



Until we are all equal



TOP: Reading, math and play time are key for children enrolled in the pre-primary education program in Tanzania.
BELOW: Children in class in Cambodia

Mind The Gap

The LEARN Plus project in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Tanzania



This innovative pre-primary education program prepares children living in remote rural communities for Grade 1 and beyond.



Children enjoy some outdoor learning and play time as part of the program in Cambodia.

Project Summary

Closing the learning gap for children before it starts.

It's impossible to overestimate how much education gives everyone a good head start. That advantage begins when children have access to pre-primary education (PPE). When that happens, they're more likely to enter school at the right age, less likely to drop out or repeat grades and more likely to perform well and complete primary and secondary school.

Unfortunately, PPE isn't an option for many of the world's children growing up in remote rural communities, where schools are few and far between.

To address this gap, the LEARN Plus research project is adapting, testing and scaling an accelerated pre-primary (APP) education model to provide children living in rural and remote communities in Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and Tanzania with access to quality, inclusive early childhood education services. Designed to be adaptable and affordable to meet the needs of low-income communities, LEARN Plus is the head start every child needs, deserves and has a right to.

THE FACTS

WHAT: Accelerated pre-primary (APP) education is an 8- to 12-week intensive program delivered before the start of a new school year. The goal is to develop the physical, language, cognitive and socio-emotional skills of 5- and 6-year-old children with no access to pre-primary education who are about to enter Grade 1.

WHERE: Cambodia, Lao PDR and Tanzania

WHEN: January 2021 to December 2024

WHY: Because education lifts not just a child but their entire community. LEARN Plus is showing that APP programs can make a difference in school readiness, enrolment and learning outcomes. Participant communities are shown to place a greater value on education. Teachers and volunteers report increased confidence in teaching skills, time management and the use of child-friendly, gender-sensitive teaching techniques.

WHO: LEARN Plus is implemented by Plan International in collaboration with the Ministries of Education, other ministries and the Mother Child Education Foundation and is funded by the International Development Research Centre through the Global Partnership for Education's Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX).

BY THE NUMBERS

Project Highlights



“The LEARN Plus project supports governments to develop solutions to enable young children who have no access to pre-primary education to catch up and be ready for school, stay in school and do well in school.”

– Fe Nogra Abog, senior education advisor at Plan International Canada

TEACHER TRAINING

IN CAMBODIA

29 teachers were trained to deliver the eight-week pre-primary program (8WPP), and **29** school heads were trained to mentor and monitor 8WPP classes.

IN TANZANIA

29 community teaching assistants, **23** Grade 1 teachers, and **23** head teachers were trained to deliver the enhanced school readiness program (e-SRP).

IN LAO PDR

22 teachers and **22** village volunteers were trained to deliver the summer pre-primary program (SPP).

22 heads of schools were trained to monitor progress of SPP classes.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

IN CAMBODIA

497 parents and caregivers participated in parental-engagement aspects of the program.

IN TANZANIA

730 parents and caregivers participated in parental-engagement aspects of the program.

IN LAO PDR

446 parents and caregivers participated in parental-engagement aspects of the program.

PROJECT REACH

IN CAMBODIA

466 children (247 girls, 219 boys) from **29** communities in the Stung Treng province participated in the 8WPP program.

IN TANZANIA

533 children (257 girls, 276 boys), including **22** children with disabilities (7 girls, 15 boys), enrolled at **29** enhanced SRP centres.

IN LAO PDR

The program has reached **332** children (177 girls, 155 boys) from **22** communities.



Sereka Marwa
Sereka is a community teaching assistant in Tanzania.

SPOTLIGHT

Education Innovation

Helping preschoolers get a head start in school.

In Cambodia, Lao PDR and Tanzania, many children (65%, 30% and 59.5%, respectively) are missing out on PPE, particularly those living in rural areas. Arable farming land is often located in remote areas, with no classrooms for miles. As a result, it's common for parents to take their children to work and eventually involve them in labour as a default solution. To help change this story, Plan International has piloted and researched the following programs:

1. In the Stung Treng province of Cambodia, the eight-week pre-primary program has rolled out in 29 communities. Classes are taught by Grade 1 teachers for four hours a day, six days a week, over the eight-week school holiday.

