



Let Us Learn: Reaching the Hardest to Reach

A Proposal, 2016

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Overview

Every child has a right to an education. Yet children around the world continue to be denied this basic right because of challenges with access, lack of educational standards and ingrained inequities. Despite our best efforts, access to education remains a global issue. In 2011, 58 million children were out of primary school and 63 million adolescents were out of junior high school. Of children with the opportunity to attend school, 250 million still could not read or write, demonstrating the hurdles stemming from poor quality education.

In 2011, prompted by the grim statistics on education, private donors Stefan and Susan Findel founded UNICEF's *Let Us Learn* program to champion the goal of "leaving no one behind". Building upon UNICEF's Out-of-School-Children Initiative and Child-Friendly Education programs, *Let Us Learn* represents the critical and progressive next step founded on the three pillars of: 1.) reaching out of school children, 2.) expanding girls' education and; 3.) improving learning outcomes for learners. **Through a giving challenge generously sponsored by the Findels, they will be matching any contributions made towards the Let Us Learn program.**

To start, *Let Us Learn* developed a set of criteria to identify countries where traditional approaches have not been successful in improving the educational outcomes for the hardest to reach children. Specifically, UNICEF looked to the following indicators:

- Lowest in achievements to deliver education to all children.
- Lowest quartile of the Human Development Index.
- High levels of out-of school children.
- Outstanding and severe issues of equity.
- High susceptibility to natural disasters and conflict.
- Alignment of country program with the three pillars of *Let Us Learn*.

Using this methodology, *Let Us Learn* found that Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Liberia, Madagascar and Nepal represented great opportunities to pilot the program, as each presents an urgent need for more equitable access to education, especially for girls and marginalized groups.

***Let Us Learn's* unique programming employs a fit-for-purpose design.** By examining targeted regions within each country to gain a situational understanding of traditional and localized educational barriers, UNICEF education experts have tailored programming to reach the most marginalized children, especially those living in remote and rugged geography, and in conflict situations. With innovative monitoring and evaluation methods using mobile technology, *Let Us Learn* can quickly respond to situational issues, and adapt the program to ensure the greatest level of success.

Over the next three years, *Let Us Learn* will continue to address the three pillars of the initiative in each of the five countries through targeted approaches, adapted to address their context specific needs. The recently published *Investment Case for Education and Equity* links many social advances to women's education, including; family planning, career prospects, household decision making, and the under-five child mortality rate. **Therefore, a greater emphasis will be placed on adolescent girls' education as well as refining and scaling innovative approaches that have proven successful.** The next three years of the program will also support the integration of *Let Us Learn* activities into national education systems to ensure long-term sustainability.

Global Program Results

Innovative Solutions

While challenges are often similar across program countries, solutions can vary significantly. ***Let Us Learn* is well positioned to provide the adaptable, relevant, small-scale programming that is necessary to reach marginalized populations and geographic areas that would not be serviced otherwise.** The program's flexible design and frequent mobile meetings by phone allow UNICEF to quickly respond to challenges and customize interventions to achieve an optimal solution. Innovative strategies are used to address disability, menstrual hygiene management and youth empowerment. Several distinct areas of innovative programming have emerged during the first three years:

- In Nepal, *Let Us Learn* is piloting a mobile program to support learning opportunities for children living on the street and in bazaars.
- In Afghanistan, mobile technology enables *Let Us Learn* to monitor education outcomes in classrooms in remote and insecure areas.
- A digital mapping project in Madagascar allows participants to photograph and demonstrate the risks in their school environments as well as the progress they have made on reducing those risks. This project not only demonstrates educational advances, but reveals local student perception of community.

Monitoring for Results

Monitoring and evaluating program impact is essential to *Let Us Learn*. Each of the five countries track inputs, outputs and outcomes, looking at both qualitative and quantitative indicators to best capture the progress achieved throughout the program. As challenges arise during the monitoring and evaluation process, **UNICEF seeks innovative solutions to ensure the best results for children to learn.**

While each *Let Us Learn* program is customized to address specific local needs and barriers, as well as respond to situational issues, monitoring in all countries will reflect the following universal indicators:

- The number of girls reached in *Let Us Learn* projects.
- The number of female teachers trained.
- The number of out of school children reached.



Adolescent girls study cosmetology skills at a UNICEF supported vocational school in Liberia. The Government continues to rebuild infrastructure and services destroyed during 14 years of civil war that ended in 2003.

 © UNICEF / Noorani.

Lessons from *Let Us Learn* will continue to inform UNICEF’s broader work in education, with outcomes and program results inspiring the development of life skills metrics and serving as a strong prototype in the emerging area of secondary education. **Education for adolescent girls has been identified as a major priority within UNICEF’s Gender Action Plan, and *Let Us Learn* is pioneering models for education in and outside the classroom.** *Let Us Learn*’s innovative practices and fit-for-purpose design continues to be a lauded example of successful education programming.

Progress was made in all of the three priority pillars of *Let Us Learn*, examples include:

- In Bangladesh, 1,500 out of school adolescents acquired skills in a range of trades through apprenticeship training, and over 80 percent of training graduates found jobs.
- Girls Access to Education (GATE) classes supporting 8,297 minority girls in Nepal to achieve basic literacy, numeracy and learn critical health skills such as menstrual health hygiene.
- Approximately 1,000 adolescents (70 percent girls and 30 percent boys) in four target counties participated in a life skills training on HIV and AIDS entitled, *Facts for Life*.
- In Madagascar, nearly 100 schools were outfitted with separate latrines for boys and girls.
- Since the *Let Us Learn* program started in Liberia, the school retention rate for girls has risen from 80 percent to 95 percent.

***Let Us Learn* has reached over 895,000 children to date.** UNICEF plans to scale up successful initiatives and ensure that learning is shared with other countries in an effort to support every last child’s right to a quality education.

Let Us Learn Afghanistan: Fatima

Born to a very poor family and barred from education opportunities under Taliban rule, Fatima assumed that since she had not started school at the age of seven that she would be illiterate for the rest of her life. At the age of twelve, she was identified by the Ministry of Health as a good candidate for the *Let Us Learn* program, and her father agreed to let her attend the Accelerated Learning Center within a few minutes’ walk from her home. At fifteen, Fatima is now a stand-out student, mastering mathematics and language courses and helping her younger brothers with their schoolwork. She is grateful that she can now read and write, and believes it will help her learn and achieve even more in the future.

The Way Forward

Stefan and Susan Findel recognize that education is the key to reducing poverty and opening up opportunities for a rewarding and enriching future – and one that is more equitable for every child. The Findels provided the seed funding to jumpstart the *Let Us Learn* program, and are **matching any gifts through a giving challenge with the U.S. Fund**. With your generous donation, and matching proceeds, *Let Us Learn* will be fully funded through 2017, allowing the program to achieve its targets over the next three years.

It is difficult to imagine a world where learning to read or write is considered an impossibility – and yet, many children around the world are resigned to this thought. With your partnership and commitment, *Let Us Learn* will provide an education to the world’s most vulnerable children, opening doors to a more promising future. With your support, we can train teachers, raise awareness and provide children with a second chance to learn and grow.



UNICEF Nepal National Ambassador Ani Choying Dolma dances with students at early childhood development class in Nepal. © UNICEF / Nshrestha.

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