group that receives program services.

### Assessing Learning

Methods for assessing learning should be selected during the program planning stage and embedded in the program provider's overall plan to monitor and evaluate its program. The assessment measures will reflect the skills standards and teaching approaches that shape the program itself. Some examples of typical assessment measures are provided in the box on the next page.

The assessment measures themselves need not be elaborate. A few key indicators of success gathered from a sample of participants through simple pre-program participation and post-program participation assessments can be almost as accurate as expensive, comprehensive assessment of all students.

Assessment results are necessary for programs to become accountable to funders, governments, and other stakeholders. The results of both formal and informal assessments are especially valuable to service providers and youth participants; they can boost participants' motivation by enabling youth to monitor their own progress in achieving their goals, and they can improve teacher effectiveness by providing feedback about what techniques are working best and which information needs more review, so teachers can improve instruction throughout the length of the program. All program components—including instructional design, program budget, policy framework, capacity of service providers, and organizational linkages—should be reviewed in terms of their contribution to student learning objectives, so that as the program continues, changes, or expands, adjustments can be made to maximize learning outcomes.

## TYPICAL ASSESSMENT MEASURES

Learning achievement in basic literacy and numeracy skills (grade-level improvement, or gains on criterion-referenced tests)

Learning rates (e.g., educational functioning levels per 100 hours of instruction)

Program completion/graduation rates

Placement rates (jobs, college, etc.)

Wage rate growth after training

Measures of civic involvement such as voting behavior, joining service organizations, attending community meetings, or volunteering for civic causes

Measures of health literacy, such as knowledge of basic nutrition, personal hygiene, AIDS prevention, drug abuse prevention, etc.

Measures of financial literacy, such as understanding credit or calculating a bank balance

## Assessing Cost-effectiveness

Programs are sometimes asked to determine whether their outcomes are worth the cost of the inputs. This is called “cost effectiveness,” and is calculated by taking units of learning or other positive outcomes, and dividing them by units of cost. Such calculations are performed with recurrent (not developmental) costs of programs with similar clients and similar aims. Developmental costs of programs are not included in this type of cost-effectiveness formula.

Some of the more popular measures of cost-effectiveness include:

- Cost per participant (a useful starting point, but does not indicate effectiveness);
- Cost per program completer (which will, inevitably, be higher than cost per participant);
- Cost per learning outcome (for example, cost per grade-level gain in reading, or cost per student who passes a test of information on health and family planning);
- Cost per positive placement (such placements may include, for example, any job, a job paying at least a certain wage, transition to any formal education, or transition to a designated level such as secondary or tertiary education).

## **Assessing the Impact of Literacy Learning on the Community**

To measure the impact of integrated literacy programs on the community, assessment should focus on development sector outcomes. Such outcomes might include results or consequences of the program on community health, safety, employment, business and economic conditions, education, democracy and governance, or families. Each of these sectors typically has several measures to indicate whether a particular community or region is improving, worsening, or staying the same.

Youth themselves have goals for their education that can be assessed for impact. Youth may want to qualify for entry or re-entry into the formal school system or job training programs, or they may want to qualify for a job or a better paying job. In both cases, successful participants may need certification to secure entry into education and training or into a job.

Integrated literacy programs that choose to offer formal certification should identify the skills and knowledge needed to make the next step into further education and training or employment so that educational institutions and employers will value it. The assessment tool used to grant certification should limit the content it assesses to those specific skills and knowledge. The instructional materials and methods should prepare students to be successful with that assessment, and teachers should be trained to use those materials and methods. If certification is to be part of the program (as is particularly desirable as an EFA component), the program should be designed to lead students directly to a certificate, or equally directly from the literacy program into a certification program. The number of youth who successfully enter and the number who complete a certification program will then represent another measure of the literacy program's impact.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Certification of nonformal education programs is the subject of an EQUIP publication (*Nonformal Education in the 21st Century: Academic Equivalency and Workforce Readiness Certification for Adults and Out-of-school Youth*), and it suggests a simple approach to program design.

