

Improving education by focusing on literacy



It's not enough to measure the number of children enrolled in or even attending school. At least as important as the number of children in the classroom is the quality of education they are receiving. For this reason, World Vision has made it a goal that children are able to read with comprehension by the time they finish basic education (often measured at age 11).



Students in Bosnia and Herzegovina participate in remedial education classes as part of a World Vision programme to help keep vulnerable students, especially those of Roma ethnicity, in school and improve their abilities in reading and math. Photo by Aida Sunje, World Vision.

WHY EDUCATION



Women account for two-thirds (61.9%) of the illiterate population, while 126 million youth cannot read or write a simple sentence. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), 2013).



Only **28 per cent** of children from a sample group of grade four students could read with comprehension in the areas where World Vision works in Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. (Child Well-being Report, Jerusalem-West Bank-Gaza, 2014, p. 14)



In Bosnia and Herzegovina **74 per cent of young people** identified education and poor school systems as key problems facing their generation. (UNICEF,Voices of Youth Survey, 2012)



In Romania, only 71.5 per cent of children are functionally literate, which means that the other **28.5 per cent of students struggle to read or cannot comprehend what they do read.** (Child Well-Being Report from World Vision Romania, 2014)



Globally, **Pakistan has the second highest number of out-of-school children.** (Society for the Protection of Children's Rights annual report, 2012)

WHAT WE DO

World Vision is working to increase the number of children who can read with comprehension by completion of basic education through a number of culturally relevant and community-specific initiatives including:

- **We advocate for equal access to quality education for all children.** As an organisation, we understand that the foundation for quality education, and as a result literacy, starts young. For this reason we are working with schools, parents and communities to promote the right of all children to access quality education. Thirteen joint citizen and local government action plans have been created as a result to drive forward the reformation of access to education in Romania.
- **We provide access to remedial education mechanisms.** In areas where functional literacy is low or where children are behind the national and international standards, World Vision is providing access to remedial education to help children "catch-up" with their peers. The after school programmes have been quite successful with large percentages of children improving their reading comprehension in areas where World Vision is active in Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza.
- **We empower students to initiate change.** By involving student leaders and student councils in addressing the problem of illiteracy, the youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina have a vested interest in helping their peers succeed. And, the fact that changes were initiated by their peers makes after school and remedial programmes more appealing to their peers.



High school students in rural Romania help their peers at risk of dropping out by tutoring them to improve their reading and math abilities. Photo by Gabriela Grama, World Vision.

REDUCING THE RISK OF DROP-OUT THROUGH REMEDIAL EDUCATION IN RURAL ROMANIA

In Romania, only 71.5 per cent of children are functionally literate, which means that the other 28.5 per cent of students struggle to read or cannot comprehend what they do read.

To help change this situation, World Vision Romania started a programme where older students with good grades tutor their peers who are behind and found to be at risk of dropping out of school.

The tutoring takes place once a week after classes. The tutors, supervised by teachers who voluntarily stay to supervise the activity, help their peers by teaching them how to read, write and make calculations.

“By participating in the remedial education activities, the children have started to be more positive regarding the school and have increased motivation for learning,” says Carmen Nistor, a teacher who supervises the tutoring sessions voluntarily.

“[The at-risk kids] have become more confident and participate actively in the lessons. Some have improved their reading and writing abilities and some have developed their socializing aptitudes,” he adds.

SATURDAY SCHOOL HELPS STRUGGLING STUDENTS IN JERUSALEM, WEST BANK AND GAZA

Sally, 9, was classified by her teachers as a weak student. Her teachers and her parents thought she had learning disabilities because she had a hard time keeping up with her peers. To help struggling students, like Sally, World Vision conducted a four-month educational programme on Saturdays, designed to strengthen reading and math skills of struggling students, while subsequently providing training to teachers on how to incorporate play into their lesson plans.

The programme built Sally’s capacities and strengthened her self-esteem. “Now I can read and write in Arabic,” she said. “I am now confident that I have the same abilities as my schoolmates. I can even outperform them and get higher marks,” she added.

“I used to get low marks in dictation, but now I get 10 out of 10. This programme has literally changed my life,” explained Sally.



Sally once struggled to keep up with her peers. Today, she is among the top students in her class thanks to World Vision’s remedial education classes. Photo by Amani Sabani, World Vision

“This is not the Sally we used to know before,” said her teacher. *“She is a brand new girl, who is always happy [and] optimistic.”*

“Thanks to the programme which transformed Sally’s negative feelings of sadness, anger, shame and dependence into positive energy, she now says she wants to be a doctor when she grows up,” her father says, proudly.

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