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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Reference Number: RFI-SOM-2022-002

Title: USAID/Somalia Accelerated Basic Education Activity

Release Date: Friday, December 16, 2022.

Response Due Date: Monday, January 16, 2023, 10:00 am Nairobi Time

The United States Government, represented by the U.S. Agency for International Development Somalia (USAID/Somalia), is issuing this RFI for interested organizations to provide responses and comments on some or all of the questions in the document below.

Please note this is an RFI and is not a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Applications (RFA). It is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government or USAID to issue any solicitation or Notice of Funding opportunity, or ultimately award a contract or assistance agreement on the basis of this RFI, or to pay for any information voluntarily submitted as a result of this request. USAID is not seeking technical or cost proposals at this time. Do not submit any proposal/application at this time in response to this RFI. Responding to this RFI does not give any advantage to any firm or organization in any subsequent competition. Responses will be held confidential. USAID reserves the right to respond to any, all, or none of the comments and questions submitted. USAID's responses (if any) will be posted on <http://grants.gov> please continue to monitor the site for any postings. USAID reserves the right to contact one or more of the RFI respondents to engage in co-design or co-creation processes prior to the issuance of the subsequent solicitation.

Please submit your comments to this RFI (No more than 3500 words) via email to Jesse Gutierrez at jgutierrez@usaid.gov with a copy to Aziz Alibhai at aalibhai@usaid.gov with the subject entitled: "RFI: USAID/Somalia Accelerated Basic Education Activity", no later than the date and time stated above.

This Notice can be viewed and downloaded from the Internet at <http://grants.gov>. Thank you for your interest in the subject request for information.



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USAID/Somalia Accelerated Basic Education Activity - Request for Information

I. ACTIVITY

USAID/Somalia is in the process of designing a new Accelerated Basic Education Activity. This \$23-\$30 million activity will build upon USAID/Somalia's investment in non-formal education and increase access to education for the nearly four million out-of-school children and youth in Somalia. The Mission anticipates that the Activity will be implemented over a period of five years, in close partnership with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (MoECHE), and Federal Member States (FMS) Ministries of Education, and within USAID/Somalia's Country Development and Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) focal zone. USAID/Somalia seeks public comment/feedback in order to enhance its Accelerated Basic Education Activity design process.

The Activity will expand access to education in communities where current demand is not being met, and a free, public option is needed. The activity also aims to improve the overall quality of education by increasing teacher capacity and further developing Teaching and Learning Materials that are evidence-based. The activity will also explore sustainable pathways for linking students who complete accelerated basic education (including graduates of USAID/Somalia's current Bar ama Baro program) with opportunities to continue their formal education, enter a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or other workforce development program or be connected to additional employment opportunities as well as develop necessary life skills. Finally, the activity will create opportunities for communities to actively engage and partner with the FGS and FMS and private sector in the process of strengthening the local education system.

USAID/Somalia seeks feedback on the questions listed in Section IV of this document.

II. BACKGROUND

The goal of the USAID/Somalia 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperative Strategy (CDCS) is to see Somalia and its people more effectively withstand disruptions and increasingly drive their own development. Since the fall of the state in 1991, Somalia has faced chronic instability generated by intercommunal conflicts and humanitarian crises¹. While the establishment of the federal government in 2012 opened a period of renewed opportunity for state-building and stabilization, Somalia continues to face numerous challenges including ongoing conflict, violent extremism and severe food insecurity brought on by several years of drought². Somalia remains one of the poorest countries in Africa with nearly seven out of ten Somalis living in poverty and an estimated per capita income of \$502 as of 2021³. Additionally, nearly 50 percent of Somalis are estimated to be food insecure, a situation which is worsening due to the ongoing drought⁴.

