



# DEVELOPMENT INNOVATION VENTURES

## Education Awards

**Development Innovation Ventures (DIV)** is USAID’s open innovation program that supports breakthrough solutions to the world’s toughest development challenges. Through its evidence-driven funding model, DIV improves millions of lives through programs that maximize impact per dollar spent. Specifically, DIV:

- Offers tiered funding to pilot, test, and scale the most promising innovations in global development, taking calculated risks to maximize taxpayer resources.
- Develops and applies rigorous evidence to determine what works to improve development outcomes.
- Supports promising ideas from a broad range of partners, including social entrepreneurs, nonprofits, private companies, government partners, and researchers across every sector and country in which USAID operates.

### WHAT WE LOOK FOR



#### Rigorous Evidence

We value rigorous evaluation of social impact to assess what is working—and what is not.



#### Cost-Effectiveness

We invest in solutions that deliver more impact per dollar than other interventions.



#### Potential for Scale

We support solutions that can scale sustainably through the private and/or public sectors.

### SNAPSHOT OF THE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO

Innovations in education—from improving learning outcomes through tailored instruction to boosting access through digital technology—equip children with the instruction and skills they need to succeed. Since 2010, DIV has invested nearly \$31 million across 33 awards to improve early childhood, primary, secondary, and university education. Across all activities that DIV supports in the sector, it works to strengthen local education systems, empower teachers and students, and build sustainable solutions that enable people to build more hopeful and prosperous futures. Below is a selection of effective investments from the DIV education portfolio.

**Learn more about DIV:** Visit [www.usaid.gov/div](http://www.usaid.gov/div), view the [portfolio](#), and contact [div@usaid.gov](mailto:div@usaid.gov).

## **Testing and Scaling Up Teaching at the Right Level**

**Youth Impact** || Botswana || Stage 2 (2020–2024): \$1.35 million

**Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)** || Zambia || Stage 3 (2017–2022): \$5 million

**Pratham** || India || Stage 2 (2013–2015): \$926,582

Although school enrollment worldwide is increasing, over half of the students in low- and middle-income countries go through school without acquiring the foundational skills they need to succeed. In response to such challenges in India, the NGO Pratham developed Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), a learner-centered approach to teaching that helps students catch up on basic foundational skills in reading and math. The TaRL methodology has three key components: 1) use a simple tool to assess students' learning levels; 2) group students by learning level, instead of age or grade; and 3) use an interactive, activity-based teaching approach to facilitate learning, regularly reassessing and regrouping children as they learn. In 2013, DIV awarded Pratham a Stage 2 grant to optimize and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of TaRL models in India. DIV later supported the testing and scale-up of this highly effective approach in Africa through additional awards. In 2017, DIV supported the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) Africa—in partnership with USAID's Mission in Zambia and the Government of Zambia—to scale the TaRL model with a Stage 3 award. In 2020, DIV awarded Botswana-based NGO Youth Impact (formerly Young Love) a Stage 2 award to test program variations to maximize impact and cost-effectiveness. With USAID support, TaRL has now proven to be among the highest-impact and most cost-effective learning interventions, costing just \$3.25 to significantly improve each student's learning. **DIV's support helped catalyze more than \$25 million from external funders to bring the model to at least ten African countries.** Globally, millions of children now benefit from TaRL.

## **Lively Minds: Improving Early Childhood Care and Education**

**Ghana** || Stage 3 (2021–2024): \$3.5 million

**Uganda** || Stage 2 (2019–2024) \$1.25 million

Nearly 250 million children under the age of five in low- and middle-income countries are at risk of not achieving their potential to create meaningful relationships, recognize and express emotions, and respond to others. Early childhood development programs are uncommon in many countries, especially in rural areas, and those that do exist are often of poor quality. Studies suggest, however, that well-designed interventions for young children can significantly improve their cognitive and emotional development. Lively Minds works through existing government structures to equip community trainers—such as kindergarten teachers or village health team members—to train and empower mothers in the community to run educational playgroups for children ages three to six. A randomized controlled trial on Lively Minds' model found that the program significantly improves child development, including cognitive, socio-emotional, and health outcomes, which are critical components of school readiness. With Stage 3 support from DIV, **Lively Minds is working with the Government of Ghana to scale the program from 6 to 36 districts and catalyze funding to reach 60 districts—including 1.2 million children—across the Northern Region by the end of 2028.** This is accompanied by a \$1.5 million award to Yale University to conduct a randomized control trial on the model as it transitions to scale. With Stage 2 support in Uganda, Lively Minds is expanding the program to 39,000 children and over 9,000 mothers. The model enables children to attend these groups for free and provides training and parenting workshops for mothers while building local government capacity.