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion.

As a result of the demographic changes, the number of people in the world who are 65 years of age and older is expected to increase from 200 million in 1990 to 600 million in 2050.

The demographic changes are also expected to increase the number of people in the world who are 15 years of age and older, from 4.5 billion in 1990 to 5.5 billion in 2050.

The demographic changes are also expected to increase the number of people in the world who are 15 years of age and younger, from 1.1 billion in 1990 to 1.5 billion in 2050.

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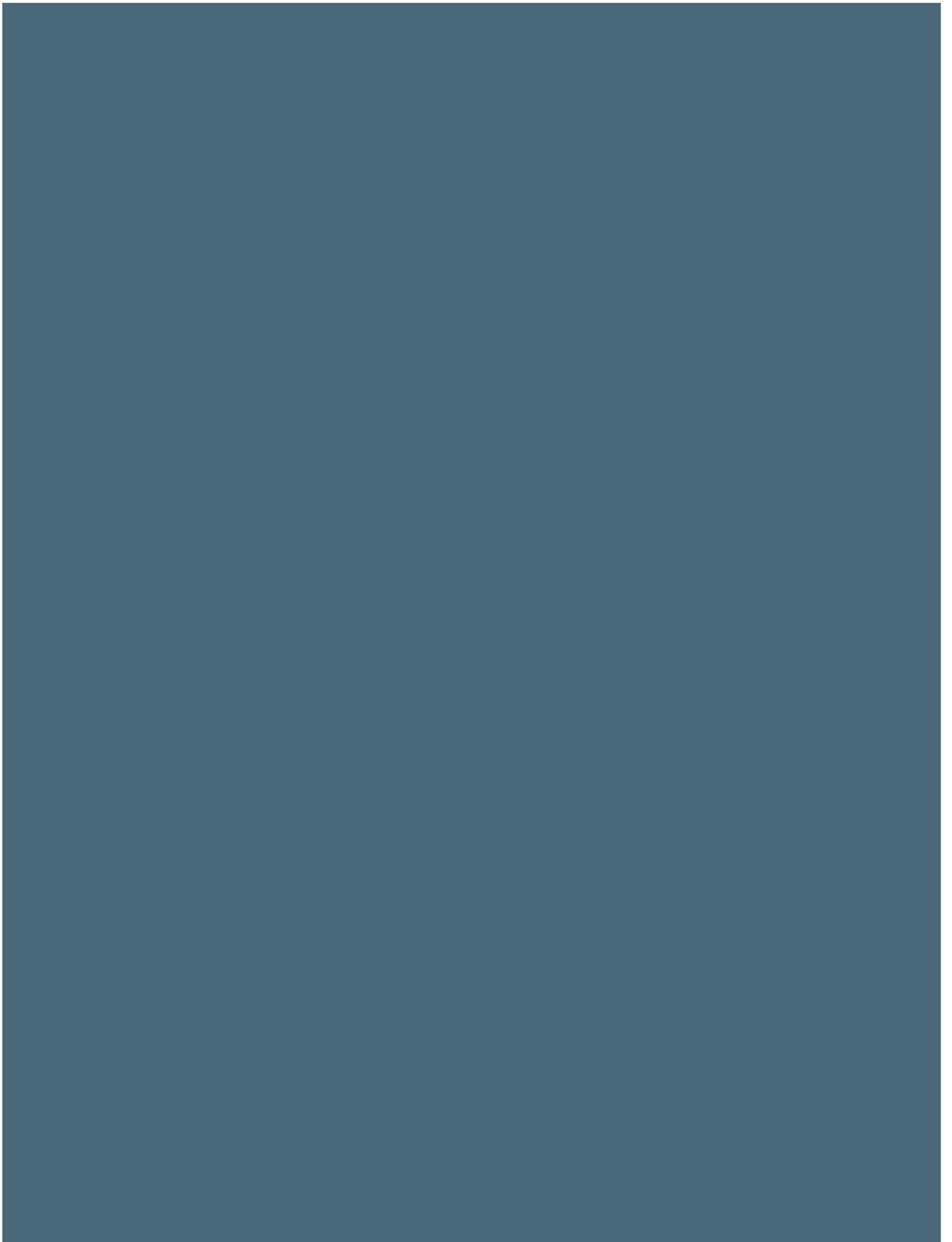
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## Conclusion