¹ USAID Somalia CDCS 2020-2025

² World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview>

³ World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview>

⁴ World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview>



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The country also has one of the youngest populations in the world with over 80 percent of the nation's 16 million people estimated to be under the age of 35⁵. Population growth is currently at three percent and is unlikely to diminish given the fertility rate of 6.9 children per woman⁶. In addition to rapid population growth, the country is also witnessing dramatic growth in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as a result of the ongoing crises. As of January 2022, an estimated 2.9 million in Somalia were IDPs⁷. This number is growing monthly, with UNICEF reporting that an additional 1,170,842 people were displaced between January and September 2022⁸. Many of the IDPs are moving towards urban areas and contributing to the rapid rate of urbanization in Somalia which is estimated at 4 percent.⁹

As a result of the difficult conditions that have existed in Somalia over the past 30 years, access to education is severely limited. Currently, an estimated four million children and youth are out of school, representing over 70 percent of the school-age population¹⁰. In the 6-9 age group, 45 percent of children have never had the opportunity to attend school and for those ages 14-17 that proportion increases to half.¹¹ The average number of years of schooling that children receive is 1.72 (1.48 for girls and 1.95 for boys)¹². Low levels of education are a driving factor behind the fact that only half the population is literate¹³.

In addition, most education is provided outside of the public sector with only three percent of schools being fully funded by the government¹⁴. In 2020, education accounted for only five percent of government spending which is far below the UNESCO recommendation of 20 percent¹⁵. In 2019, the government spent an average of \$268 per learner attending public primary schools¹⁶. As a result of the lack of public funding, private, community and, in some cases, NGO-run schools provide the majority of education and households contribute seven times what the government does to children's education¹⁷. Since the majority of schools charge fees, even at \$99 - 132 per year,¹⁸ education remains out of reach for the poorest families.

Given the diversity of the providers and the multiple challenges facing the federal government as it rebuilds the public education system, there is a lack of adequate resources, and little oversight and regulation of schools. The Government recently announced plans to recruit and train 3,000 new government teachers and the budget for education has increased. While these are promising signs, as it stands only 36 percent of teachers in public, private and community schools are considered to

⁵ USAID Somalia CDCS 2020-2025

⁶ USAID Somalia CDCS 2020-2205

⁷ UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/reports/somalia-situation-reports-2022>

⁸ UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/reports/somalia-situation-reports-2022>

⁹ USAID Somalia CDCS 2020-225

¹⁰ Harun Maruf, "Somalia Fights Back Against Al-Shabab Attack on Education Sector", VOA, Nov 16, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-fights-back-against-al-shabab-attack-on-education-sector-/6837584.html>

¹¹ Education Sector Analysis, 72

¹² Education Sector Analysis, 19

¹³ USAID Somalia CDCS 2020-2025

¹⁴ Education Sector Analysis, 90

¹⁵ Education Sector Analysis, 91

¹⁶ Education Sector Analysis, 102

¹⁷ Education Sector Analysis, 21

¹⁸ World Bank Study on the Role of Non-State Providers of Education in Somalia, 2018



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be qualified which may be, in part, a reflection of the low pay teachers receive¹⁹. The teaching profession is also highly gendered with females representing only 12 to 18 percent of the teaching staff at the primary level and only 5 percent at the secondary level²⁰. Additionally, there is great variety in the type and number of textbooks available to students. Since the finalization of the National Curriculum Framework in 2017, the government has developed new Somali language textbooks for the primary, upper primary and secondary levels and distributed 250,000 free primary textbooks²¹. Although little data is available on learning outcomes for Somali students, the majority of students sitting for the national form four and 8th grade exams passed although this represents a limited number of the total school age population²².

III. PRELIMINARY ACTIVITY PURPOSE, OUTCOMES, AND INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

The purpose of the new activity is to increase equitable access to quality education for out-of-school children within USAID's CDCS focal zone while increasing government capacity to oversee the public provision of education. The activity aims to achieve this goal by focusing on:

1. Increasing access to free, basic accelerated education programs in secure areas with the greatest need
2. Improving learning outcomes in foundational skills areas (literacy, numeracy and social-emotional learning)
3. Increasing community engagement and local ownership of Accelerated Basic Education (ABE) programming
4. Strengthening the local, public education system to increase free educational options

IV. LIST OF QUESTIONS

Respondents to this RFI are asked to provide input on some or all of the questions below **(maximum number of words for the document is 3500)**.