## **Chancen International: Income Share Agreements to Finance Education**

**Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa** || Stage 2 (2022–2024): \$900,000

Higher education is inaccessible to the millions of students in Africa who complete secondary school but cannot afford to continue their education. While enrollment in primary and secondary school has continued to climb, enrollment in tertiary education has been slower than expected in the past two decades, in part due to lack of education financing. To increase access to education for more young people, Chancen International, a Rwanda-based nonprofit organization, developed a new financing model using an income share agreement (ISA). With ISAs, students receive a loan to fund their higher education that they repay through a percentage of their salary over a set number of years after they graduate from rigorously evaluated academic institutions. While many ISAs have failed, Chancen has designed an effective model that is spurring market investment. **In 2022, Chancen launched a \$21 million blended finance fund to scale its model to 10,000 youth excluded from traditional financing.** Funding from DIV is supporting Chancen to expand its model to South Africa and Kenya and improve its monitoring and evaluation framework in Rwanda. This award will also strengthen the impact of the Development Finance Corporation's \$7 million loan to Chancen's blended finance fund. Chancen's ISA model has the potential to enable millions of students across Africa to access improved job opportunities and sustained economic growth.

## **Georgetown University: Supporting Teacher Achievement in Rwandan Schools** **Rwanda || Stage 3 (2022–2025): \$1.51 million**

While school enrollment rates increase annually, the availability of qualified teachers is not keeping pace, resulting in below-grade learning levels. To improve teacher recruitment, motivation, and retention in Rwanda, Georgetown University partnered with the Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Education Board, as well as academic partners at Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), the University of Oxford, the University of East Anglia, and Williams College. Together, they developed and tested a pay-for-performance contract that rewards the top 20 percent of participating Rwandan teachers—determined by a blend of classroom observation and student learning outcomes—with bonuses. In a randomized controlled trial, this contract—Supporting Teacher Achievement in Rwandan Schools (STARS)—delivered annual learning gains equivalent to an additional year of learning in English and two years of learning in math, all without increasing overall teacher salary costs. With support from DIV, **Georgetown and its partners are assisting Rwanda’s Ministry of Education to scale STARS to one-third of the country’s primary school districts, reaching more than 370,000 students during the grant period.** The award will also evaluate the impact of the pay-for-performance contract on student learning outcomes and teacher recruitment efforts while shedding light on delivery bottlenecks.

## **Luminos Fund: Scaling a Program to Reach Three million Out-of-School Children** **Liberia, The Gambia || Stage 2 (2023–2026): \$747,500**

Pandemic-related school closures impacted 250 million students in sub-Saharan Africa, adding to the 100 million children consistently out of school before 2020. Hundreds of millions lost not only the opportunity to learn, but also the future opportunity to earn—millions may not set foot back in a classroom. To help get more children back to school, the Luminos Fund developed a program that helps children catch up to grade level and return to the classroom. Luminos trains organizations to identify, recruit, and engage out-of-school children in an activity-based curriculum, then helps the children reintegrate into public schools at age-appropriate grade levels. **A 2018 longitudinal study found that around 90 percent of Luminos’ students transitioned to formal schools at the end of the program; 74 percent were still attending one year later.** On average, Luminos students outperformed their peers in literacy and numeracy by 10 percentage points. Support from DIV will strengthen an ongoing randomized controlled trial by enabling Luminos to track student enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes for a year beyond the end of the program. DIV will also support Luminos to assist the governments of Liberia and The Gambia to determine how public schools can implement the Luminos program at scale. Luminos aims to reach 137,040 children and 2,302 teachers during the award period and has the potential to reach millions more through government partnerships.

## **Educational Initiatives: Building a Scalable Model for Personalized Learning in Indian Public Schools** **India || Stage 2 (2021–2025): \$1.5 million**

Despite increased school enrollment, improved infrastructure, and better nutrition, learning outcomes among children in India remain poor. Socio-economically disadvantaged public school students lag behind expected grade-level competencies, which leads to gaps in learning levels within classrooms. To enable individualized instruction in classrooms with limited resources, education technology company Educational Initiatives (Ei) developed Mindspark, a personal adaptive learning (PAL) software that identifies individual student learning levels in math, English, and the student’s predominant local language through diagnostic tests. It then provides targeted instruction to help students learn at a level and pace most appropriate for them. Mindspark is one of the few rigorously tested PAL software programs. To date, it has demonstrated significant and cost-effective learning gains in independent evaluations, including a randomized controlled trial. **Mindspark has been used by 500,000 students and is available in nine languages on tablets, laptops, and computers.** With support from DIV, Educational Initiatives is making Mindspark accessible to students in public schools, reaching 40,000 students and 1,000 teachers across 200 government day schools over three years. Ei will also A/B test different implementation strategies to identify best practices.