2. In Lao PDR, the summer pre-primary program has been introduced in 15 villages in the Bokeo province. Children in the program are taught for six hours a day, five days a week, over 10 weeks. Classes are taught by Grade 1 or preschool teachers during the summer break.

3. In Tanzania, where evidence suggests a pupil-to-qualified-teacher ratio of 131:1, the enhanced school readiness program has been implemented in 29 communities in the Kisarwe district. Classes are taught by community teaching assistants for 3.5 hours a day, four days a week, over 12 weeks.

Children in these programs are also taught hygiene and personal care skills and are served simple meals by volunteer parents. Parents and caregivers with children participating in the programs also attend educational sessions on how to support their children's learning at home. These sessions help emphasize the importance of on-time enrolment and daily attendance for children in primary school.

"Many children drop out and never come back, so we're trying to address that by preparing children for school," explains Fe Nogra Abog, senior education advisor at Plan International Canada. "When they've been prepared, they tend to stay in school longer."



I brought my grandchild to the centre so she can learn, since at home she can't. Now she can count from zero to 10."

– Zena Halfan, a guardian and grandmother



Scan or click the QR code to watch a video about the LEARN Plus program.



Students practice oral hygiene as part of an SPP class in Lao PDR.

REPORT CARD

How Is LEARN Plus Doing So Far?

To date, evidence from the project points to improvements in access to pre-primary education, in the school readiness of young children and in family engagement in children's learning. For parents like Yin Xayaphone in Lao PDR, the value of LEARN Plus is undeniable: "I have observed that my daughter is joyful and can read and write. I believe she's now ready for primary school."

The impact of the program is equally clear for teachers who have received training on play-based teaching techniques as well as ways to promote gender equality and inclusion in classrooms. Chanpone Phanpadith, a pre-primary teacher in Lao PDR, is a thrilled with the progress she has helped make possible. "The first month that [one of my students] participated, she was too shy to speak and couldn't make eye contact," she says. "A month later, she could read and write Lao letters and numbers."

In 2021, the LEARN Plus project carried out studies to test the model's effectiveness and see how it could be applied more widely. In Tanzania, the model led to nearly universal access to pre-primary education, and across the board, it came through as one of the most cost-effective options. The model's success, though, relies on using teaching practices

that are inclusive of all students and promote gender equality. Engaging parents and working with them to promote equality and inclusion was also critical.



Parents and caregivers decorate a classroom in Cambodia in anticipation of new classes starting.



The LEARN Plus programs are also offered to children with disabilities to create equal opportunities for everyone in the community.

DID YOU KNOW?

➤ World leaders understand the importance of early childhood education (ECE) in shaping the health and wealth of nations. That's why they signed onto the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring that all children have access to quality early childhood

development, care and PPE by 2030.

➤ Worldwide access to PPE is 50%, which means 175 million children are still going without.

➤ Globally, only 1.2% of education aid is spend on ECE, leaving millions of children behind.

Thank you for your support.

LEARN Plus is supporting children across Cambodia, Lao PDR and Tanzania. Thank you for your commitment to helping children access the quality education they deserve.



Click or scan the QR code to learn how you can support girls until we are all equal.

WHAT'S NEW AT PLAN

Our Shared Dream

We see the world as it is and the world as it could be. No matter how complex the challenges, a better future is possible.

It takes **determination**.

It takes **optimism**.

It takes **vision**.

Our “moon shot” vision is equality for girls everywhere. Improving the lives of girls improves the lives of everyone in the family and the community. That understanding, which we know you share, is at the heart of our fundraising campaign, Until We Are All Equal. When you support this campaign, you're trusting us to identify the greatest threats to equality, especially for girls, and respond to them as they arise.

Just going to school every day is impossible for many girls, with one in six living in a conflict zone. That's why, right now, about 120 million girls are missing out on an education. What's more, many girls – 12 million every year – are forced into early marriage, placing them at a heightened risk of dying from complications of early pregnancy or childbirth.

There are 500 million girls alive on our planet today, each filled with promise and potential and with their whole futures ahead of them. How do you transform the world? Start by investing in girls.



About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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