Research has confirmed the effectiveness of integrated literacy programs that recognize and validate the knowledge and skills that youth have gained through local and personal experience. Governments and NGOs can serve out-of-school youth by recognizing the value of self-motivation and active involvement; emphasizing the integration of economic, social, and cultural meaning with the acquisition of literacy skills; starting at participants' levels of competence and supporting them in defining and reaching higher levels of proficiency; and drawing on indigenous knowledge and community assets. Literacy programs that emphasize interactive and informal relationships between teachers encourage participation, discussion, and cooperative learning, and support out-of-school youth when they are compatible with a flexible learning schedule so that participants may continue to fulfill their household and work responsibilities.

USAID and other development agencies have a special interest in the success of the youth in the countries that receive funding. Young people who acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills find it easier to succeed as adults, and their chances for success will increase as their countries build their economies and need more highly educated workers.

Young people represent the future of any country's economy, political system, and social order, and they also represent a force for immediate good or ill. Youth want to succeed as workers, parents, and citizens of their communities. Given a chance to succeed now, they are more likely to contribute to growth and stability later.



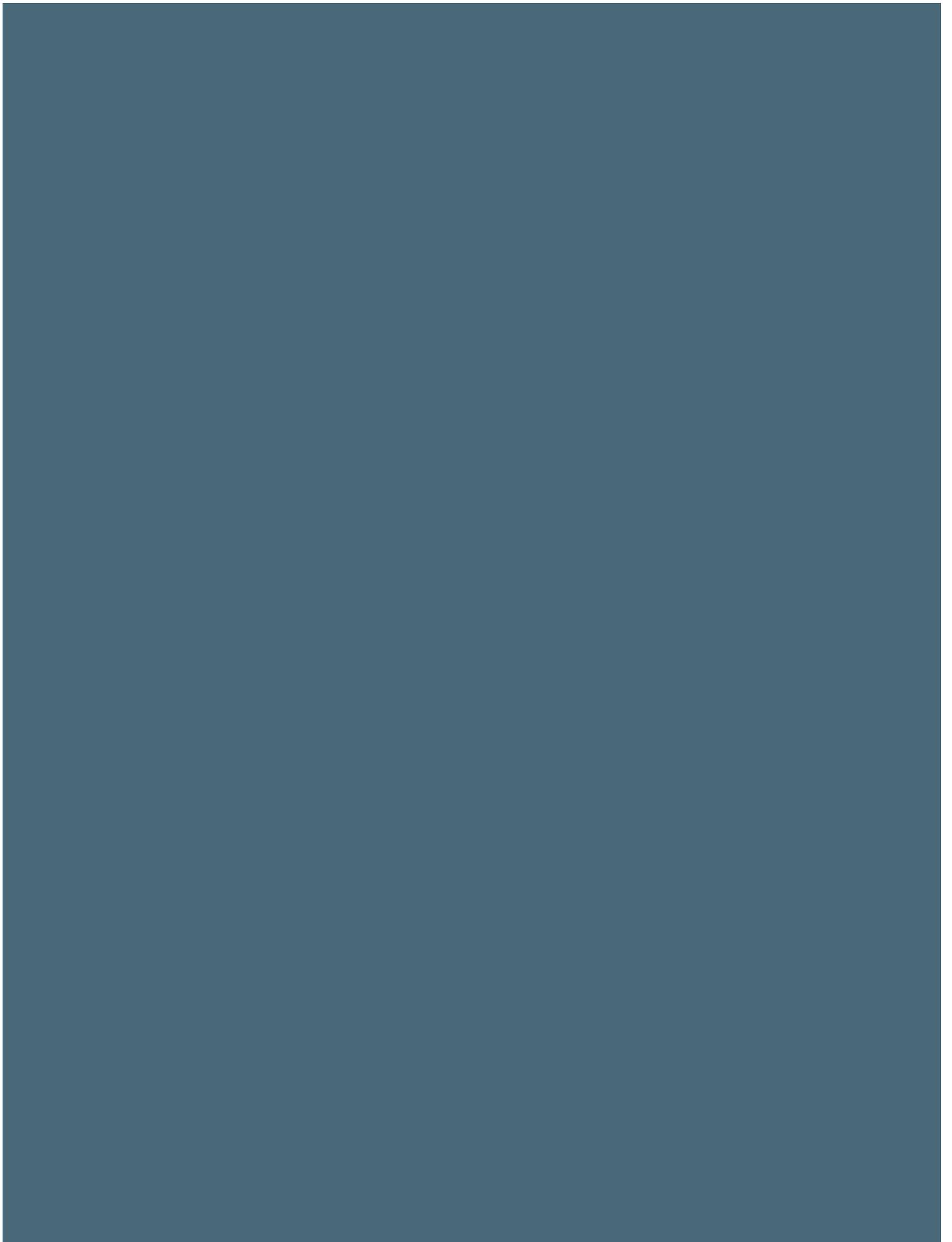
## Resources for Additional Information

*Teaching Adults to Read: The World Education Approach to Adult Literacy Program Design* by John Comings and Lisa Soricone (2005) provides practical advice on how to design a literacy program and detailed case studies of projects in Africa and Asia. It is available at: [http://www.worlded.org/docs/Publications/teaching\\_adults\\_to\\_read.pdf](http://www.worlded.org/docs/Publications/teaching_adults_to_read.pdf)