1. **Access:** What are effective, inclusive and conflict-sensitive practices in accelerated education or other non-formal education programs that have been successful in Somalia, or similar contexts, in increasing access for the hardest-to-reach populations (nomadic, IDPs, children with disabilities and conflict affected)?
2. **Learning Outcomes:** What are effective, inclusive and conflict-sensitive practices in accelerated education or other non-formal education programs that have been successful in Somalia, or similar contexts, in improving learning outcomes in foundational skills (literacy, numeracy and SEL)?

¹⁹ Education Sector Analysis, 124

²⁰ Education Sector Analysis, 124

²¹ Education Sector Analysis, 138

²² Education Sector Analysis, 115



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3. **Root Causes:** Propose ideas on what type of support to federal, state and local education officials, such as curriculum content and education delivery modalities, can build on lessons learned from past accelerated education programs and better address the root causes underlying the high number of out-of-school children and youth in Somalia?
4. **Parent/Caregiver/Community Engagement:** What approaches have been shown to increase parent/caregiver/community engagement in accelerated and other non-formal education programs in conflict and fragile environments to effectively improve learning and well-being outcomes, promote sustainability, create greater accountability, and strengthen the provision of education at the local level?
5. **Female Teachers:** What are the effective, sustainable, and contextualized practices to overcome the barriers around female teacher recruitment and retention in the education sector in Somalia?
6. **Pathways:** What are feasible, sustainable pathways and requirements for transitioning graduates of accelerated education programs to mainstream public or private education, TVET, work, or entrepreneurship opportunities? Are there unique considerations for conflict environments?
7. **Sustainability:** What are some proposed ways to increase government and community engagement and provide for greater sustainability of public education in the Somalia context given low levels of domestic resources and infrastructure?
8. **Education System Resilience:** Given the current Somalia context, and taking into account what the education sector has learned from the COVID crisis, what are best practices/interventions to increase the resiliency of the education system in order to respond to changing supply-side and demand-side needs?
9. **Marginalization:** What are some proposed sustainable interventions that can reduce educational disparities, address inequity, improve participation, increase retention, and education performance of children from marginalized groups? What strategies should be employed to increase female student enrollment and retention?
10. **CVE:** What are strategies – through education – to increase government legitimacy and deter the pull of extremist groups?
11. **Teacher Professional Development:** What are some effective approaches to systemically and sustainably build teacher capacity in a way that leads to qualification in conflict and fragile environments with low domestic resources dedicated to education?



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12. **Accountability:** Given Somalia's operating environment, what are some efficient approaches to monitor field interventions, verify fidelity of program implementation, and manage risks of fraud, waste, and abuse?

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All information provided will become the property of USAID and will not be returned. USAID reserves the right to use information provided by respondents for its purposes. Responses may be used by USAID without restriction or limitation. Proprietary information must not be submitted.

VI. REFERENCES

1. Harun Maruf, *Somalia Fights Back Against Al-Shabab Attack on Education Sector*, VOA, Nov 16, 2022. <https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-fights-back-against-al-shabab-attack-on-education-sector-/6837584.html>
2. UNESCO, *Education sector analysis: Federal Government of Somalia: assessing opportunities for rebuilding the country through education*, 2022. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380838>
3. UNICEF, Somalia: Humanitarian Situation Report, No 9, September 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/media/3221/file/SitRep%20September%202022.pdf>
4. USAID, USAID/Somalia, *Country Development Cooperation Strategy-Somalia, 2020-2025*. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Somalia_CDSCS_External-2025.pdf
5. The World Bank, *The World Bank in Somalia Overview*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/somalia/overview>