Education contributes to prosperity, stability and security. Quality education can help individuals, families and communities achieve their aspirations and realise their full potential.

**Strategic direction**

Through the **Partnerships for Recovery: Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response**, Australia is investing in education as a vital part of our health security, stability, economic and humanitarian response. This has a strong emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, and creating a skilled workforce to support recovery from COVID-19.

Australia’s development investments are guided by best international practice and respond to the context in which they are delivered. Australia:

- Invests in early childhood care and development.
- Invests in quality improvements at all levels of the education system.
- Prioritises equity and equality, with a particular focus on gender and disability inclusiveness.
- Aligns education and skills with labour market needs.
- Supports remote learning, safe reopening of schools and COVID-resilient education systems.

Education investments are provided across all education subsectors through bilateral, regional and global investments.

To maximise the effectiveness of our investments, Australia works with a range of partners including partner governments, the private sector, the Global Partnership for Education, non-government organisations and academic institutions.

Our investments support Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and contribute to other SDGs.

**Current Priorities**

Australia is playing a key role supporting Indo-Pacific partner countries to address education system disruptions. Priorities for the short, medium and longer term include:

- safe school operations
- re-enrolment and ‘stay in school’ campaigns
- protecting education financing
- meaningful community engagement in learning and skills
- building resilient education systems
- enabling technology-based reforms aligned with local capabilities
- seizing the opportunity to accelerate positive teaching and learning practices.

Australia is making strategic investments in online and distance learning approaches, including highlighting Australian expertise and models that may be adapted in Indo-Pacific countries.

Sector Performance

- In 2019-20, Australian development assistance:
  - enrolled 576,732 additional children in schools across the region
  - trained 149,831 teachers to improve education quality
  - enabled 3,537 women and men to gain recognised post-secondary qualifications.
- Australia supported Papua New Guinea to secure a AUD13.3 million Global Partnership for Education grant which is helping provide teacher training on remote lessons, distribute school hygiene kits, install handwashing stations and distribute learning materials for vulnerable children.
- In Indonesia, Australia supported local partners and schools (in four provinces) to improve teaching practices and learning environments. 78 per cent of students passed the literacy end line test (compared to 58 per cent before).
- Australia’s funding for the Australia Pacific Training Coalition delivers more than 1,200 Pacific Islander graduates with highly regarded Australian qualifications each year.
- In Lao PDR, Australia provided training for 10,005 teachers in 2019-20, including training on Laos’ new Grade 1 curriculum and targeted support for educationally disadvantaged areas.

The Global Partnership for Education

Australia’s investment in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) supports countries in the Indo-Pacific to strengthen national education systems and increase the number of children in school and learning. GPE’s focus is on the most vulnerable, including girls and children with disabilities.

GPE’s USD500 million response to mitigate COVID-19 impacts on education supported continuous and inclusive learning, distance education, and safe school re-opening. In 2020, GPE support to the Pacific increased to AUD21.2 million including inaugural support to eight PICs (FSM, RMI, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). These amounts are significant in national education budgets.

With Australia’s contribution of AUD90 million (2018–2020), GPE allocated AUD694 million to countries in the Indo-Pacific. Australia is influencing the GPE agenda through Board and country representation to ensure effective delivery, especially in the Pacific.

Gender equality

In 2019-20, Australia’s development assistance program supported training of around 82,400 female teachers, enabled more than 286,000 more girls to enrol in school in the Indo-Pacific and supported more than 1,749 women to gain a recognised post-secondary qualification.

Disability inclusiveness

Disability inclusiveness is a strong focus of our education investments. In Kiribati we are helping implement an inclusive education policy – increasing enrolments at the Kiribati School and Centre for Children with Special Needs and transitioning children to mainstream schools. Watch the impact of our work here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrJ8iI8UyVc.

Indigenous peoples / ethnic minorities

Children learn better if they begin reading in their mother tongue, yet forty percent of children lack the opportunity to do so. Australia’s partnership with USAID and World Vision under the All Children Reading program has produced packages of high quality, accessible early grade books in more than 30 under-served spoken and signed languages.

Innovation

An innovation competition in partnership with MIT Solve and Australian company Atlassian is helping disadvantaged young people in the Indo-Pacific prepare for the workforce of the future. Australian funding supports promising pilots.