*Skills and Literacy Training for Better Livelihoods: A Review of Approaches and Experiences* by John Oxenham, Abdoul Hamid Diallo, Anne Ruhweza Katahoire, Anna Petkova-Mwangi, and Oumar Sall (2002) describes and analyzes adult literacy programs in Africa that have focused, at least in part, on vocational and entrepreneurship skills. It is available at: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2002/04/26/000094946\\_02041204272593/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2002/04/26/000094946_02041204272593/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf)

*The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning* is a non-profit international research, training, information, documentation, and publishing center on literacy, non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning. UIL links educational research, policy and practice in these areas in order to contribute to enhancing access to learning and improving the environment and quality of learning for all in all regions of the world. UIL's URL is: <http://www.unesco.org/uil/>

*Writing the Wrongs: International Benchmarks for Adult Literacy* by David Archer and Lucia Fry (2005) makes the case for investment in adult literacy is important and then describe 12 "benchmarks" that if met would improve the outcomes and impact of literacy programs. This publication was supported by ActionAid, a UK NGO and is informed by their decades of experience in the field. It is available at: <http://www.actionaid.org/docs/writing%20wrongs%20literacy%20benchmarks%20report.pdf>



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# About EQUIP3

The Educational Quality Improvement Program 3 (EQUIP3) is designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. We work to help countries meet the needs and draw on the assets of young women and men by improving policies and programs that affect them across a variety of sectors. We also provide technical assistance to USAID and other organizations in order to build the capacity of youth and youth-serving organizations.

EQUIP3 is a consortium of 12 organizations with diverse areas of expertise. Together, these organizations work with out-of-school youth in more than 100 countries.

To learn more about EQUIP3 please see the website at [www.equip123.net/equip3/index\\_new.html](http://www.equip123.net/equip3/index_new.html).

